

HPAR7003 Archaeological Project Design and Delivery: Assignment 1

Please Note: The Appendices for this assignment have been submitted to the Supporting Documentation Link

Introduction

The MoRPHE compliant project design for the Pontefract Castle community archaeology project (Casswell et al, 2019) was pioneered in response to a unique opportunity. The project was driven primarily by a development-led archaeological directive (WYAAS, 2018) from the West Yorkshire Archaeology Advisory Service for the client, Wakefield Metropolitan District Council, but sponsored by an organisation with research and social value focused corporate goals, Historic England, through an NPPF emergency investigation assistance grant. The terms and conditions of the grant required that the project deliver public and social value in accordance with Historic England's Public Value Framework (Historic England, 2019a), part of its Corporate Plan (Historic England, 2019b). This allowed the opportunity to experiment with a project design that integrated social value, through community participation, with what was ostensibly a development-led commercial style archaeological project; a chance seldom available in this setting.

The following discussion will critically assess how successfully this experimental project design set the project up to deliver the desired outputs for the primary stakeholders who drove it. The areas of focus will be on the delivery of a contextualised research design, appropriate methodology, effective project management, communication and a suitable outcome in terms of publication and archiving.

Contextualised Research Design

Fulfilling the requirements of the development directive and achieving social impact were the primary drivers of this project and it was therefore necessary that the research design (section 3 of Casswell et al, 2019) was contextualised to these drivers.

The intention of aims one, two and three was to identify the physical extent and condition of the surviving archaeological remains, refining the chronology and phasing of the site through remote sensing and excavation (section 3.1 of Casswell et al, 2019). These aims were constructed ostensibly in the context of the development-led archaeological directive that initially drove the project (WYAAS, 2018). This is made obvious by the similarities in wording between aims one, two and three (especially, Q4-7) in section three of the project design and the stated excavation aims of the archaeological brief for the development of the site (section 5.2 of WYAAS, 2018). The intention of aim four was to make recommendations, analysis and publication. This aim was constructed in the context of section eighteen and nineteen of the archaeological brief (WYAAS, 2018).

However, the intention of aim five was specifically to implement the methodologies of aims one to four in a way that would deliver results integrated with public engagement, providing measurable social impact through detailed evaluation. This aim was constructed in the context of fulfilling the social impact requirements of Historic England's Public Value Framework, necessary for NPPF grant funding eligibility. It would focus on providing opportunities for public engagement both online and in the form of a participatory fieldschool. Additionally, in an approach unique to this style of project, aim five also offered DigVentures the opportunity to test an experimental model for the proposal and procurement of a development-led archaeological project that delivers a higher value outcome through creating measurable social impact via community engagement. A publication has been made by Wilkins et al (2021) detailing the successes of this model at Pontefract Castle and how it could be used for the benefit of future projects.

Appropriate Methodology

The methodologies discussed below are available in sections four, eleven and appendix one of the project design. Aim one was to be addressed using orthorectified imagery; a method of survey able to apply spatial measurements to photographic detail with extremely high levels of accuracy (Howland et al, 2014). Planning to use this methodology to survey the entirety of the upstanding castle remains and their environs was an excellent fit with research aim one; to establish the precise physical extent, plan and character of the

archaeological remains of the site through remote sensing. The resulting output delivered exactly this, available to view on Sketchfab (available at: <https://skfb.ly/6ROUA>) with an interpretation of the results available in section ten of Casswell et al (2021).

Addressing aims two and three was to be achieved through excavation. Excavating the seven-metre-deep drawbridge pit involved using a running half-section method in one metre spits with buckets of spoil being winched out on a davit arm. This was the only safe approach, but a significant disadvantage was that a complete profile of the stratigraphically crucial pit deposits was never visible on site. The planned use of photogrammetry as an excavation recording method proved to be an excellent choice to resolve this issue. Merging 3D models of each excavation spit allowed a complete visual representation of the full section through the drawbridge pit deposits (see figure 9, Casswell et al 2021), providing an invaluable visual stratigraphic chronology of the feature and directly contributing to the requirements of aim two. Additionally, photogrammetric models of the stone casing walls and gatehouse drum towers (figures 3-8, Casswell et al 2021) allowed for an accurate visual assessment of the condition of their preservation, contributing to the outcomes of aim three.

The excavation records were completed on site using DigVentures' own digital open access online relational database, Digital Dig Team (DDT), with records freely and instantly available online for anyone to view (see <https://bit.ly/3HM15EJ>). DDT creates the basis for a born-digital site archive and also adds the benefit of centralisation and expedited accessibility to the archive both on and off site (Taylor et al, 2018) which can be of particular use, for example, to specialists issuing advice quickly on excavation methodology from afar. Furthermore, DDT is particularly useful in the context of aim five as a social participation tool and a platform for the public both working on site and engaging online. A summary of the benefits of this approach and how it may be applied to projects in the future is made in Wilkins (2020).

Aim five was designed to integrate with the previous aims through a programme of community engagement both online and in person. A field school at Pontefract Castle during the final week of excavations allowed the opportunity for people of all ages,

backgrounds and abilities to learn about Pontefract Castle, gain skills in excavation, recording, finds processing and photogrammetry amongst others. Integrating community engagement with what was ostensibly a development-led commercial style project was an experimental approach that provided measurable social value, as required by the project sponsor Historic England. Wilkins et al (2021) provides a comprehensive survey and evaluation of the social impact made by the Pontefract Castle project. Amongst many listed outcomes, 80% of those surveyed had never been actively involved with archaeology before and 83% had an improved view of Pontefract as a whole because of the archaeology. Additionally, a significant proportion of community participants were of low-income status and/or young age, suggesting the project was able to break through some social access barriers to heritage.

Effective Project Management and Communication

The project team followed the MoRPHE-compliant structure detailed in Figure 3a of the MoRPHE Project Manager's Guide (Historic England 2015), with specific roles and responsibilities detailed in sections seven and ten of the project design. The project itself would go on to develop two distinct unforeseen issues during the fieldwork execution stage. These issues would test the effectiveness of the project management team and, in particular, the methods of communication and interfaces that were planned in the project design.

The first issue became apparent with the discovery that the drawbridge pit was much deeper and far more substantial than could be reasonably and safely excavated in the budgeted five-week fieldwork stage. Whilst unexpected depth of archaeology was not noted as a risk in the risk log (Casswell et al, 2019 pg. 33) other than in regards to environmental sampling, it would be unreasonable to assume a depth of seven metres could have been foreseeable with countermeasures applied during project planning. This is where instead planning for regular weekly progress review meetings during fieldwork (see section 7.3 of the project design) between the project executive, project manager, the client, WYAAS and Historic England proved so valuable as an effective channel of communication in managing the impact of this issue.

As soon as this issue became apparent, the project manager informed all parties using a progress matrix (Appendix 2) that matched progress against project aims and objectives. This was also an invaluable mechanism that had been planned in the project design (see section 7.2), highlighting issues hindering project progress and allowing a discussion to be opened regarding next steps. It was decided upon consultation with the Historic England inspector of ancient monuments and the other project stakeholders that an additional fieldwork execution stage was necessary in order to meet the research objectives of the project (Aim 2, Q5-7) and fulfil the development directive of WYAAS (2018, section 5.2).

Therefore, the project executive requested a variation of contract and a reviewed programme of costs and delivery was submitted to the client for approval, available as a redacted version in appendix 3. The MoRPHE project design originally submitted did not require updating because the aims, methodology and scope of the project had not changed. The variation required was only in relation to the costs and delivery timescale of an additional stage of fieldwork. This was approved with plans put in motion to deliver this second stage of fieldwork. However, it was at this point in March 2020 that the project encountered its second unforeseeable issue; the COVID-19 pandemic.

The pandemic and associated lockdowns not only delayed the commencement of the second fieldwork execution stage, but resulted in a significant change in the practicalities and cost of delivering it in a safe way. The project manager identified a requirement for PPE and sanitising products in an updated risk assessment (appendix 4) as well as more accommodation and separate vehicles to maintain social distancing. Consequently, the timescales and costs agreed in the first variation to contract in February 2020 were no longer viable and a second variation request was made by the project executive (appendix 5). This was approved by the client and project sponsor with the second stage of fieldwork being completed in July 2020.

Resolving the issues encountered during the project execution stages was only possible through a commitment to open and transparent communication between the project team and main stakeholders. Effective management of the variation process has its roots in the

project design, where lines of communication and methods for informed decision-making were established in advance; through planning for regular review meetings and progress documentation that ultimately aided decision-making (Casswell et al 2019, section 7.2 and 7.3).

Publication and Archive

The Pontefract Castle Gatehouse Project is now in the closure stage with the project archive currently being prepared for imminent deposition with a number of archiving entities. The physical archive will be deposited with Wakefield Museums and the digital archive will be made available on the ADS and OASIS platforms. A particularly successful element of the digital archive, that will undoubtedly be applied to many future projects, is the construction and preparation of the digital archive using the latest ClfA standards, developed by DigVentures, for the archiving of digital data (ClfA, 2019). The development of these standards was undertaken by some of the staff that worked on the Pontefract project and these principles were used throughout. An example of this would be the implementation of a Data Management Plan (DMP) at the project design stage (Casswell et al, 2019 appendix 5). A DMP provides a framework from the outset of a project for the management of digital data in readiness for archiving and deposition (ClfA, 2019 pg. 24).

DigVentures' commitment to public participation and the social benefit of its projects firmly extends to publication, with the project design, updated project design, assessment and analysis reports all freely available to view on the DigVentures website (available at: <https://bit.ly/3t4lGi6>). Additionally, the entirety of the on-site excavation records remains freely available to view in perpetuity on the DDT project page (available at: <https://bit.ly/3HM15EJ>). It is also intended that elements of the excavation results, such as the 3D models and some of the finds, will form part of the new interactive visitor experience at the upgraded Pontefract Castle visitor centre.

In addition to archiving, a publication has been made (Wilkins et al 2021) evaluating in particular the social value and impact that was created by the project as well as the successes of its design; merging public participation with a development-led project.

Conclusion

The Pontefract Castle community archaeology project was designed using an innovative approach to community participation in a development-led context in response to the requirements of the client and project sponsor. This report has critically assessed how successfully the experimental project design set the project up to deliver these requirements.

The research design contextualised aims and objectives to both the development-led archaeological brief and the public value requirements of Historic England by integrating research, analysis and publication with a programme of public participation. The methodologies planned to achieve this showed resilience in the face of emerging project issues, continuing to deliver excavation results and public engagement despite new constraints. Effective management of the variation process resulting from these issues started at the design stage, with channels of communication and methods of information gathering necessary for effective decision-making planned in advance. The project itself, now in the closure stage, is still able to deliver archiving and publication results in the context of both the development-led brief and public value through multiple avenues of dissemination.

The successes of this project and its design should act as an example from which future projects seeking to produce public value in addition to development-led outcomes can be planned. However, perhaps its greatest success is showing that given the right circumstances, social impact and public value through engagement and participation can be achieved even in a commercial style developer-led project.

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