00:00:00:13 - 00:00:20:16

Emily Johnson

Welcome to this policy practitioner discussion as part of the Seaford Head project. Today we hope to make visible the dialogue, challenges and opportunities that present themselves when dealing with heritage loss. We'll be particularly focusing on Seaford Head in East Sussex, the archaeology of which is threatened by coastal erosion.

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Emily

Seaford Head is currently the subject of a pilot study rapidly assessing and recording the archaeology of the site to inform future heritage management decisions. And it's those sorts of decisions and processes that we're going to be talking about today in this podcast.

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Emily

I'm really excited to meet all of our guests today. They include archaeologists, heritage practitioners and local council members. So let's meet them.

00:00:45:22 - 00:00:55:13

Hannah Fluck

Hello, I'm Hannah Fluck and I am head of environmental strategy at Historic England, and I am also the vice co-chair for Europe for the Climate Heritage Network.

00:00:55:22 - 00:00:59:04

Tom Dommett

Hi I’m Tom Dommett. I'm the head of historic environment for the National Trust.

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Anooshka Rawden

Hello. My name is Anooshka Rawden and I'm the Cultural Heritage Lead for the South Downs National Park Authority.

00:01:05:21 - 00:01:11:00

Adam Chugg

Hello. My name is Adam Chugg and I'm the town clerk at Seaford Town Council in Seaford in East Sussex.

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Jon Sygrave

I'm Jon Sygrave. I'm an archaeological project manager from Archaeology South-East part of University College London.

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Emily

I'm your host, Emily Johnson. I work at Archaeology South-East too as an archaeological animal bone specialist, and I also run our program of digital outreach like this podcast. So I'll be facilitating today's discussion.

So for people who don't know the site at all, let's talk first to Adam about Seaford Head in the present.

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Adam

Thank you. Yes, Seaford Head is an iconic clifftop above our town and obviously on the edge of the coast, and it's owned by the Council on behalf of our community. It's a massive green space, part of the area is a nature reserve and we work with partners such as the South Downs National Park, the Sussex Wildlife Trust and others to maximize ecology, care and care for the landscape

Part of the area is also the Seaford Head golf course that we own and manage, and where we take an ecological approach to golf course management with minimal use of pesticides, wildlife corridors, ecology to encourage bees and other insects, and also boreholes supplying all the water for the course instead of using mains water.

We're also, as a council, aware of the great historical importance on the site, with Bronze Age, Iron Age, and also World War One and World War Two history on the site. And we hope to act very much as custodians of this land.

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Emily

That's great. Jon, can you tell us more about this archaeology?

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Jon

Yeah. The site at Seaford Head is a Scheduled Ancient Monument, it is listed as an Iron Age hill fort, a Bronze Age barrow as well. And also the listing mentions the World War Two remains that Adam mentioned.

Despite this like statutory protection for the site, really all of our knowledge just comes from two small excavations, one of which happened in the 1870s, led by Lane Fox, later Pitt Rivers, who excavated across one of the ditches of the Iron Age hillfort and the Bronze Age Barrow. And then in the 1980s by a guy called Owen Bedwin.

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Jon

Now, those two small excavations have proven that it's an Iron Age hill fort, dating maybe to around 300 B.C., possibly also has a Roman element to it as well and gave a middle Bronze Age date for the Bronze Age barrow.

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Jon

That's pretty much the sum total of the information that was available prior to our survey starting.

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Emily

Great. So what has the survey uncovered? Have we found out anything new?

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Jon

Well, we've added to that information really. So we've undertaken an accurate survey of the monument. So a topographic survey measuring the height difference across the monument showing where the location of the barrow is. Things like that.

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Jon

We've also done a geophysical survey, so we started seeing whether or not there's evidence for potential archaeological features under the ground. And this is important because if there were to be any future investigation of the site, those are the first places that we would start targeting.

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Jon

And our geophysical survey has shown various sort of anomalies which we could target, which may be archaeological features. So, yes, our knowledge is building, but it is far from complete. The other thing that we've done is a drone survey of the of the monument both using photogrammetry, which is a technique taking thousands of images and using them as a composite in order to create an accurate sort of photographic model of the site. We've also flown the drone along the cliff edge. And on that cliff edge you can see the exposure of archaeological features.

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Jon

You can see the outer ditch for the Iron Age hill fort really clearly, and some other both natural and potentially archaeological features there as well. So yes, we've increased our knowledge and understanding of the site. Is it a complete understanding?

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Jon

No, it's not. But it's provided new and more accurate data as to what's there.

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Emily

Exactly. I mean, I think you'll agree with me that the Seaford Head project was never supposed to give a whole complete archaeological understanding of the site. It's supposed to inform people so they can properly have these sorts of discussions, right?

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Jon

Yes. Yeah, quite. It's you know, you never in a week or so, which we took for the surveys, going to record the whole of the four hectare Iron Age Hill fort and Bronze Age and World War 2 site, it just it won't get done this is about doing what we can with the resources available.

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Emily

Definitely.

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Emily

So we've talked a bit about coastal erosion affecting Seaford Head, but Hannah, I wonder if you can talk to us from a climate sort of perspective, like why is this issue arising now?

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Hannah

Yes. So this is an issue that's always been there. Our coastline exists because it's where the wet stuff meets the dry stuff, and those waves eroding the cliff lines, that's been going on for thousands of years. So to a certain extent, it's something that's always been happening.

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Hannah

And some of these sites which were located at the coastline were always going to be exposed to those processes. What's happening now and what is going to happen in the future relates to our changing climate. So I think we all know that us humans have done a pretty good job of screwing things up a little bit

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Hannah

so that our climate is changing at a rate which is far greater than that which it has changed before. Broadly speaking, it's getting warmer and wetter in the summer. Got that wrong, wrong way around. Sorry. It's getting hotter and drier in the summer and warmer and wetter in the winter.

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Hannah

And our sea levels are rising at quite a rate, that means that that meeting between the land and the sea is becoming more intense for longer. The erosion at the coast that we're experiencing is in part due to those changing sea levels, but it's also affected by changes that we see in our precipitation.

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Hannah

So those extremes of things getting wet and dry do change the way in which our grounds… affect our ground stability. So some of the erosion that we're seeing at those sites is also in relation to the way in which heavier rain, more intense rainfall is happening and also more prolonged dry periods that leads to sort of shrinking

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Hannah

and swelling and cracking the ground. And what we're seeing now is just the tip of the iceberg. We know that these processes that stem from this changing climate are going to get more and more extreme. So this is just the beginning of the sorts of scales of change that we're going to see

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Hannah

that will be affecting all of our heritage around the coast and indeed inland as well.

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Emily

Yeah, definitely. And of course that's been seen at Seaford Head in relatively recent months and years by these pretty dramatic cliff falls which have been, yeah, quite the thing to behold. Adam, how is this heritage loss going to affect you as the local landowner?

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Adam

Yes. I mean, really picking up picking up on what Hannah was saying. Seaford is on the coast and therefore very much in the front line with the effects of climate change, as she was explaining it, accelerating coastal erosion and also increasing the risk of coastal flooding.

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Adam

So for us, it's obviously about understanding as best we can what is happening and our responses - there's a range of responses - from pure public safety, moving fences and paths back from cliff edges when there are cliff falls, warning the public to stay away from the coast when it’s stormy, to working with partners such as those here today to see how best

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Adam

we manage this landscape in this time of change. We're also a council doing all we can to work with our community in terms of trying to grow community involvement and understanding in response to climate change as well.

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Emily

And Tom, as your role in the National Trust, how does this affect the National Trust as a landowner of attractions along coastal areas?

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Tom

I mean, the big thing for us is, is the scale. If you scale this up in a national way, it just multiplies the complexity of everything it's dealing with. So the Trust owns around 700 plus miles of coastline. In terms of planning how we think long term about coastal change, Hannah’s mentioned how there could be -

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Tom

There are a lot of different factors at play. This isn't just one thing. Rising sea level, increased storminess. It's about rainfall. It's about the varying geologies, it's about the topography. All of those things coming together. So actually, when we start to try and get a picture at a national scale, it's really difficult.

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Tom

Coastal erosion is inherently quite unpredictable, very complex. And as we project that into the future, it becomes harder and harder to do. So that's one thing about getting that planning in. There's an issue as well around the monitoring and how we actually keep track of the changes that are happening at that sort of scale.

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Tom

And yeah, there is some really interesting work emerging there and there is a huge role that for the People, for citizen science, for public engagement, particularly to help us do that. Yeah, we've got we've got a really interesting just a bit of really simple signage down on the Purbeck coast that explains a little bit around

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Tom

coastal erosion and coastal processes and then has a little slot in it where you can insert your smartphone and take a picture along a stretch of coastline. And we've been collecting that for, I think maybe seven years now.

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Tom

And it's actually building up a really great archive of the change that's happening. So there are there is some simple ways to do it. And particularly then when it comes to the heritage of the coast. Again. It's that scale that once we understand how the impacts are playing out in different places.

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Tom

There are there are a huge number of archaeological sites on the coastline that are going to be impacted by coastal erosion, by coastal change. And. The reality is that the resources are finite. You know, Jon even has mentioned as part of the Seaford Head project, it's about what's the kind of proportionate response, what can we do with the resources that

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Tom

we have and what's the best way to apply them? And that you know, that really hits at that national scale of how we try prioritise a finite set of resources against that. As soon as you start having that discussion, you get into really…

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Tom

It forces some conversations about choice. And what choices are we making and why, you know, where do we intervene?. And that that's a really interesting area.

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Jon

Just to just to say that's part of what we're trying to do with this project in terms of this podcast and other digital outreach things that have been funded by the South Downs National Park Authority is as part of this work because it's starting that conversation with members of the public because, like you say, Tom

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Jon

the choice has to be with tax paying, time giving, you know, members of the public. How do they want to take this forward, or not? You know, it's how much desire is there, for instance, for a much greater project at Seaford Head, or not?

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Jon

And we've got to have a mechanism by which we can talk to local and national populations about that.

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Hannah

Also, just worth thinking that actually all these interventions also come with a, not just the financial cost, but a carbon cost as well. And not just that but the collections themselves. As archaeologists, when we investigate sites and when we excavate those sites, we're creating archives and materials have to be kept somewhere and they have to

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Hannah

be kept in particular conditions. And that that also brings a cost. So there is a moral element to this decision about, like Tom and Jon have described, those choices we make about when we deploy that that resource, when we use that carbon budget in some ways, I suppose, to really make sure that we're doing that to

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Hannah

best effect and for something that is in the public interest. So absolutely the public element of this and the reason behind why we do anything to do with heritage is about people. It's about stories about people and those places and the way in which we can share that that that connection through time between generations, both

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Hannah

backwards and forwards, is really about is about the future. People think we deal with the past, we don't really! I'd say we're all about the future. So it is a very complex issue that's really caught up in a lot of the kind of ethics about how we make these sorts of decisions, and how we prioritize.

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Hannah

And I think it's a challenging area.

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Anooshka

I think as well, it's challenging ourselves as a sector to think about what value means. It's, you know, what is the value of what we're preserving today and will it have the same value tomorrow? You know what's important to people in the future?

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Anooshka

It comes back to just what Hannah was saying. I think the other point that has come to mind for me as well is that we are also having to challenge ourselves professionally in that a lot of the certainties that we've that we've established in terms of preserving particular material culture, for example.

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Anooshka

So the objects that are in our museums or in our historic houses that are cared for by the National Trust. We assume certain things about environment and about preservation and about risk. And all of those things are coming into play now to actually challenge our assumptions around preservation in the long term.

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Anooshka

So it's an issue that isn't only pervading our landscapes, it's pervading everything about heritage in the round. And I think that's also important to really consider, because we're not just talking about resources for landscape that are stretched. We're actually talking about resources across the entire cake

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Anooshka

that is the heritage sector. You know, it's our museums and galleries, it's our landscapes, it's our built heritage. It's it's the full gamut, really.

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Emily

Definitely. And what happens when people don't know about their heritage that's right under their feet? Or what happens if it means different different things to different parts of the public? Hannah, maybe you have an insight.

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Hannah

Yeah, that's a very good point. I think people can't value what they don't know and what they don't know about. And I think for an awful lot of us, we we exist and go about our daily lives in a world where we know, we view it through different lenses and we know what we know, but we don't

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Hannah

know what we don't know. And as soon as someone starts explaining or sharing some of that knowledge, which I think is archaeologists, is our responsibility to share what we know. And you do start to engage with and understand and relate to places differently.

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Hannah

And and I think that's one of the real challenges with some of these issues around loss of heritage is that in many instances we've just heard from Jon how much we just don't know about this site that we're losing

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Hannah

that we don't know, we don't know. And actually, it it's very hard then to think about how you prioritize that and what information do we need in order to understand how people might value it if they knew about it.

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Hannah

So sharing that to help people make informed decisions based on information and making sure that we share that knowledge is a really critical part.

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Jon

Yeah, definitely. And also I suppose by, by starting this discussion about sites like Seaford Head yes, we're talking about Seaford Head, but we're also talking about a process that affects people's homes and is going to change the world around, around people.

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Jon

You know, it's like if Seaford Head isn't Seaford Head or looks significantly different due to a massive cliff fall, then how does that start making people feel about their place in their home and also the level of risk that they might be personally at or their houses might personally be at?

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Jon

It's kind of opening a Pandora's Box into what might happen in in the future and how, you know, coastal erosion and climate change is going to impact communities.

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Emily

Yeah, would it be better to be blissfully unaware then. Or not. I mean, clearly not.

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Hannah

Yeah. I was just going to share the analogy that that one of Tom’s colleagues at the National Trust often uses about some of these sites of being canaries in the mine, as being the kind of the litmus paper, the thing that is the indicator that something is changing and sometimes quite dramatically

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Hannah

and often what we find with some of these heritage sites is that they are that early warning system. But also it's a place where we can observe those changes and understand those changes. And it isn't people's lives or homes.

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Hannah

And that might be an easier space to really think through what some of these changes might mean.

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Adam

I think I mean, I think to say that it's very noticeable in our town that there is a growing consciousness of being on this front line of climate change, so we’re the canaries, if you like, or whatever. Maybe a bigger, louder bird, perhaps because certainly we've had Storm Eunice, for example.

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Adam

And that was, you know, the sea came up. And there was quite a bit of damage along the sea front and stuff like that. So that's happening more and more often. So in coastal areas, such as ours there is this awareness that we are on the front line and that change

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Adam

is happening, as well, and the conversation changing from has changed from something that will be in the future to it's going on now, things like the big cliff falls, and therefore this project fits into that context really.

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Adam

And I think it's really helpful to have things that people can help them to understand and grasp what's happening.

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Tom

And I just think it's it's fascinating and amazing that one of the maybe one of the biggest values that an archaeological site can have is expressed through its loss.

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Tom

And the story that that tells about the future and I think that is just the most the most incredible thing to be able to reflect on and a reminder of how thoughtfully and carefully that we need to approach this sort of topic and around around change and transformation and loss and and how that helps us think differently

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Anooshka

I was just going to add to that I think what Tom said is really important, actually, on a variety of different levels, it's a bereavement process. It's a process of loss in terms of the very different emotions that it might elicit from local people or from people nationally, depending on the significance of the monument or its profile,

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Anooshka

for example. But I think we are talking about having a conversation about letting go and a grieving process in that sense. And I sometimes think that, particularly with archaeology, there can sometimes be a discomfort around the emotional connection to the past.

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Anooshka

You know, we we've historically been a sector that's had one foot in science and one foot in art, and we've drifted more and more towards the sciences. But actually, now is the time when, you know, we're facing quite radical changes and quite radical questions about the future as well.

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Anooshka

So I think what Tom said there is really important.

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Emily

Yeah. And if I may add that we've got these sorts of outputs from the Seaford Head project, we've got Alinah Azadeh working on this as a local, as an artist who might help us connect more deeply with that side of the narrative.

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Emily

And that's going to be really exciting. Hannah?

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Hannah

Yeah. I just wanted to add, I have a PhD student who’s exploring how we try and communicate and understand some of these processes of loss. And she's developed an approach which recognizes that not everybody necessarily agrees or even has the same view as to what it is that they value or they enjoy or they like or they

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Hannah

understand to be the story or the history of these places. And she's developed an approach using interactive documentary to capture what might be quite different and disparate views in one place, recognizing that what they have in common is that location, is that particular site, and then enabling the viewer

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Hannah

I suppose it is with an interactive documentary to navigate their own way through the story of that site. She describes it as a little bit like one of those Choose Your Own Adventure books, I don't know if anyone had one of them when you were a child,

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Hannah

but I think it's really important to recognize that that applies not just to the history of those sites, but also to the perception of loss. So I did some work with an anthropologist a few years ago in the east of England looking at coastal change.

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Hannah

And we went to this particular part of East Anglia because the rate of change of that coast is is one of the most rapid in the country. And we wanted to ask people how they felt about that very rapid environmental change and how that made them feel about the heritage of that place and and the loss that

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Hannah

they might be experiencing. And one of the messages that came back quite strongly was that actually what they liked about that place was that *nothing* had changed. They felt like nothing had changed. And what they meant was there weren't any new housing developments.

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Hannah

There weren't any big supermarkets or industrial estates. And that sense of continuity of a coast where the sea is pummelling the land was something that they felt more strongly than the fact that ten meters of it had vanished, of the land had vanished, into the sea in the past the past couple of years.

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Hannah

So we have to be very wary about how we interpret not just the heritage, but also that that perception of change.

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Emily

Absolutely.

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Jon

Yeah. It's funny, isn't it? Because if I think of that landscape, the first sight that comes to mind is the Happisburgh site with all of those fantastic people’s footprints from about 800-900,000 years ago. And what amazing find that was and how short that actually lasted before it was eroded and disappeared into the sea.

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Jon

And for me as an archaeologist, it's like, oh, what an amazing site! And then it's gone. And it's like, what a loss. But yeah you can imagine that the people used to that environment almost enjoyed

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Jon

the dynamic nature of the fact that things, you know… unless obviously your house is immediately adjacent to it. But yeah, there's different viewpoints isn't there. And it's, it's trying to remember all of those.

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Tom

Yeah. Well we and we've already talked a bit about, about challenge, about loss. But there is absolutely a kind of opportunity creation going on here as well. Amazing discoveries that have come through that kind of change. And in a lot of ways that kind of change is essential to us continuing to grow our understanding of places

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Tom

and that loss is an essential part of that. And I think, you know,, that becomes a challenge as well in that sometimes quite ephemeral nature, I suppose at the exposure of some of those new sites, the ability to respond quickly is, is something that is a struggle.

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Jon

Yeah, I suppose there's new sites being discovered, but there's also like sites like Seaford Head and they do have statutory protection. They are scheduled ancient monuments. They're supposed to be like preserved and looked after for future generations. And I suppose it's that it's that shift in in how we see these, our iconic heritage sites in the country

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Speaker 5

such as Seaford Head that, you know, some things are impacting it now, which is beyond our control. We can't we can't stop the cliffs eroding at that point. So we need to- our response can't be one of protect for future generations necessarily on that site, so it's like so what should our response be?

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Emily

Yeah

00:27:05:08 - 00:27:08:13

Jon

That's one of the things that with we're looking at.

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Emily

Yeah and I think one of those ways could be 3D modelling. We, we've done some of this with the Seaford Head project, right? We are going to- one of our outputs will be a preserved forever virtual, you know, 3D model of the site.

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Emily

But you know, can’t quite replace the staggering cliffs and, and glorious beauty of being on Seaford Head. Anooshka, did you have something?

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Anooshka

Yeah, it was something I was hoping we touch on in this, but I guess that's a provocation back to ourselves as a sector in that we've actually strongly communicated the idea that we can preserve things against the hands of time.

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Anooshka

That's, that's what we've done through legislation, through policy, coming from a museums and galleries backgrounds, the truth of the matter in preserving material culture - so all of the objects that we get through archaeology or as inherited works, whether it be fine art, etc. - all we're doing is slowing a rate of deterioration.

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Anooshka

That's all we can do. That what a conservator will tell you. I mean, you know, and we're good at it. We can slow things. But I think we've also created a situation where I sometimes ask myself, is the public's perception that we can preserve everything and anything?

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Anooshka

And I think that's a provocation back to us about the messaging that we've spent a long time as a sector putting out, which is now going to need to be very rapidly nuanced when we think about the challenges ahead.

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Jon

In my other role as a commercial archaeological field work manager, when we're dealing with sites that aren't under statutory protection, there's always been a sort of acceptance of the fact that in the face of, say, a whole area being sort of like developed upon and being impacted that that we're given, I suppose, a

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Jon

fair chance to try and find the most significant aspect of that and then try and preserve that by record and not necessarily preserve that in situ for all time because the development is going ahead on that area, and an acceptance that when we're not going to see every single part of that site or that landscape,

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Jon

that we'll do our best, and what is practical within an amount of time and an amount of budget to do that. And so I suppose in that regard it's commonplace for us to view sites which are being destroyed, you know, that's what's happening to them and the fact that we're only recording a percentage or our

00:29:46:12 - 00:29:48:16

Jon

best understanding of that before they go.

00:29:50:06 - 00:30:06:21

Emily

Yeah. It's just because Seaford Head is a scheduled ancient monument that there aren’t buildings on it so that we, we aren't losing it by development, we're losing it by this, this other nonhuman driver.

00:30:07:12 - 00:30:26:12

Hannah

Yeah. I think Anooshka is absolutely right. I think the way in which we, we've, we've sort of set ourselves up for, for a challenge is, is an interesting one. And one of the messages that actually the conservation setting and heritage sector tries to promote is that we are about managing change.

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Hannah

The majority of us working in heritage are managing change. And what we do, I've often said we take a long view, so our real expertise is that we think in multiple generations, both backwards but also forwards. So when we're talking about the reasons behind some of the designation, why some sites are preserved or scheduled as

00:30:50:15 - 00:31:09:10

Hannah

listed, as nationally significant. And that's because we want to preserve them for future generations or look after them. Now what that that preservation looks like. It's about that information. It's about that storytelling. It's about that connection. People and places through time. That can take many different forms.

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Hannah

So as we face those pressures of change, how we can respond to and manage that, that's the essence of what we do. I think sometimes we forget that. Sometimes other people forget that. But I think we're far better at it.

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Hannah

And I'm also really minded if that old undergraduate archaeology essay question of archaeology is destruction - discuss. And, and I think of that every time I think of this topic because we can’t as archaeologists, as soon as you start investigating, you are removing that information in that evidence.

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Hannah

So what we try and do is make sure that we apply those techniques that enable as much of that information to be retained and then communicated. And that's the other central point communicated and shared. So conserving for future generations can take a lot of different forms.

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Anooshka

Seaford Head itself actually in its more recent history has shown us that heritage value has fundamentally changed over time. So the reason Lane Fox was there was because the site was allegedly going to get blown up to form a breakwater.

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Anooshka

So that's why he went in and excavated. You’ve then got a 200 year old golf course that went in over the top of the Scheduled monument. So the site itself, the thing that I find most fascinating with it is that it shows us how heritage value has changed actually over a few hundred years, let alone that

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Anooshka

longer deep time sequence. And that, I think, is interesting. It's interesting to explore that in and of itself. And I think Seaford provides us with something quite unique in terms of that, that history. I mean the thing about the breakwater is just classic, you know, it was almost like an emergency intervention before the site was due to get

00:32:51:04 - 00:32:51:19

Anooshka

blown up.

00:32:52:06 - 00:33:12:22

Adam

Yeah, there's a whole history to the near blowing up at site! Actually my understanding in the 19th century there was an unsuccessful attempt to do some of the blowing up. And you can still see the bottom of Seaford Head of the evidence of that, if you like,

00:33:12:22 - 00:33:24:15

Adam

which is in Seaford Museum, is it so you I mean, that's what I was going to talk about is that the coast this coast is fascinating because, picking up the points other people were making, it's not an accident that Seaford Head is a massive green space.

00:33:25:06 - 00:33:45:07

Adam

You know, that's not an accident. That's about what people have done over the last especially in the last hundred years or so, go further west from us between Brighton and New Haven, the coast was built upon. And when that happened, people stepped forward to make sure that didn't happen coming across through Seaford and onto Eastbourne.

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Adam

So all of that is green because of the action people took within the 1920s in response to greater development going on, going on to the west of us. And so it's not an accident how it looks now.

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Adam

It is about the decisions people made, the choices people made, the campaigns people have had in the past that it looks like it does now. And finally, I want to say that this is about in the context of the town, the town council, that that's part of us.

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Adam

What we think, you know, is because what is a successful - what is a successful coastal town in this context? You know, it's our job to preserve everything aspect and welcome the tourists in. Or do we want things going on in our town in, you know, new things in the here and now.

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Adam

And how does that operate when there are things in the town that do need preserving? And where's that successful balance between preservation and the town having a life of its own?

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Emily

Yeah, definitely so interesting. Tom, did you have something.

00:34:42:00 - 00:35:06:16

Tom

Well it was just it was just a reflection on, I suppose, of that thinking around development-led archaeology or even that response to that imminent considering the imminent loss in the 19th century at Seaford Head. And that that rescue kind of instinct which it’s really interesting and to think about the question of when we make an intervention,

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Tom

typically a lot of our interventions are at the point of loss. They are at that very immediate point of loss. And there's a there's an often very good reason for that, which is around resources and what we can bring to bear and when.

00:35:24:02 - 00:35:44:24

Tom

And and there's also something really interesting about maybe the the intensity of emotion and connection that comes through that imminence of loss. But there's also a question there for me about, you know, if we if we knew a development is going knew 100% for sure that it was going in in 50 years time.

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Tom

When would we make our intervention? Then we go in and do our recording to understand that site better. Would it would still be closer to the point of loss? Or would we try and do it earlier and give people more of an opportunity and ourselves more of an opportunity to share to share that knowledge?

00:36:05:07 - 00:36:23:13

Tom

Coastal change is perhaps one of the few scenarios where we know something is going to happen is going to happen. It's just a question of when. And yeah, that's it's an interesting thought, I suppose, about when we choose to make that intervention.

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Emily

Definitely. I wonder if the difference between sort of commercial archaeology and development-led archaeology is we know when, right? Like we know when a house is going to be built because the developer has to have archaeological intervention, first of all, etc., etc..

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Emily

But the next storm could take a huge chunk off of Seaford Head and off of so many of our coastal sites. So that “when intervention” like, you know, I think is is as urgent as it as it could be because we literally don't know when these things might be lost.

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Hannah

But that question of “when” and those sorts of tipping points, and then also working back from some of those tipping points like Tom was describing, if you know that's going to happen, what action would you take? They're really quite, quite challenging. In climate change adaptation that is described as an adaptation pathway.

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Hannah

So that idea that there isn't… we don't even know sometimes where we're going to end up. It's an open ended question. We know that things are changing. We've got a pretty good idea, to about the middle of the century.

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Hannah

Beyond that, depending on how we behave now with our carbon reduction things, things can get pretty, pretty wildly different. One of the challenges with that adaptive pathway is that you need to to make decisions at different points. Doing nothing is a decision, and it's often not a particularly helpful decision for anybody.

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Hannah

So one of the approaches that we've been developing with researcher called Caitlin DeSilvey at the University of Exeter and with colleagues at the National Trust, and at UCL, is an approach that we're calling Adaptive Release. It's about thinking about the future of these places that are going to undergo some quite inevitable, quite challenging changes.

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Hannah

But how at each point in that process can we bring the best out of them? How can we think about that change in that transformation in a positive way? In some instances, that might be using that opportunity to undertake the archaeological investigation, to learn about these sites and the information that they hold about our past. In

00:38:32:00 - 00:38:53:01

Hannah

others it might also be realising some of the natural environment potential, some of the opportunities for biodiversity or indeed for just access and understanding and seeing these sites. So we're very actively thinking about how we can turn what can be a bit of a doom and gloom story into something that's actually… there are positive strands to

00:38:53:02 - 00:39:09:13

Hannah

this. Also recognizing that it's not a linear path, it's not straightforward. We don't know when that lump of cliff is going to fall off, but we still have to start planning for and taking action. And we might want to revise whether that action that we've taken is still the right approach and change those approaches as we go.

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Hannah

There's no single trajectory that we need to take and that iterative and reflexive process, it can be pretty challenging. It's not what we're used to. I think Jon's describing developer-funded excavation. You know, something is going to be built, you know that site isn't going to exist.

00:39:25:09 - 00:39:43:09

Hannah

You go in and you excavate in a proportionate way to gather that information. This is a more challenging situation because it's not quite as simple. The timelines aren't as simple, and coastal erosion is unusual in that you are talking about pretty complete lost. When you know, things fall into the sea

00:39:43:09 - 00:39:57:17

Hannah

they tend not to come back again. But there are other circumstances which we will see quite significant changes and loss of aspects of sites where it's not quite as as sort of black and white is being in existence or being part of the seabed.

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Hannah

And there's a final point. As an archaeologist, one of the things I find most fascinating about these sites along the coast is that there is a, we do have archaeology on the seabed, so there are many places that were once on land and are now archaeology that's now underwater.

00:40:17:07 - 00:40:36:03

Hannah

Now that taphonomy in archaeological terms, that site formation process, how does something that's on the land become something that's now underwater archaeology. And I've got a real yearning to really maybe make the most of some of these places to really understand that that site formation a little bit better.

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Emily

Experimental archaeology into into sites becoming underwater. Interesting. That would be really cool. Jon?

00:40:46:02 - 00:41:01:00

Jon

What I was going to say was just the change that is going to happen at Seaford Head. So every site will be different. Seaford Head has got 80 meter high cliffs. You know, it's very dangerous up there, as Adam will attest.

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Jon

And it's not just the bits that are falling into the sea that are lost. We can't operate within the first 20 meters of that cliff edge now, it's not safe to do so. We wouldn't we wouldn't want to be digging holes and destabilizing the ground up there.

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Jon

It could be disastrous. So what we're already looking at now is. Any further sort of excavation or anything that happened, it would have to be, you know, already a substantial distance back from the cliff. When we're planning anything for for the future up there, we've got to consider actually, we've got to go a lot further back

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Jon

than than what is immediately apparent. I mean, I understand and again, on on coastal sites like Seaford Head, there's an attraction to be close to that coastal edge that, you know, liminal area between the land and the sea and all the rest of it.

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Jon

The coastal path sits there. People enjoy playing golf on that course and just going there as sightseers because it's exciting to stand on the top of those cliffs. But those those amenities that are attracted by that space, such as the coastal path and some of the golf links.

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Jon

You know, again, when Seaford Town Council is going to be looking at the management of that site in the future, they're going to have to take into account that it's it's not just a case... You can't just move the path back, you know, five meters or just move the golf course links just back five meters because, you know,

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Jon

the next year that could go as well. So how are you going to manage this space effectively and safely? So so that it can still be still be used? It's yeah. Some interesting challenges.

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Adam

Yeah. I think Jon summed it up perfectly. The course is both an amazing place and a very challenging place, one at the same time, because the site is iconic, as you say, and we're lucky. People come, golfers come from all over the country to stand on the 18th tee because that's an incredible view and an incredible hole to

00:43:03:12 - 00:43:20:18

Adam 3

play. But at the same time, we have to face the reality of of the coastal erosion and what's to come. And so that's that's what we're doing where the work has begun in terms of in terms of modification of the course.

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Adam

So the 17th green and the 18th tee are the bits that are in the line of, are directly, that's where the cliffs come and that's where they are. That’s the bits that's got to move. The rest of the course is not is not at the cliff edge in the way that those parts are.

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Adam

So so those are the bits that we have plans to to move them. But obviously in consultation with and contacts with the partners around us in terms of making sure the solution is appropriate for the site and in keeping with what the future of the site needs to be.

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Adam

We also one other thing on the sort of the today challenges is around, yes, you know, we still have people coming to our town who want to go and stand on the edge of a cliff. You know, that's a massive challenge for us.

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Adam

And in some ways, you know, the erosion is making the cliff edge even more dramatic and even more attractive for a selfie on a cliff edge. So there's huge public safety issues around the coastal erosion that we're having to grapple with the council as well.

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Hannah

I was just thinking about that, that kind of danger element, bringing value to those places. And actually in some ways, we do see that, not danger as much, but in archaeology heritage, the rarity value or the reason that these little fragments in the past are so precious, is because so much has been lost.

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Hannah

So this kind of irony, sort of part of the currency almost of the value of these places is, is one that's based in the large scale loss of other of the aspects of this. And so thinking about the ways in which perhaps certain categories of archaeological site and heritage asset are more vulnerable to

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Hannah

these processes. And I think we're only just beginning to think about and be in a position to identify which, sort of scientifically and systematically. But we will find that certain sites are more exposed, more vulnerable, and therefore the rarity of those and the importance of understanding those, we’re going back to that idea of prioritising, and that

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Hannah

is a really critical factor. So this particular hillfort, the location, it's on the coastline, the way in which it has a relationship with that landscape and seascape and had in the past is, is something that is of particular interest to that particular site,

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Hannah

that perhaps is something that does set it apart from other similar constructions of that period. So, so I think that's, you know, that's another strand of that that kind of rare, rare fragments. We are going to be losing those coastal sites of that period.

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Hannah

And the other thing, I've got a question, am I allowed to ask a question? Jon, but I'm kind of wondering what we know about the abandonment and the end of the kind of the useful life of that settlement?

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Hannah

And I'm wondering whether that might be an interesting thing to explore as we're looking at the loss of the site. So it was lost in one way in the past when people stop living and using it, and maintaining it.

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Hannah

And what was that process? Is it a sudden one? Is it a gradual one? And how does that kind of mirror, is there a kind of poetry in how that relates to what's happening to it today?

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Jon Sygrave

Short answer is, I don't think we know I'm afraid! [laughter]. You know that from the material culture that's been recovered from the site, in just those two small excavations, suggested that it was, that it was middle Iron Age in date.

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Jon Sygrave

Although there hasn't been a reappraisal of that material culture, so it you know, it could change and that there were some, there were also Roman finds associated with it. That's pretty much our sum knowledge. So its transition, whether or not it was still an active place when the Romans arrived and whether it got taken over and

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John Sygrave

continued in use, you know, these are all research questions that that could be answered or, you know, could be attempted to be answered. But, no, we don't we don't understand. And I suppose that's, that's the thing. All our sum knowledge, like I said before, came from really two small excavations on the site that only, that you

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Jon Sygrave

know, where only maybe be a week, two weeks at most, both of these locations. And that's where all of our sum knowledge has come from. Presumably, there's many sites out there that haven't even had those two small excavations happen, and they were a response in the past to imminent loss as well.

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Jon Sygrave

You know, it's, so I think these are actions repeating themselves.

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Anooshka Rawden

I was just going to add, I think it's really interesting, that you’ve used that sense is, you know, is there a poetry? I think there is an important story we could postulate around contemporary challenges being reflected in the past and in how people have also had to adapt to change.

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Anooshka Rawden

And we know that there's a pretty major shift in the way society functions between the Bronze Age and the Iron Age. And we could postulate that there was an environmental factor within that. We don't know, you know, but what makes society change so fundamentally?

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Anooshka Rawden

You know, maybe there were changes in terms of agriculture, which affected economy, which affected how people lived. You know, we know that there are sites in places like Turkey where the animal bone assemblages show that people move from predominately having cattle to goat.

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Anooshka Rawden

Well, what do we know about goats? They're more drought resistant. So it does make you start to consider, are we seeing adaptive practice and can we start telling a story about that? And that's perhaps not something we've done particularly well so far, but it could be something that we could potentially do better because I think one of

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Anooshka Rawden

the biggest challenges at the moment is we all know that our own experience of living is that the whole world revolves around each of us as individuals. That's how as human beings, we're brought up to think. So, you know, when we're asked to adapt our behaviour, or when we're asked to face up to challenges that are completely outside

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Anooshka Rawden

of our control, it's very hard to accept that. It's very hard to accept that your life needs to change. Whereas actually, we've got a long history that the archaeological record can tell us, of people that have constantly been in a state of adaptation and have constantly had to adapt, whether to social change and, and actually external factors

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Anooshka Rawden

beyond their control, environmental, resource, invasion, you know, we've had to adapt, but I don't think we tell that story strongly enough about adaptation generally and the potential adaptation that's happened previously around the environment.

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Hannah

Yeah, the point about adaptation is one that I often make when I'm talking to people about, about climate change and heritage. It's a really miserable topic, climate change, let's face it. It's not one that leaves you feeling in a happy place.

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Hannah

So one of the things that, I'm a Palaeolithic archaeologist, so my PhD research is in how people responded to changes and challenges over the past million years and how that's reflected in stone tool technology and spatial distribution of information, etc. But one of the things that characterises us as a species is our incredible ability to adapt, and

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Hannah

that really should give us heart. We are very good at responding and adapting to challenges of all sorts, including of our own making. And we see that time and time again in the archaeological record. The other point, one that a friend and colleague of mine from the States often makes, Marcy Rockman, she's talked about

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Hannah

every place has a climate story. And I think that's another aspect of what you're describing, Anooshka, is the idea that we can use those stories of that human adaptability, our persistence, our ability to respond to these challenges, but also the way in which those environmental changes and that climate story of a place can take

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Hannah

us from that past into the future.

00:51:38:22 - 00:51:58:04

Jon Sygrave

Since humans have been in Britain, let alone elsewhere in the world, we've seen multiple periods of Ice Age and warming periods. The nature of the fauna and the nature of our environment has changed dramatically. It's just that we've been in this little, sort of like, period recently, which has been relatively stable.

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Jon Sygrave

And, and, and, and it seems to us as though it's always been like this, but it hasn't. And it hasn't for humans either. People exactly like us, maybe more in archaic terms, but it has happened in the past, and we have survived and we're still here.

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Jon Sygrave

So.

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Emily

Right. So we know that humans have the capacity to adapt to this change. And we also know that people, for example, living in Seaford are painfully aware of coastal erosion and the loss that is on around them.

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Emily

So how do we start to include them in these conversations, Adam?

00:52:35:01 - 00:52:38:09

Adam

I’ll take two quick points. I'm going to go back to the previous conversation briefly.

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Emily

Sorry, carry on.

00:52:38:24 - 00:52:54:09

Adam

Just to say that Seaford is an example of previous adaptation as well, Jon, because you may not be aware of this, but but we’re next to a place called New Haven, because in Elizabethan times there was a huge storm that redirected the river Ouze.

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Adam

So the river mouth used to be in Seaford, and now it's up the coast of New Haven. So our town went through a complete, you know, storm climate course shock in the 16th century when the river, suddenly went three miles up land, because of a huge storm.

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Adam

And so the history of the town, it had to adapt to that change in circumstances, so it's nothing new for us, having to adapt to a large change, because that Elizabethan storm literally moved the river. So that's, that's something that’s part of the context of the town and the site I think.

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Tom Dommett

Jon, do you think that's reassuring? Because I get that sense, that this kind of thing is, is about our, is about personal, individual and kind of community resilience. Understanding that kind of, yeah, and it's really interesting some of the research that's kind of coming through, around wellbeing and heritage and just, just being around heritage

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Tom Dommett

and what it does. And I think the fancy name is ‘ontological security’ but the sense of, of of continuity and, and of, and of a rootedness. And, and that, actually that sense of continuity, almost continuity of change or, you know, as, the

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Tom Dommett

one inevitable thing in life. Yeah. I'm really interested to hear whether you feel like that really actually plays out for people.

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Jon Sygrave

I don't know whether, I think people understand that in the broader sense. I think, and, and yes, there's lots of stories especially along the south coast, of big storm events, like Winchelsea being completely wiped out. New Romney being wiped out as well at different, different times, and things, these settlements change and

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Jon Sygrave

A resilience, I suppose, to, to remain still within that landscape and adapt and even rebuild your town again on a slightly higher place five miles away. You know, that's, that's all happened, I think. I think something changed, maybe in the Victorian period, where we started really starting to think that we could conquer nature and uh, and change

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Jon Sygrave

the world. And you see that in the, in the really substantial sea defences and things that were built during that period. And we're still living with those Victorian seafronts and that feeling, I think, of permanence, that, that they try to inspire, you know, we can beat everything with enough steel and concrete, you know, and, and maybe

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Jon Sygrave

the level of change that we potentially might be experiencing now in the near future is, is such where we're going to have to look back more, towards a more adaptive past.

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Hannah

Yeah, I think that's totally it. That, that kind of disconnect not… with almost every aspect of our lives, actually, particularly acute in the last few decades. Even from, thinking about when I learned to drive, I could open the bonnet of that car and vaguely have a chance of fixing something.

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Hannah

I wouldn't even attempt that now, let alone with an electric car. I wouldn't have a clue. And, and we are increasingly detached from those things through which we live our lives, including with the elements, with our places, with that knowledge that when you build a house where it's most likely to stay up, hopefully for a long time,

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Hannah

because you know how the different elements work: the prevailing wind, the landscape, that level of vernacular, local, traditional knowledge is, is something that we have lost. And I really hesitate to use the word, because it could take us down a whole other rabbit hole, we’ll do another podcast on this one day, and I’ll come back and talk to you,

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Hannah

but, but we there's a lot of conversation about ‘wilding’ of our natural spaces, but actually it's our minds and our relationship with those places that I think also needs a little bit of that, that reconnecting, that, that wilding. And also sticking to the south coast,

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Hannah

We have King Cnut, who was a king, who I think is actually in my high stomping ground round Chichester, Langstone Harbour area, where he was rumoured to have proved, to prove his fallibility, his people would say, “you are so powerful, you could tell, you know, tell anything, make anything happen”.

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Hannah

And he said, “I'm, I'm not and I'm going to prove it to you because I'm going to tell the tide to go away and stop”. But, of course, the tide didn't stop. And, and I think that's that's kind of where we are now.

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Hannah

Perhaps some of these archaeological sites can help do a bit of “King Cnut-ing” and go “you know what? We've got a false sense of security here, guys”. Those Victorians have got a lot to answer for. But actually, re-learning some of that, that humility about our relationship, with these natural processes.

00:57:53:01 - 00:58:08:09

Anooshka RawdenI

was just going to add, I think with the Seaford Head project, the thing that we really wanted to do is not only communicate the archaeological discoveries, but we wanted to play with how we communicate the idea of loss, which is why we're also working with an artist.

00:58:08:09 - 00:58:26:00

Anooshka Rawden

So we're working with the artist Alinah Azadeh. Her creative practice is very much focused on the Sussex Heritage Coast. I think it could be really interesting because it's an opportunity to put out a series of digital resources that give people the practical news,

00:58:26:01 - 00:58:42:01

Anooshka Rawden

You know, the update on what's happened and what's been discovered and what we infer. It's giving people the insights into the policy and practitioner discussions like we're doing here. We're trying to open up this conversation, but it's also going to explore what a site might mean to us

00:58:42:01 - 00:58:54:20

Anooshka Rawden

Emotively. When we learn about it, we know more about it, we might feel differently about it as a result. And then we're told it's going, and we don't know the rate at which it's going, but we think it's going quicker than it was.

00:58:55:04 - 00:59:13:24

Anooshka Rawden

And what will be fascinating is, it's quite a passive form of engagement, because obviously the work we've done at Seaford has had to be quite rapid by nature. You know, with these increasing cliff losses from 2015, the most recent one made us realise because you could see things in the cliff, in the chalk profile, in terms

00:59:13:24 - 00:59:29:12

Anooshka Rawden

of archaeological features, we had to do something. So, it's quite passive engagement, but it will be fascinating to see how the public comments on these assets, and is it different when we communicate a bit more from the heart than perhaps when we communicate from the head?

00:59:29:20 - 00:59:40:04

Anooshka Rawden

It would be quite, it's just a quite interesting way to play with this. And I think it comes back to what you said, Hannah, it's, it's also a little bit about rewilding the mind and thinking about a space differently.

00:59:40:16 - 00:59:44:03

Emily

I love that, rewilding the mind. Adam, did you have something to add?

00:59:44:10 - 00:59:59:12

Adam

Yeah. I wanted to just sort of pick up on what people were saying about, yes, the, the days of just, you know, sitting in a landscape, and it’ll all be fine and we can control everything, and that's that, you know, are behind us and people,

00:59:59:18 - 01:00:16:13

Adam

And there's a growing recognition that especially in a coastal area like Seaford, and actually to live in a coastal town, you have to have, so well, it's helpful to have some of that awareness really, of the fragility of the landscape you're in, the context you're in, and all those things.

01:00:16:21 - 01:00:34:01

Adam

So just quickly by, for example, Storm Eunice did damage to our sea front because it was a southwest wind with a storm force wind. So, of course because we face southwest. So the storm surge came from the direction, in the direction we're facing, and therefore we have flooding because of that.

01:00:34:23 - 01:00:50:08

Adam

So if people get, if people's knowledge increases, they're better able to be resilient in the context of what's going on. This is what I'm trying to say really, rather than just sort of sitting “I could be living anywhere” it doesn’t make any difference. It is different in a coastal area, and we're on the frontline of the coast and climate change.

01:00:50:19 - 01:01:06:09

Adam

I think in terms of public engagement, I think as a Town Council we’re, we think we're quite humble about this. How can the public get more engaged and involved? Well we notice as I say that, for example, our partners Sussex Wildlife Trust do a brilliant job at Seaford Head getting loads of public engaged and loads

01:01:06:09 - 01:01:20:23

Adam

of volunteering goes on there. So, so really it is the on the ground community organisations like them who can really help the public to get more involved and play a role and do something. And that's, that's how we're trying to see how this project can best be used is, is helping to engage that public energy,

01:01:21:04 - 01:01:22:07

Adam

and get it to grow even stronger.

01:01:22:17 - 01:01:34:18

Anooshka Rawden

I think one thing that's come to mind for me as well is that there are a lot of instances when landscape change is proposed, where we consult as standard. So we do that through our Local Authorities. We do that through a planning process.

01:01:35:04 - 01:01:54:10

Anooshka Rawden

Do we have a process for consulting on Heritage at risk? Do we have a vehicle or a mechanism that enables us to do that at national level or at local level? Because I think the significant thing that we can't lose in this is it's a national issue, but it's felt differently at local level because our local identities

01:01:54:19 - 01:02:07:22

Anooshka Rawden

are very personal to ourselves. And, you know, as Adam has said, is a coastal community in Seaford, the people of Seaford are at the forefront of coastal change. But it does strike me that we have these mechanisms, and these mechanisms are fallible.

01:02:07:22 - 01:02:21:19

Anooshka Rawden

So if you think about the people that might respond to a to a planning application, there's a certain degree of pre-engagement there in terms of assuming who's going to respond. We know as a heritage sector, we don't serve youth voice as well as we could.

01:02:21:19 - 01:02:38:15

Anooshka Rawden

We were underrepresented in that area. And that's the generation that's going to be taking, taking hold of the decisions we make today in terms of the heritage of the future. But, but we lack a mechanism, I suppose, it's very much based on local level feeling.

01:02:38:22 - 01:02:55:21

Anooshka Rawden

I mean, some of our work is very reactive. It's based on local people coming and saying “this is important to us, could you please act?” Well, what if we have a situation, as we do at Seaford Head, where we don't fully know how aware people are, of the fact there's a Bronze Age barrow there and an

01:02:55:21 - 01:03:08:20

Anooshka Rawden

Iron Age Hill fort because of the subsequent changes to the landscape. So our first principle is to tell people about it, and then see if that changes value. But it just struck me that there's other landscape change we consult on, and we do,

01:03:08:21 - 01:03:14:14

Anooshka Rawden

We do so in a very structured manner, but with Heritage at Risk, we don't, for a variety of factors.

01:03:15:20 - 01:03:20:09

Emily

Hannah, you’re definitely best placed, I think, to, to talk about policy around heritage loss.

01:03:21:04 - 01:03:38:20

Hannah

Oh, where I have to start pointing out what my personal views might stray from those of my organisation. There's a number of things that that kind of come to mind in this. One actually around, we're talking here very much just as disembodied professionals about a sector.

01:03:39:03 - 01:04:01:21

Hannah

We are all individuals who work in heritage because we are driven, passionate about heritage and why it matters, and it's not a… And we're leaving that out of it. And I'm finding that that's very interesting. That I'm pretty sure all of us have got personal views about this, which we're probably holding back on.

01:04:02:21 - 01:04:23:20

Hannah

And I think that is something I see an awful lot in the way in which the heritage sector talks about this, that we find it much easier to put on a kind of mask of impartiality, hide behind the discipline and the processes and not necessarily engage as human, as human beings in this.

01:04:24:01 - 01:04:46:03

Hannah

And that can make us seem sometimes I think like, like we don't care, or we don't understand. But it also can, can stop us really thinking through how you might undertake some of those processes that I think Anooshka you were just describing and really thinking about why all this matters, that heritage is

01:04:46:03 - 01:05:13:14

Hannah

about people. And sometimes we might need to be a bit better at letting some of that, that ‘humanness’ come through. But there's another aspect of that Heritage at Risk. So there's also a challenge, because if we understand the risks to heritage, or to anything in fact, but to heritage, we have a responsibility, I think, to communicate that because

01:05:13:14 - 01:05:33:05

Hannah

that heritage is, it's shared. It's commonly held and understood to be of interest and importance, to a wide range of people and communities. So, we have a responsibility to communicate that. There's a lot of concern I think that when we communicate that risk, we're taking responsibility for that risk.

01:05:33:19 - 01:06:03:15

Hannah

And as we face an increasingly exacerbated processes of loss and decay and erosion of our heritage because of the challenges of climate change in particular, we are, we are going to see increased, um, increase in our heritage that is at risk from loss, and that is going to feel like a failure for policymakers who are tasked with looking

01:06:03:15 - 01:06:23:14

Hannah

after it. But we have to absolutely start to communicate those challenges and that loss doesn't mean that we're responsible for that, but we are responsible for communicating it. We are responsible for helping people think about what they would like to do about it, whilst recognising all those challenges and it's a really difficult one to navigate.

01:06:24:03 - 01:06:43:20

Hannah

And there's another concept that I've heard described, and actually Marcy, who I referred to earlier, who talks about the climate stories has used this is an example, ‘the cultural suitcase’. So there's a, a kind of, I think the example she gives comes from an experience that she had of her being involved in a fire in her home

01:06:43:20 - 01:06:53:04

Hannah

and having to decide what she wanted to take with her. There's actually a Webpage, I think it's ‘a burning building’ or something like that, where they ask people to say, “What would you take with you, if your home's on fire?”.

01:06:53:04 - 01:07:09:05

Hannah

“What would you take?” And the objects that people choose, they take photos, and describe and often explain why they take those objects with them and what they mean to them. And we're in a similar position here in terms of those priorities and those choices we make, and through those processes that you were describing,

01:07:09:05 - 01:07:31:20

Hannah

Anooshka, the ultimate question is, what do people want in their cultural suitcase? As, as we as we look forward, we can't take everything, but what is it that people want? And we have to have those difficult conversations. We have a responsibility to tell people when the house is on fire and that we have to start making those

01:07:31:20 - 01:07:42:00

Hannah

decisions. And we have to make them together. It's not for the heritage profession to make alone, whether that's policymakers or, or practitioners.

01:07:42:12 - 01:07:54:10

Anooshka Rawden

I think there's a couple of things that have come to my mind for me there, that I suppose there's the realisation that because we care a lot, we're possibly not always the best people to make those decisions anyway, because perhaps we care too much.

01:07:54:22 - 01:08:08:06

Anooshka Rawden

But also, it strikes me that, you know, that the people that walk that coastal path at Seaford, are probably our best allies in monitoring change at that site. But we assume that they will care about it enough to do that.

01:08:08:06 - 01:08:28:01

Anooshka Rawden

We make certain assumptions, I think, around citizen science. And the basis of that model working is exactly what Hannah says, is we've got to share more of the space that we occupy, share our knowledge in a way that is, you know, able to be absorbed by as broad an audience as possible, be open in the conversation.

01:08:28:01 - 01:08:40:22

Anooshka Rawde

And I think that's what we need to do, because it is a collective decision, and I think we talk a lot about consultation, but actually that still infers a degree of hierarchy. I think it's having a wider conversation is, is what it's about ultimately.

01:08:41:24 - 01:08:56:15

Anooshka Rawden

But I do agree. I think also there's a there's another issue here, which is success around Heritage at Risk is very much about reducing the number. The reality is we're going to see more heritage going on the At Risk register, and that's not necessarily a sign of failure.

01:08:56:20 - 01:09:09:17

Anooshka Rawden

What it is, is a sign that we're recognising that things are at risk. And I think we have to change what, what, well, it's not even about success. We have to change what Heritage at Risk is about, and how we communicate the purpose and its function.

01:09:10:12 - 01:09:27:09

Anooshka Rawden

And it is a useful tool in starting these conversations. I just don't think we've quite got there yet in making these conversations really meaningful. I think it's really interesting what your PhD student is doing, what Tanya's doing, around this idea of almost a gaming mentality around thinking about heritage.

01:09:27:09 - 01:09:43:09

Anooshka Rawden

I think that's quite fascinating. And again, for me, it comes back to, are there ways that we could have a conversation that is more accessible to a broader range of people? And I'm thinking again here about how do we engage younger people in this because they're inheriting the decisions that we're making today?

01:09:43:18 - 01:10:06:17

Tom Dommett

Yeah, I think that's really true. And those comments, you know, there is, I think there is a bit of a solace in the science and a safety, and a degree of detachment. And the truth is, I think anyone working in heritage is doing it because, because they have a profound belief deep inside them that it can just

01:10:06:17 - 01:10:25:06

Tom Dommett

enrich people's lives and be transformative, for people. And it is that message ‘for people’. And it's, and it's all about emotional connection and the universality of that kind of emotional connection. And that's how we're going to reach people.

01:10:25:06 - 01:10:31:11

Tom Dommett

And it's that, sometimes it feels like cliches come across, but the sort of things around it, you know.

01:10:31:18 - 01:10:32:24

Tom Dommett

Anyone could be an archaeologist.

01:10:32:24 - 01:10:51:21

Tom Dommett

It's about imagining the past. It's about storytelling. It's about empathy. And being able to relate to, to other people, it just happens to be people who have been gone for a while, or a long while. But, but those are the, those are the real skills, in a way, of looking at and questioning the world around you.

01:10:52:08 - 01:11:15:16

Tom Dommett

And, and it's so interesting that the coast could be, could be, a space where that particularly happens where, where we, where we can particularly take that approach because of that aspect of loss. And then also, it has more of a sense of a kind of democratisation, if that's a word, of the heritage, in that

01:11:16:06 - 01:11:34:13

Tom Dommett

space, just by the very nature of how it is in the landscape and the nature of the impending sort of loss, because that that landscape, in a way, loses its value for, for other things and increases the value for what's already there to be lost.

01:11:34:22 - 01:11:37:16

Tom Dommett

I think, and there's something really interesting that.

01:11:38:01 - 01:11:58:22

Jon Sygrave

I think that, I think what Hannah was saying about us being emotional about a subject is, is key. And I think people are very emotional about specific sites and things in the landscape as well. And can also sort of like start attributing blame when they're not saved, and what have you.

01:11:58:22 - 01:12:19:06

Jon Sygrave

And I think that's a real issue when it comes to discussing this, this subject. I think that's why sites like Seaford Head play such an important role in in starting this discussion, because there's no, you know, Seaford Head's important, but at the same time, you know, it's an 80 metre high cliff that's open to the

01:12:19:06 - 01:12:36:22

Jon Sygrave

sea. There’s really very little that can be done, you know, in order to protect that from further cliff fall. So therefore, the emotions taken out of it a little bit, in terms of Seaford Town Council or East Sussex County Council, “what are you doing to protect Seaford Head?”

01:12:36:22 - 01:12:57:15

Jon Sygrave

Well, you know, we can't in the face of all of this, and that allows us to, to have this discussion using Seaford Head, whereas with other more emotive sites maybe we couldn't broach that. But it's, it is about sort of like, larger agencies and larger bodies than ourselves.

01:12:58:00 - 01:13:15:13

Jon Sygrave

Taking that up and using this example as, as a sort of like a, you know, so coastal change is happening. So things are being lost such as Seaford Head and use that as a as a less emotive example to, to have that debate.

01:13:16:09 - 01:13:33:07

Tom Dommett

It gives us permission doesn't it. It's, it's a permission to think differently and, and maybe there's something that we can learn from that about how to give ourselves that permission elsewhere as well, actually, because it's quite unique to the coast.

01:13:33:11 - 01:13:44:11

Tom Dommett

It's very unique for us to be having this kind of conversation. This kind of conversation I don't think happens in other contexts. Not really that I've come across. So there is something to be taken from that.

01:13:45:11 - 01:13:57:09

Hannah

Yeah. Is it a kind of sobering thought in all of this about that kind of tough, the tough decisions, in places like Seaford as you say Jon, there's nothing to be done. But we know the numbers are going to increase.

01:13:57:09 - 01:14:16:11

Hannah

We know that this is an issue that's coming. Now, I haven't done the calculations, but my back of fag packet workings out reckon that even if we deployed all of the resources at our disposal, all of the archaeologists in the country to do nothing but to record sites that we know are going to be lost in the

01:14:16:11 - 01:14:30:11

Hannah

next 20 years, we couldn't do it. So this is, we've got to be realistic about the challenges. Right at the beginning Tom was talking about that, that prioritisation, but we have to be very honest with other people about that.

01:14:30:11 - 01:14:56:13

Hannah

Now we're left with a number of choices. So, that idea of engaging and, and empowering communities, is part of that also engaging and empowering more people to be archaeologists? As Tom said, anyone can be an archaeologist. Do we need to really start to think really carefully about how most effectively we can do that, to enable people to,

01:14:56:13 - 01:15:13:08

Hannah

to actually be able to record these places before they are, before they are lost. And, and what does that process look like? How, how does that happen? And, and what sort of shift does that need in our sector?

01:15:13:18 - 01:15:26:03

Hannah

to really think about how we start to share some of that knowledge, and what does that mean then to be a professional archaeologist or heritage worker, and the sorts of responsibility that that might

01:15:26:03 - 01:15:27:02

Hannah

have to

01:15:27:17 - 01:15:53:08

Hannah

Sort of deploy to some of these, these tasks. And there's also a kind of moral element as well, for all of the archaeologists, amateur and professional, and all of the research that goes on, is it justifiable to research sites that aren’t under threat to undertake and use those resources to excavate, record places where actually they, they're really not

01:15:53:08 - 01:16:02:21

Hannah

Threatened, either by development or by these processes. And I think that's a question that we probably need to ask ourselves before we deploy and undertake works.

01:16:03:19 - 01:16:21:24

Anooshka Rawden

I was just going to say, I think, you know, if community archaeology groups alone mobilise to focus more on sites at threat than perhaps sites that have a low, you know, are actually safe underground where they are, they have they might have a strong local interest, but, you know, let that lie and and focus on what is at

01:16:21:24 - 01:16:44:18

Anooshka Rawden

risk. That could be quite powerful in itself if community archaeology and the voluntary archaeological societies and groups mobilised in that direction. I think just as an observation as well, I think, and again sort of very much speaking here as someone who comes from a museums and galleries background and what I'm observing in that sector, I think we are at a

01:16:44:18 - 01:17:01:10

Anooshka Rawden

place at the moment where people are seeking certainties, you know, they're looking for certainties. And that's why I think the past, and interpretation of the past, has become such a contested issue, generally. I think actually as a positive.

01:17:01:10 - 01:17:19:23

Anooshka Rawden

There could be something very powerful in engaging people in the story of loss. You know, actually, there could be certainties around uncertainties if we're clever about how we get people involved in that conversation. And actually, that could increase public value for Heritage at Risk.

01:17:19:23 - 01:17:32:18

Anooshka Rawden

Because, you know, the flip of the coin is, why should anyone care that Seaford Head is going to fall into the sea? That's the flip of the coin. It comes back to that idea of telling stories, creating the emotional connection, creating the relevance.

01:17:33:00 - 01:17:40:13

Anooshka Rawden

But I think a time when people are looking for certainties, there can be positive ways we can play with uncertainty in that in that space.

01:17:41:16 - 01:18:03:18

Jon Sygrave

I think there is a real question of resources when it comes to this as well. And, and, you know, if, if we think of the hundreds of thousands of sites that could be impacted by, in the next 20 years, we could try and list them in terms of what is the most important archaeologically, or we could list

01:18:03:18 - 01:18:20:00

Jon Sygrave

them in terms of what, which sites have a engaged local community, which will actually step up and do something. Or we could list them as what sites are actually controlled by, like landowners that would actually stand up and do something.

01:18:20:06 - 01:18:39:12

Jon Sygrave

And also sort of like, whether or not there's any money there to do it, in the first instance. It might not be the most archaeologically valuable site that ends up getting the most attention. It might be because there's a site where there's an engaged local population that are willing to actually stand up and do something.

01:18:41:08 - 01:18:59:24

Jon Sygrave

It's getting over all of those different sort of like, values of the site, I suppose. And it's, and. Well, and, and what is its value, you know, is its value archaeological, is its value to the local populace. It's, it's a complicated issue.

01:18:59:24 - 01:19:13:05

Jon Sygrave

But at the end of the day, even for volunteer excavation or volunteer project, you still need some form of funding. And, and a lot of these projects will be going to bodies like Heritage Lottery Funding or something along those lines.

01:19:13:12 - 01:19:29:04

Jon Sygrave

There's not too many other places where you could go and get a pot of money for such a project. I mean, I know I've applied for it and it's, it's not easy. And, and, and therefore. Yeah. Realistically, how much will actually get done?

01:19:29:14 - 01:19:42:22

Jon Sygrave

I don't know. I don't want to be negative about it. It's just, it's you know, my day to day job is trying to find budgets to deal with heritage sites, like as I'm sure like many of yours is as well.

01:19:44:10 - 01:20:04:16

Tom Dommett

Maybe there's a, a case to really put across more strongly what those benefits are from doing that kind of work and the breadth of benefits for the, economic benefits around tourism, engagement with creative industries, you know, as well as the benefits for people being involved in it come out with.

01:20:05:14 - 01:20:17:18

Tom Dommett

Higher levels of subjective well-being. They feel better about themselves. They feel more connected to a community. And maybe we can do more to really shout about that.

01:20:18:11 - 01:20:39:02

Jon Sygrave

Tom, I know that colleague of mine, Sarah Wolferstan is working with National Trust at the moment, looking at how you can best evidence, like impact from your various things in its programs like that, evidencing that impact, and I suppose National Trust is well placed to with its army of volunteers and, and what have you, to be

01:20:39:02 - 01:20:57:13

Jon Sygrave

able to evidence, maybe be some of some of that, which would be fantastic because it's, it's it's, only if, if archaeology and the benefits of investigating these sites, the greater health benefits and, and other things like that get, get noticed and worked into

01:20:58:15 - 01:21:04:18

Jon Sygrave

larger programs, that are at, I think more towards this could be done.

01:21:05:16 - 01:21:11:16

Emily

Yeah it's win, win isn't it. As long as you can find the money, people are happy. The archaeology is recorded. But money…

01:21:13:01 - 01:21:40:15

Hannah

It is interesting that the talk about valuing heritage, because there is work ongoing at the moment with DCMS, Historic England and others have been involved with, looking at culture and heritage capital and exactly that challenge. I think economists would call it non-use values, so how, how we can really articulate those benefits to people and to places and,

01:21:40:17 - 01:21:58:21

Hannah

and there are some existing tools that start to do that. But I think we know that we are grossly underestimating the, the importance of that. And I think the other element going back to that, that question that we asked earlier about how can people value what they don't know about, that actually part of, I think certainly for

01:21:58:21 - 01:22:23:02

Hannah

me, the, the wellbeing value of heritage, in particular, archaeology is the, the benefits gained from that sense of discovery, whether that's discovery by visiting a place and undertaking that research to understand something more about it, or that discovery, that that thrill you get through excavating and finding something that's being buried in the grounds of so many years,

01:22:23:11 - 01:22:46:00

Hannah

And that is it's a very real feeling of discovery. And I think maybe there's some elements of that, as you were saying Anooshka, that using that uncertainty as a as a means of having positive conversations. Actually, it's that sense of discovery that perhaps you can only have that with something that's uncertain or something that's not

01:22:46:00 - 01:23:02:09

Hannah

known. And that's the real magic of the archaeology for me, and I suspect for many others. So something about that, that we can help to capture. But, you know, watch this space for more on culture and heritage capital from, from our friends in government.

01:23:04:05 - 01:23:19:15

Emily

Unless anyone else had very pressing points to make, I'll move on to what next for Seaford Head. So now that we've done this survey, now that we've engaged with policymakers at this moment, what will we do with Seaford Head?

01:23:19:17 - 01:23:23:11

Emily

Adam and Jon, I think this is for you both to, to talk about.

01:23:24:00 - 01:23:44:08

Jon Sygrave

Again it goes back to what I was saying before. It's, it's it's where the resources lie, whether the desire is there with the local population to do something. I, I want to get this project finalised. I want to get these podcasts and digital outreach aspects out and the full report out.

01:23:45:14 - 01:24:09:13

Jon Sygrave

And I want to, I want to start gauging the response from the public. And then it's a discussion with Adam and Seaford Town Council as to how they potentially want to take that further, or not. And also as, as Adam was talking before about the remodelling of that golf course or coastal path and whether or not the

01:24:09:13 - 01:24:28:00

Jon Sygrave

project can help with that, maybe use our reporting and some of the digital outreach products and the responses to them as evidence in a grant application. I'm not too sure yet. You know, it's there's lots of options there, but it's, it's yeah.

01:24:29:03 - 01:24:36:14

Jon Sygrave

It's what Seaford Town Council and what the people of Seaford like, really ultimately, want, want to do. That's, that's what will drive it.

01:24:37:06 - 01:24:51:00

Emily

Yeah. If I may, with the digital outreach products that we will be creating, if you're, if you live in Seaford and you're listening to this, like I want to know about that, like can you leave a comment and tell us what you think about this?

01:24:51:01 - 01:25:10:18

Emily

And you know, we we're really trying to engage the public on this. And any sort of insight that you can give is, is very much appreciated because other projects may follow the Seaford Head model. This project is aiming to be a replicable project that we can then apply to different sites at risk.

01:25:11:02 - 01:25:24:09

Emily

So if podcasts aren't working for you, then let us know. Or if, if you're, you know, if our video products really, really take off, then we'll focus on them, you know, it’s engaging local press, all of these things.

01:25:24:21 - 01:25:31:09

Emily

It is not just the archaeology that we're evaluating in this project, it's also the method by which we communicate it.

01:25:32:03 - 01:25:49:03

Adam

I'm really glad to hear what you said. I mean, one of the things for us as the Council that is so exciting about this project is the way it is creating a template for future practice. A lot of it is partnership between the different stakeholders involved, including us as landowners and being a valued partner within the project as well

01:25:49:03 - 01:26:06:00

Adam

as being part of the local council as well. But also as I say, what do we do when we’re, you know, when we're facing the challenges that the coastal erosion, climate change is bringing us and here is a model where we were taking the approach to record what we can before it is inevitably lost.

01:26:06:00 - 01:26:22:18

Adam

And that's a pretty important template going forward. It also helps to inform our approach as custodians and landowners across the site really. I mean, that's partly informed by the approach we are already taking in terms of how we're managing the golf course.

01:26:22:18 - 01:26:44:02

Adam

That is in the context of climate emergency and therefore a lot of ecological practice happening within the golf course, wildlife corridors, etc., and seeing it actually as a green space where we can actually really do take action around climate emergency and support and develop, support the survival of our local ecology in our area.

01:26:44:17 - 01:26:55:23

Adam

And how does this work operate within that context, how it can help us in terms of taking forward the right approach to take around responding to climate emergency. And that's why this project’s so important to us.

01:26:57:02 - 01:27:11:21

Emily

Definitely. Any further thoughts from anyone? Any final thoughts, no? Well, all that remains then, I think, is to thank Historic England again for funding this project and the South Downs National Park Authority for contributions, making things like this podcast possible.

01:27:12:11 - 01:27:26:00

Emily

And you can find links to all of the project outputs as they come out in the show notes. And thank you so much to all of you for coming and speaking today. It's been absolutely incredible to hear all your points of view.

01:27:26:18 - 01:27:29:03

Emily

I think all that’s left is to say goodbye.

01:27:29:19 - 01:27:30:23

Adam

Goodbye. Thank you everyone.