

CITIZAN 2015-2018 and 2019-2021, a community archaeology project past and future: successes, challenges, potential solutions

The 2015-2018 England wide community archaeology project CITIZAN was established to raise awareness of the threat to coastal and intertidal sites from climate change. It trained over 1000 people to identify, record, monitor archaeological sites using an app linked to a freely accessible interactive map. It engaged over 8000 people through outreach. It won two awards and inspired CH4 television's Britain at Low Tide, drawing 1 - 1.5 million viewers per episode. It was a huge success. There were also many challenges. After exploring both this article presents proposed solutions as CITIZAN heads into a second phase of funding, 2019-2021.

Keywords: community, archaeology, intertidal, coastal

Il progetto inglese CITIZAN 2015-2018 è stato realizzato per accrescere la consapevolezza sulle minacce ai siti costieri e litoranei derivanti dal cambiamento climatico. Ha insegnato a più di mille persone a identificare, registrare e monitorare siti archeologici usando una app collegata a una mappa interattiva accessibile. Ha coinvolto oltre 8000 persone attraverso attività di comunicazione. Ha vinto due premi e ispirato il programma televisivo del canale CH4 "Britain at Low Tide", con 1-1,5 milioni di spettatori a episodio. È stato un progetto di successo, anche se non sono mancate le sfide, come dimostra questo articolo, che presenta anche le soluzioni che sono state adottate, visto che CITIZAN sta per affrontare una seconda fase di finanziamento tra il 2019 e il 2021.

Parole chiave: community archaeology, archeologia litoranea, archeologia costiera

1. Successes

Archaeology along the coast and tidal estuaries of England is at risk from increasingly frequent and ferocious storms, tidal surges and rising sea level but most sites have no statutory protection or established mechanisms to record them. The community archaeology project CITIZAN, influenced by the long running TDP (Thames Discovery Programme) and SCHARP (Scotland's Coastal Heritage At Risk Project), was set up to address this challenge.

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CITiZAN 2015-2018 was enabled by the National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF) with support from the National Trust, Historic England and Crown Estate. All events were free of cost to participants. The Project Leader, Project Officer and two South East region archaeologists were hosted by MOLA in London; two North archaeologists by the Council for British Archaeology (CBA) in York and two South West archaeologists by the Nautical Archaeology Society in Portsmouth.

The project aims were to:

- Raise awareness of the threat to coastal and intertidal sites from climate change;
- Develop a standardised app based recording system linked to an interactive map;
- Train people to identify, record, monitor coastal and intertidal sites;
- Establish a sustainable and autonomous network of volunteers to continue the work.

The map was populated with 82,000 records of intertidal and coastal sites from the National Record of the Historic Environment (NHLE). 5 to 10 key sites per region were defined, based on archaeological significance, erosion risk, existing local interest and access.

The aims were to be achieved through:

- 5-10 training sessions per region per year, spread across the key sites;
- 6 follow up visits for each key site;
- 10-15 outreach events per region per year e.g. guided walks, talks, conference presentations;
- Developing and maintaining www.citizen.org.uk and social media presence;
- Inspiring the public to add to CITiZAN's interactive map.

CITiZAN 2015-2018 delivered 110 training events, via foreshore fieldwork and classroom sessions, to 1278 attendees (figs. 1-2). 224 outreach events reached 8762 people (fig. 3). 1327 new records, 1991 updates and 3369 photographs were added to the interactive map. The data was lodged with the Archaeology Data Service (ADS) and can be imported back into the NHLE. Feedback showed CITiZAN participants developed an understanding of the threat of erosion to archaeology and how to help mitigate this through recording and monitoring sites and features: a film of CITiZAN volunteers at Orford Ness, Suffolk sums this up beautifully (Heritage Futures 2017). Participants formed new friendship groups, began formal study of archaeology and gained archaeological employment. One was nominated for CBA Young Archaeologist of the Year. In 2018 CITiZAN won the Charity Award for Arts, Culture and Heritage and was joint-winner of the British Archaeological Award for Best Com-



Fig. 1. Photogrammetry at St Patrick's Chapel, Heysham, Lancashire, with CITIZAN volunteers from Lancaster and District Heritage Group, 2017.



Fig. 2. CITIZAN volunteers identify timber species from samples they took at Pett Level prehistoric submerged forest, 2018.

munity Engagement Archaeology Project. CH4 television's Britain at Low Tide was based on CITiZAN. It was presented by two CITiZAN staff members and featured others. The three series drew 1 - 1.5 million viewers per episode.

It is easy to talk about success. It's much less easy to talk about pressures and challenges. Perring and Orange (2017, p. 149) suggest this may be due to competitive instinct but loyalty to the participants and the project, the pressure of securing further funding (and employment) and a desire not to be seen as complaining about an ultimately rewarding job surely also play a part. All these mean it's hard to be honest about lessons that need to be learned even though, as community and public archaeology continues to grow, it's crucial to talk about what worked, what didn't work and why (Moshenska 2017, p. 14).

2. Challenges

If CITiZAN was an extremely successful project, it was also a hugely ambitious one: the first England wide long term community archaeology project. While this appeared to create a specific set of challenges, anecdotal evidence from peers suggests some common themes. This paper grew out of one such conversation; this section discusses some challenges faced 2015-2018.

National v local

CITiZAN 2015-2018 was promoted as a national project and campaigned for volunteers in the national press and on social media. It was



Fig. 3. An app for all ages: CITiZAN outreach in Ramsgate, Kent, for Heritage Open Days, 2016 (copyright David Webb).

indeed national: anyone could download the app and add to the interactive map and training and outreach events were envisaged for all coastal counties. But this national call created tension with the local aim of the project: to build autonomous self sustaining teams of volunteers. In the South East participants travelled well out of their area for training events, signing up for sessions at several different key sites: demand outstripped supply. The archaeologists tried advertising locally first or introducing local quotas; this led to disappointment when events appeared to book up immediately and challenged the inclusive aim of community archaeology.

Workload

The number of training events and follow up visits looked feasible. It wasn't. In the South East demand meant the archaeologists delivered extra primary events hindering delivery of follow up visits. The South West had the longest stretch of coastline: distance between sites was a major hurdle. The North team had unpredicted pressures on the project and so lacked the resources to deliver. Extra work and public interest arising from the television series also created unforeseen pressures.

The amount of administration compounded the above. Each archaeologist was responsible for all planning and delivery for each event at their key sites. This included gaining permissions from landowners and statutory bodies; liaising with local stakeholders, booking specialists; hiring venues; writing risk assessments and method statements; producing site-specific teaching material production, compiling 'volunteer packs', recruiting trainees and populating social media. Needing a 'good' low tide complicated delivery; this was also a challenge for scheduling follow up visits. Post event work included issuing certificates, sending thanks and any extra information requested, dealing with queries, social media round ups including Flickr and writing the report. Preparation for outreach was variable but could include much of the same.

High workload reduced potential for follow up visits which reduced potential for developing autonomous volunteer teams. While individuals continued to record sites there was little opportunity for a group dynamic and natural facilitators to emerge. Mersea Island and Birling Gap, particular project successes, were sites where the archaeologist was able to spend a lot of time. Mersea Island also has a particularly strong community spirit and participants at Birling Gap had previously worked together on a National Trust project (fig. 4).



Fig. 4. CITiZAN volunteers at Birling Gap, Sussex, find the base of the Belle Tout shaft last seen in profile in the cliff in the 1970s, 2016.

Community empowerment and project sustainability

CITiZAN 2015-2018 training sessions enabled participants to identify, record and monitor sites with the app and to record sites by standard written, drawn and photographic means. Many participants continued to use the app though independently rather than in local teams. To a degree this fulfilled the project's measure of sustainability. But if "the key to successful engagement is to support genuine community empowerment" (Thomas 2017, p. 30) then CITiZAN's focus on fieldwork combined with the lack of follow up visits, left participants without the skills and confidence to design, develop and disseminate their own projects, beyond the life of the project or alongside it. This is an issue for community archaeology more widely and one that needs to be addressed (Frearson 2016, Hedge and Nash 2016); true community empowerment and sustainable projects will never be achieved otherwise.

Volunteer Management: emotional labour and managing expectations

The emotional landscape of volunteer management is recognised in the heritage sector (Greene, Ward 2016). It is barely, if at all, recognised within community archaeology (though see Johnston 2018, pp. 26-27). Emotional labour, first recognised in relation to the service industry, is the work that people do beside physical and mental duties to fulfil organ-

isational aims and client expectations. It usually means displaying only positive emotions, suppressing negative ones and performing emotions not actually felt. It can be a source of work related stress, one that particularly affects people who build and maintain person to person relationships as a key part of their job, and can lead to emotional exhaustion and burnout (Zapf *et al.* 1999; Jeung *et al.* 2018). The role of community archaeologist is rewarding and enjoyable but particularly when pressures mount it's one that requires a fair amount of Strictly Ballroom happy face (Luhrman 1992) as well as the summoning of energy and enthusiasm when reserves are low. A primary pressure for CITIZAN 2015-2018 was to keep smiling through and delivering even when working long and often exhausting hours caused, ironically, by the popularity of the project.

Managing expectations was another challenge. Demand outstripping supply led to sometimes vocal disappointment. Evaluation forms showed that participants at a single event wanted very different things. The enthusiasm the project engendered was fantastic but much time was spent fielding emails and carrying out visits when keen coast users had spotted intertidal archaeology after violent storms or extreme tides. CITIZAN became seen as a rapid response force while lacking the resources to fulfil this role.

Engaging new audiences

With 50+ the anecdotal but observable average age of participants in community archaeology projects (Thomas 2010, p. 23; Frearson 2018, p. 13) one of CITIZAN 2015-2018 challenges was to engage younger people in archaeology. This was achieved but required creative thinking. One North archaeologist was a long time Young Archaeologists' Club (YAC) leader and organised a training weekend for YAC leaders from across the UK (fig. 5). Leaders could then run coastal and intertidal archaeology sessions for their own groups which left a stronger legacy than individual YAC sessions. One South East archaeologist accompanied University of Brighton BA Arts faculty students on their open-air drawing course *Land and Sea*. Exploring the archaeological narrative for each site together gave the students archaeological literacy to take into future careers (fig. 6).

3. Solutions?

Last December CITIZAN was awarded NLHF support for 2019-2021. Beyond training and outreach, which again will be free of cost, the project will develop a professional development scheme for non-archaeological coastal curators and write a series of 'Low Tide Trails'. A third ar-



Fig. 5. YAC leaders celebrate after a fantastic training weekend near Southport, Merseyside, 2017 (Copyright CBA).

chaeologist will be added to each region. The project will be relaunched this spring. Solutions have been sought in response to the challenges of 2015-2018 and are discussed below.

While still covering the whole of England with the interactive map and app the project will focus on six 'Discovery Programmes', named as such after the influential Thames Discovery Programme. These will cover Liverpool Bay, Humberside, East Kent Coast, Mersea Island, South Devon Rivers and Solent Harbours. This reduction in geographical coverage is seen as the solution to many of the challenges, in particular the national v local tensions, much of the workload and the difficulty in forming self-sustaining groups of volunteers.

In 2015-2018 training event content was standardised but delivery was a reactive response to local demand. For 2019-2021 a standard national training package has been proposed: one introductory lecture, three evening lectures and three weekend fieldwork sessions, delivered over May – September in each Discovery Programme area. This should greatly reduce event planning administration. While the package is prescriptive feedback from 2015-2018 suggests many participants appreciate this approach; these participants would form the core of highly en-

gaged volunteers recording and monitoring sites autonomously with occasional support from the archaeologists. Clearly stating the training package on the CITIZAN website will better manage expectations. To assist with managing expectations, navigating the emotional landscape and more the archaeologists have requested volunteer management training.

For project sustainability and community empowerment the training package should also cover, at least in theory, the archaeological process from pre- to post fieldwork. Participants would gain a greater understanding of how to plan projects as well as how to write reports, something only achieved in 2015-2018 with the Lancaster and District Heritage Group. Contextualising fieldwork would also highlight the importance of depositing community generated research outside work with CITIZAN with the local Historic Environment Record (Hedge, Nash 2016).

CITIZAN 2015-2018 met the challenge of engaging young people in 2015-2018. The aim for 2019-2021 is to widen participation: to work

Fig 6. University of Brighton Land and Sea students drawing at Birling Gap, Sussex, 2015.



with people with no previous involvement in archaeology including marginalised groups and communities. In preparation for 2019-2021 the archaeologists met with community groups in the Discovery Programme areas; through this some collaborations are already lined up. This work would be completely flexible in design and would respond to local need. It's frequently said that to engage new audiences archaeologists need to change the stories they tell. Inspired by a presentation at TAG 2018 on the Welsh community archaeology project Unloved Heritage? (Dr Penelope Foreman pers. comm.) one way forward for CITiZAN 2019-2021 is not to tell people about archaeology at all. It is to listen to them and work with them to explore their questions and ideas, through the delights of coastal and intertidal archaeology and the power of the archaeological approach.