



Call for Proposals for: aerial investigation and mapping to enhance local authority Historic Environment Records and address research agendas.

Date of Issue: July 2026

## Summary

Historic England invites proposals for archaeological surveys using aerial photographs and lidar as the primary sources of evidence. Projects should preferably run for no more than around 12 months and ideally start before March 2027. A maximum of two proposals may be submitted per organisation. Previously submitted proposals will be considered where aims have been substantially revised. Submission of a proposal does not guarantee funding, which is subject to Historic England's grant capacity. Co-funded proposals are welcomed.

Projects must adhere to [Historic England's Standards and Guidance for Aerial Investigation and Mapping Projects](#). Projects will be chosen that make best use of resources to identify important aspects of our historic environment and therefore enable protection and appropriate management of change. Project results should communicate the outstanding quality of our historic surroundings – explaining the many diverse influences in their development and allowing communities to experience greater pride and belonging through understanding and engaging with heritage.

Mapping and recording from aerial photographs and lidar are proven techniques for identifying and analysing archaeological sites and landscapes, particularly over large areas. To maximise impact, projects must ensure that outputs are integrated into Historic Environment Records (HERs) where they will support the sector to protect and manage heritage assets and guide sustainable policy, planning and decision-making. Proposals should focus on areas with high potential for archaeological discovery from aerial sources, and where enhanced evidence will deliver the greatest gains in understanding and heritage protection.

Proposals must demonstrate alignment with Historic England's [Strategic Plan 2026-2031](#).

## **Background**

Historic England, and its predecessors, developed Aerial Investigation and Mapping Standards – formerly called the National Mapping Programme (NMP) – to promote the effective use of aerial photographs and lidar to identify, map, record and better understand archaeological sites and landscapes. Area-based projects, covering 100 square kilometres or more, enable efficient analysis of large volumes of aerial photographs and lidar data. These projects collate archaeological information within a Geographic Information System (GIS), ensuring it can be incorporated into a HER to provide the knowledge and evidence base to support appropriate management of change.

Aerial Investigation and Mapping data helps the sector to protect and manage heritage assets and guides sustainable policy, planning and decision-making. The analysis and synthesis of this archaeological information, presented in project reports, enhances understanding of the character and significance of landscapes. By making digital data publicly available and sharing research results, projects can enable communities to discover and care for local heritage, building connection and social cohesion.

To date, over half of England has been covered by Aerial Investigation and Mapping surveys, resulting in the identification or enhancement of over 120,000 archaeological sites. Each year thousands more are added to the record, demonstrating the continuing value of this approach. The resulting data can inform research at local, regional and national scales.

New projects will examine areas where Aerial Investigation and Mapping is most needed and where this technique will deliver the greatest impact. Proposals should demonstrate clear regional priorities (identified in consultation with the relevant Local Authority) and address areas subject to significant strategic pressures. These may include development pressures (such as housing, amenities or major infrastructure); major changes in land use (including woodland creation or changes in agricultural practices) and risks associated with climate change.

Projects must target areas where aerial photographs and lidar will significantly enhance identification and understanding of archaeological sites and landscapes. Proposals may include areas previously covered by early, hand-drawn projects where there is a clear justification for re-analysis and high potential for improved data quality and understanding.

## **Aims**

The purpose of this Call for Proposals is to ensure that resources are targeted in areas where Aerial Investigation and Mapping projects can address clear regional priorities. These should include areas where our heritage is subject to strategic threat or where there are significant opportunities for improved heritage management. Successful projects will deliver measurable improvements to HER coverage, support evidence-based decision-making, and reduce risk to heritage assets in priority areas.

The Call will support the creation of new knowledge in areas where using aerial photographs and lidar as the main sources can significantly enhance identification and understanding of the historic environment.

The main aim of the resulting projects will be to guide sustainable policy, planning and decision-making at local, regional and national levels by providing significant amounts of new and improved information for local HERs.

Proposals should address significant physical or thematic gaps in archaeological knowledge identified in regional research frameworks or other published material.

Priority will be given to projects in areas not previously covered by Aerial Investigation and Mapping surveys. However, proposals for areas covered by earlier (hand-drawn) projects will be considered where there is a strong business case and where a new project will add significantly to the knowledge of the area (see appendix 1 for map of previous and current project areas).

Projects will identify and describe local, regional and nationally significant archaeological sites or landscapes to enable appropriate levels of protection.

Project results will allow communities to experience greater pride and belonging through understanding and engaging with heritage by making information available on previously unrecognised or poorly recorded archaeological sites and landscapes.

Applicants are advised to consider seeking joint funding. This could include partnerships with other conservation, heritage or academic bodies, to maximise impact and value.

## **Business Case**

There is still much that we do not know about England's historic environment. Important archaeological sites and landscapes remain undiscovered or are poorly understood. Identification and enhanced understanding of this resource is essential to ensure its effective protection and management.

Mapping and recording from aerial photographs and lidar are proven techniques for identifying and analysing archaeological sites and landscapes, particularly over large areas. This information is most effective when integrated into HERs where it can support the management of heritage assets, inform sustainable policy, planning and decision-making, and guide further heritage research.

To achieve this, priority must be given to areas where Aerial Investigation and Mapping will deliver the greatest gains in knowledge and understanding of the historic environment. Proposals should clearly demonstrate the potential of these

methods to identify and characterise the archaeological resource within the proposed area.

Each project proposal should identify strategic threats or opportunities to archaeological remains in the suggested area and explain how the proposed work will respond to them. Potential project areas must meet one or more of the following criteria:

- Significant or complex development pressures (eg Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIPs), growth areas, new towns).
- Threats or opportunities due to significant or complex landscape change outside of the planning process (eg landscape recovery, nature recovery, woodland creation, flood mitigation).
- Demonstrable and specific threats to archaeology from the direct or indirect effects of climate change (eg dewatering, erosion, wildfire, changes in agricultural practices).
- Significant knowledge gaps and variability in data quality, coverage and accessibility, which limit the sector's ability to manage change effectively and realise the full value of heritage assets.

All proposals should consider how the research will address:

- Regional, thematic or period-based research questions that will significantly enhance landscape-scale understanding and subsequently improve protection of the historic environment.
- Opportunities for communities to understand and engage with their heritage, broadening access and understanding.

Proposals must demonstrate how they will contribute to the priorities of Growth, Place and Sector as set out in Historic England's [Strategic Plan 2026-2031](#). These may include:

- Creating baseline information to inform development and infrastructure that is responsive to heritage.
- Creating knowledge of archaeology and landscapes to inform place-specific advice that guides sustainable policy, planning and decision-making.
- Providing evidence to allow the sector to manage change appropriately.
- Sharing research to help communities to discover and care for heritage.

Proposals will be assessed on the business case including the following:

- Brevity and clarity of information provided.

- Adherence to Historic England's *Standards and Guidelines for Aerial Investigation and Mapping Projects*.
- Realistic costs, timescale and value for money. This should include evidence for how the timescale was calculated, including the potential impact of the type and quantity of aerial sources and the density and complexity of known archaeological sites in the proposed area.
- Potential of the project to address key threats/opportunities in national and local contexts.
- Potential of the project to significantly improve understanding and appreciation of the historic environment and contribute to research frameworks.
- Ability of the project team to deliver high quality work to agreed timescale and cost.
- A strategy to communicate project results to a diverse range of people in inclusive ways.

Project proposals received in the last Call (April 2025) will only be considered if significantly repurposed to meet current priorities.

## Stakeholders

The key stakeholders in Aerial Investigation and Mapping projects are local planning authority historic environment services. Project proposals must demonstrate that they were prepared in close consultation with the relevant local authority staff to identify key priorities in the area proposed.

Proposals must include an agreed mechanism for incorporation of textual monument record data into the HER. This should ideally be direct entry into the HER. Where this is not possible, a cost-effective and timely means of data exchange and full incorporation must have been agreed with the relevant HER(s).

The relevant Historic England regional team, in particular the Inspector of Ancient Monuments, must be consulted to discuss priority areas and topics.

The relevant Historic England Listing team should be consulted to discuss if and how information that could enhance existing list entries or support designation assessment of new schedulings should be communicated.

The Historic England Archive is a key stakeholder for Aerial Investigation and Mapping projects. Access to, and loan of, aerial photographs is subject to specific terms and conditions. Where applicants do not already have established procedures

in place for accessing aerial photographs from the Historic England Archive, they must contact the Aerial Survey team to discuss requirements and arrangements.

Partnerships are encouraged with universities, protected landscapes (National Landscapes, National Parks) and other heritage organisations (eg National Trust, National Lottery Heritage Fund) especially if they bring funding for some, or all, of the aerial investigation and mapping.

## Methods

Proposals must be laid out using the Project Planning template in appendix 2 – proposals in other formats will be rejected.

Projects must adhere to [Historic England's Standards and Guidance for Aerial Investigation and Mapping Projects](#).

The Historic England Archive can provide a 'coversearch' which will list all aerial photographs held in the archive for a proposed project area. Applicants must contact the Historic England Archive for a coversearch to inform the timetable assessment, noting that the enquiry is in relation to this Call for Proposals.

Proposals should describe the likely methods for disseminating and communicating project results to professionals and the general public.

## Products, Communication and Engagement, and Archiving

The main products will be:

- Digital mapping.
- Textual monument records in the relevant HER(s).
- A project report in the Historic England Research Report Series (RRS) (see below for more information about RRS).
- An OASIS record.

Regular communication with key stakeholders should be scheduled throughout the project.

The project will follow Historic England grants processes and will be monitored by a Project Assurance Officer. Progress updates are supplied as brief statistics each

quarter and in highlight reports. Historic England's Aerial Survey team will carry out quality control on all projects.

Projects should enhance the National Heritage List for England via the [Missing Pieces Project](#) through links to the final project report.

A strategy to communicate project results to communities, helping them understand and engage with their heritage, must be considered and included in the proposal. This could be through publication, events, social media or other means.

Copyright for the mapping remains with the grant recipient but Historic England are licenced to use the data as set out in the funding agreement. This will include release of the data under the Open Government Licence v3 via Historic England's [Open Data Hub](#). Monument records and mapping must be integrated into the relevant local HER as part of the project. Mapping data will be added to the [Aerial Archaeology Mapping Explorer](#).

Historic England aerial photograph loans must only be used for the agreed project. Scans of Historic England Archive aerial photographs must be deleted on completion of the project.

The hard copy and digital documentation produced under this project will be the copyright of Historic England. Copyright on all reports submitted will reside with Historic England, although a third-party in-perpetuity licence will automatically be given for reproduction of the works by the originator, subject to agreement in writing from Historic England.

The author should ensure that copyright permission is obtained for any images used in the report and be aware that Historic England will make the report available on its website.

The author should also make certain that all material copied from other sources is fully acknowledged and the relevant copyright conditions pertaining to that data will be observed.

### Research Report Series (RRS)

Research Report Series (RRS) reports must be produced in the RRS template in line with the associated guidance provided. This is available on our Brand Hub: [Research Report template - Historic England Brand Hub](#) but will only be viewable and accessible to you if you are logged into the hub. Please click on 'Login' at the top of the page for information about how to do this.

A draft version of the RRS report will need to be submitted to Historic England for review. The draft product must be of sufficient quality to be accepted for review and comply with all relevant guidance, where applicable.

Historic England will provide feedback and comments on the content of the draft report so that appropriate revisions can be made, if necessary. If there are any queries or questions over recommended revisions, the Project Assurance Officer can arrange a meeting to discuss these. Please note that proofreading for grammar, spelling and typos etc. is the responsibility of the product author(s) and not the responsibility of Historic England.

Time for Historic England to review the draft report (a minimum of four weeks), and time for amendments to the report, should be included in the project timetable.

## **Accessibility**

All project reports and products must meet the relevant accessibility requirements and standards. You can find information about accessibility on our Brand Hub (please see the link below). Please note that you will need to be logged into the Brand Hub in order to view the Accessibility information page. You can request access by clicking on 'Login'. The Accessibility page is located under the 'Using our Brand' heading: Accessibility - Using our brand - Historic England Brand Hub

## **Evaluation**

Evaluation is a powerful tool that helps Historic England tell better stories about what our grants achieve and helps provide assurance to its stakeholders, including the taxpaying public, that it invests public money in ways that optimise value. We have developed a strategic approach to evaluating our grant-giving so that we can do more of what works, and have the most positive impact that we can.

We have developed a tiered system for collecting information. Grants up to £25k will need to submit interim Highlight reports and a Closure and Lessons Learned report. Grants between £25k and £250k will in addition be asked to share relevant data through an evaluation data collection tool (to be issued at award stage).

# Budget

The total budget available for this Call is £250,000. The maximum grant available per project is £80,000. Project proposals should include detailed costs as set out in the costs spreadsheet available to download.

# How to apply

Proposals should be based on the template attached to this document and must include a task list, timetable and costs.

Guidance on grants for research activities related to the historic environment sector can be found on the Historic England website [Research: Funding for Activities that Research and Survey the Historic Environment | Historic England](#).

## Timetable

Proposals must be submitted to [HPCPCalls@HistoricEngland.org.uk](mailto:HPCPCalls@HistoricEngland.org.uk) by 14<sup>th</sup> September 2026. Applicants will be informed of the decision by late September 2026.

## Further information

For questions about the project please contact Matthew Oakey at [Matthew.Oakey@HistoricEngland.org.uk](mailto:Matthew.Oakey@HistoricEngland.org.uk)

For further queries about the application process, deadlines etc please contact Tim Cromack at [Tim.Cromack@HistoricEngland.org.uk](mailto:Tim.Cromack@HistoricEngland.org.uk).

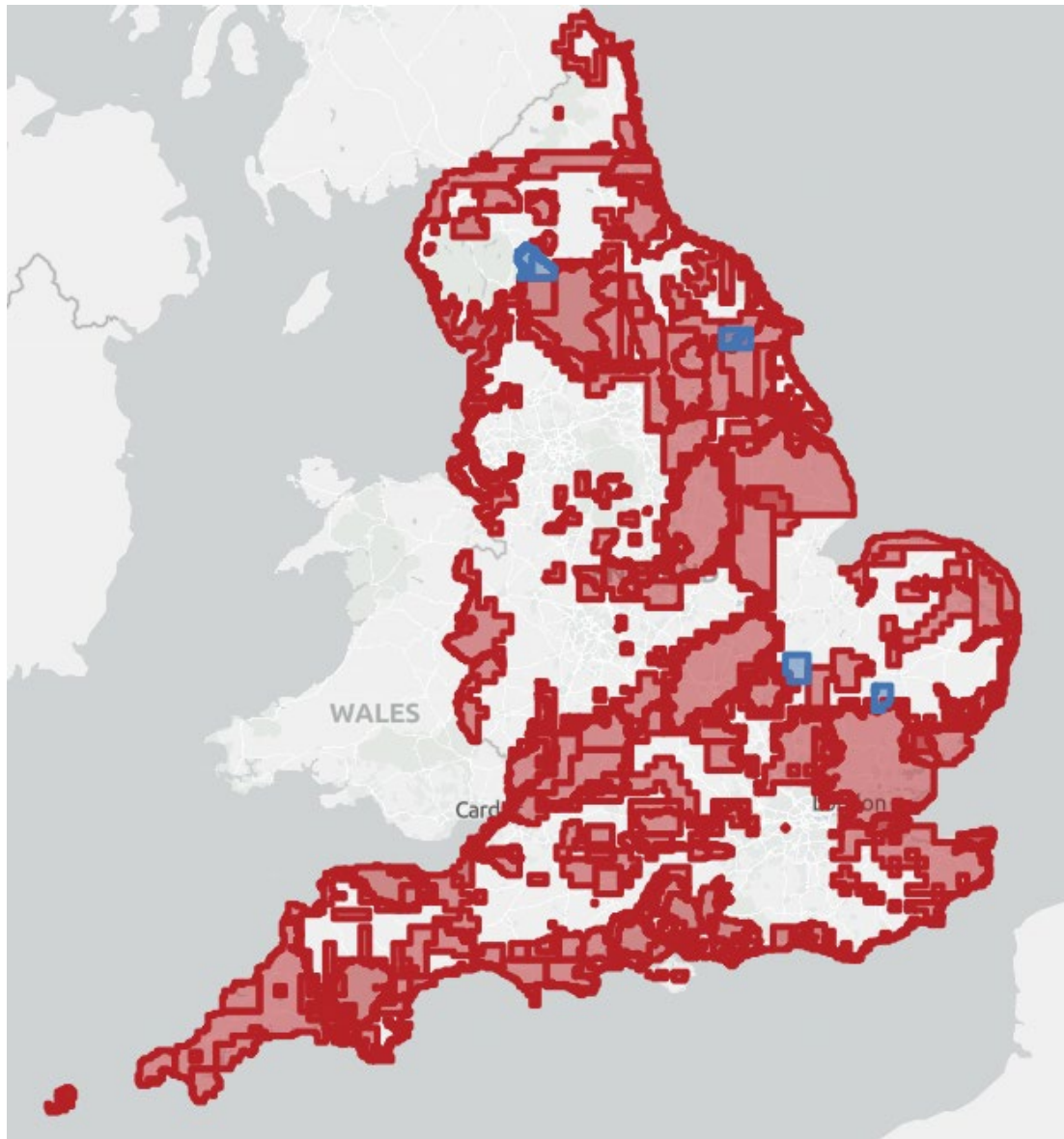
If you would like this document in a different format please contact our Customer Services department:

Telephone: 0370 333 0607

Email: [customers@HistoricEngland.org.uk](mailto:customers@HistoricEngland.org.uk)

# Appendix 1. Previous and current project areas

The results of previous Aerial Investigation and Mapping projects can be viewed on the [Aerial Archaeology Mapping Explorer](#) or accessed via the [Historic England Open Data Hub](#).



*AI&M project areas as of June 2026. Completed (red), ongoing (blue). Base mapping © Crown Copyright and database right 2026. All rights reserved. Ordnance Survey Licence number 100024900.*

# Appendix 2. Format for proposals

This template should be used in conjunction with the information in the Call document.

## Document control

|                        |                                                         |
|------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------|
| Title:                 | <i>Include a document control grid in your proposal</i> |
| Author(s):             |                                                         |
| Derivation:            |                                                         |
| Origination Date:      |                                                         |
| Reviser(s):            |                                                         |
| Date of last revision: |                                                         |
| Version:               |                                                         |
| Status:                |                                                         |
| Summary of Changes:    |                                                         |
| Circulation:           |                                                         |
| Required Action:       |                                                         |
| File Name/Location:    |                                                         |
| Approval:              |                                                         |

## 1. Project Name and Area

### Background

A brief summary of the context and drivers for the project including an accurate location map. Projects must be defined by full OS one kilometre squares irrespective of crossing county or other administrative boundaries. The only exception to this is along the Welsh or Scottish borders. Please provide a shapefile of the project area with your proposal.

### Aims and Objectives

Refer to potential protection outcomes in this area. Describe the opportunities for the project to deliver additional benefits beyond heritage protection, for example research potential, partnerships or community work. Refer to how the project will meet the key research questions relevant to this area.

### Business Case

A brief business case explaining how the project will meet the aims of relevant areas of Historic England's [Strategic Plan 2026-2031](#) and regional or local strategies and research agendas. Include a statement of the archaeological potential of your area and the anticipated impacts of the project.

### Methods

A brief outline of how you will achieve your project aims and objectives. This should demonstrate adherence to [Historic England's Standards and Guidance for Aerial Investigation and Mapping Projects](#) and outline why and how using Historic England standards will be effective in achieving

the aims of the project. Describe how you propose to access material held by the Historic England Archive. You must specify how data will be incorporated into the Local Authority HER and how results will be disseminated and communicated.

### **Stages, Products and Tasks**

Provide a list of main stages and products. Provide a task list with allocation of days required for each of the main tasks. This should include time allocations for each member of the project team.

### **Interfaces**

Mention who has been consulted in the relevant Local Authority and the Historic England Regional team, in particular the Inspector of Ancient Monuments and Listing Adviser. Mention interfaces with other local initiatives where relevant.

### **Project team**

Include a brief outline of the relevant project team members' experience (including any previous delivery of Aerial Investigation and Mapping projects) and their roles on the proposed project. If any staff training is proposed, this should be outlined. Any changes to the project team must be discussed and agreed with the Historic England Aerial Survey team.

### **Project timescale and budget**

Include the project timescale (including proposed timescale for each mapping block if necessary) and budget (please use costs spreadsheet and submit with your proposal). Provide a brief explanation of how the budget or resources were calculated including a short timetable assessment based on available sources and archaeological knowledge of the area.