



MOLA Research strategy 2013–2017

Aims

This Strategy aims to provide a framework in which the results of commercial excavation and the wider, grant funded and synthetic research work of MOLA can be prioritised and to provide steer for external researchers wishing to access the collections and data held by MOLA. This document aims to encourage targeted collaborative research and promote wider research engagement. It is intended as a compliment to, not a replacement for, existing local, regional, national and period specific research frameworks.

Background

MOLA has a strong record in research and the dissemination of the results of that research, promoting education and participation by drawing together archaeological sub-disciplines, and developing cross-disciplinary partnerships. The reputation of our publications is unparalleled and although we have particular expertise in the archaeology of London, our work takes us across the UK and beyond. MOLA maintains strong links with the academic community and seeks out robust research projects and outputs which stand alone or add value to our commercial work.

In 2012, the restructuring of MOLA resulted in the creation of a department dedicated to Research and Education. This department draws together artefact and ecofact specialists, editorial, graphics and photographic expertise, overseen by a Director of Research and Education. The team will be responsible for delivering a dynamic range of research, communication and public engagement programmes. To demonstrate a wide community impact, it is important that research, participation and education are approached cohesively. '*A Strategy for Researching the Historic Environment of Greater London*' (Rowsome and Barker 2016) acknowledges this and previous London frameworks reflecting MOLA's unique heritage with the archaeology of London, the aims and priorities are thematic and reflect MOLA's desire to continue expanding engagement with the wider research community.

At any one time, MOLA will have in its care, many thousands of artefacts, human remains, collections of environmental and zooarchaeological material and excavation and survey records. MOLA recognises the importance of effective prioritisation to optimise the study of this material for academic and wider public benefit.

The adoption of the following strategy is essential to:

- ensure decisions on funding applications are made strategically and that external and internal researchers are coordinated effectively
- provide the tools and opportunities for staff to carry out research of a high calibre
- develop the reputation and profile of MOLA
- improve the synthesis of developer-funded research

Research priorities: key themes

In the next five years, MOLA will focus research efforts in the following thematic areas:

- **Transition and change**
- **Mapping the past**
- **Defining a sense of place**
- **Travel and trade**
- **Ritual and religion**
- **Science and the past**
- **The archaeology of inter-tidal zones**

Topics covered by these themes include:

Transition and change

London before London; pre- and post- Roman transition periods; population movement; settlement development; human responses to environmental change; human impact on the environment; the evolution of urban settlement; the archaeology of catastrophe; changes in human health

Mapping the past

Using GIS and historic maps to track population movement; artefact distribution; historic and contemporary archaeology; people and places

Defining a sense of place

Defining communities and identifying change; the evolution of urban settlement; urban hinterlands and suburbs; the fabric of historic towns; the archaeology of public spaces; characterising the landscape; cognitive landscapes; defining identity; death, demography and disease

Travel and trade

London as a trade centre; the Roman port; trade and the Empire; the movement of people, goods and ideas; economy; production, distribution and consumption; artefact studies; comparing the 'old' and 'new' worlds

Ritual and religion

Burial practices; ritual buildings; the influence of religion on material culture; identity; non-conformism; ideology, cult and religion; the movement of ideas; the ritual landscape

Science and the past

Using new technology; realising the full potential of scientific techniques; science and the conservation challenge; presenting science through heritage

The archaeology of inter-tidal zones

Hydrology and geoarchaeology; river systems as barriers, links and resources; the challenges of conservation in an active environment; prehistoric exploitation of the landscape; nautical and maritime heritage

Management, monitoring and dissemination of research

MOLA has appointed a Research Co-ordinator working under the direction of the Director of Research and Education, to oversee internal communications, identify opportunities, assist with funding applications and develop partnerships with commercial, academic and community groups to produce truly innovative work. In addition, MOLA can call upon the advice of a group of academic advisors, who have historically provided advice on the content and direction of our monographs.

MOLA will support the research activities of staff and external researchers through targeted publication programmes using in-house skills and resources, conference posters, assistance with submission to peer-reviewed journals publications and ICT support of new-media outputs.