

## F.2 HER audiences

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## F.2 HER audiences#

Potentially there are many different types of HER user, from professionals within the heritage, environment and other sectors, amateur researchers (both individuals and groups), those within education and casual users with a passing interest in a specific question or location. As HERs are encouraged to make a greater variety of information more widely available through different media and also to promote their services beyond traditional users, this diversity will rightly increase. Different members of an HER audience will want different levels of information, have very different reasons for wanting that information and will use the information in specific ways (see section [F.7](#) for guidance on Audience Development).

Each user will also have a different level of understanding of the basic concept and role of an HER and what they can reasonably expect to gain from using it. Some will have an established relationship with an HER extending back many years, and indeed may have contributed significantly to its content, whilst for others this will be the first time they have ever encountered the resource. Each user will thus have specific needs, require different levels of support from HER staff and will have varying deadlines to meet. At the outset of each query the HER officer should find out any timescale to which the user is working.

HER staff need to be able to deliver effective service to all users whilst managing other demands on their time. Benchmark 1.2 'Access to Services' recommends that HER officers set a specified response time to enquiries, this should be viewed as an ideal maximum response time. Grouping users into categories may assist an HER officer in considering the requirements of an individual enquiry whilst prioritising and managing service delivery.

The following user types are a very general guide to users' potential requirements, capabilities, motivations and interests.

### Local Government conservation users#

This group work within the local heritage sector and have an in-depth understanding of their local HER and a close working relationship with it. It includes those employed within local government such as local authority archaeologists, planners and conservation officers, museum staff and staff of the local Portable Antiquities Scheme. This group usually require little, if any, supervision and assistance but do require rapid access to the resource. Rapid access could be achieved through an intranet. Access to and knowledge of information relevant to the enquiry contained within any backlog is also required.

### Other heritage professionals#

This group comprises those professionals working within the heritage sector externally to local government. It may include archaeological contracting units, archaeological consultants, environmental consultants, and members of national bodies such as [Historic England](#) and The National Trust and secondary and tertiary education professionals. They will usually have an

understanding and experience of HERs in general and in interpreting HER information but perhaps not the specifics of an individual HER. This group may require varying levels of assistance and supervision and will have quite specific and focussed information needs. Response time is likely to be a high priority for this group.

### **Other professionals ? planners, consultants, countryside managers, academic#**

This group require HER information for professional purposes but may have limited or no experience of using the resource and a limited concept of HERs'. It includes local authority planners, countryside managers from organisations such as the Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group (FWAG) and the British Trust for Conservation Volunteers (BTCV) and planning consultants and may also include certain education professionals such as primary and secondary school teachers. Assistance in understanding the concept of HERs, in formulating queries and interpreting data is likely. The information required will often be geographically or period specific. Response time is likely to be an important factor for this group.

### **Amateur researchers#**

This group includes members of local societies and interested individuals. They may have a long history of working with HER information and an in-depth understanding of it. Where this is not the case the user may require significant initial assistance with how the HER works, how to frame queries and how to interpret data. They will normally have focussed and specific queries that require focussed and specific answers as well as access to primary material and accurate references for further research. Response time is likely to be a lower priority for this group.

### **Students#**

This group includes school, college and graduate level students. Familiarity with HERs in general is unlikely and as students are often answering quite specific questions a high level of assistance may be required to retrieve and understand the appropriate information. These users will often want access not only to HER records but primary material and detailed references. Additional assistance in directing the user to other specific resources is also likely. The importance of response time for this group will be set by academic deadlines.

### **Casual users#**

This group are often using the HER as a one-off experience and will have little background knowledge of the resource. Indeed the query may be passed on from a colleague in a different service area or department. Queries from this group of user are generally simple requiring a simple answer. These users normally require copies of specific record entries and relevant references. There are normally no time deadlines. Casual users may return to the HER as an amateur researcher.