

Submerged Prehistoric Landscapes in the Face of Development

Organizer

Name: Simon Fitch
Affiliation: University of Bradford
E-mail: s.fitch@bradford.ac.uk

Co-organizers

Name: Robyn Pelling
Affiliation: University of Bradford

Name: Ruth Plets
Affiliation: VLIZ

Session Description

Over nearly thirty years of study, palaeolandscape research has moved from the status of a niche sub-discipline to an increasingly strategic area of investigation. As well as the pure archaeological interest in the submerged prehistory of our continental shelves, additional drivers include the ongoing infrastructure development to achieve net zero emissions goals and geopolitical requirements for secure energy provision.

On one hand, the commercial activities on our seabed now provide us with new and extensive datasets from previously unexplored areas but these may hamper future access to any surviving archaeology. There are two major challenges in archaeological and heritage management linked to this increased commercial development of the continental shelves. The first is the question of what chapters of human history lie drowned on these former coastal plains? They undoubtedly retain information about both adaptations never detected on land and human response to climate change that may presage modern human responses to anthropogenic climate change. The second challenge is the need to close remaining gaps to support adequate heritage protection in deeper marine waters, where nearshore and terrestrial protocols fail. There is now a global imperative to explore landscapes where vital evidence for human occupation may be recovered but which for now is poorly understood because access to surviving archaeology is severely limited.

This session therefore seeks papers that assess the results of current submerged archaeological landscape research across the globe, examine the potential and/or threat of

commercial development to such archaeological research and consider the future for research in an increasingly developed marine zone.

Keywords

Submerged Landscapes; Marine Archaeology; Prehistoric Archaeology