

Dear colleagues,

I am writing on behalf of the SAfA Conference Organizing Committee with an update on arrangements for the postponed 25th Biennial Meeting. As you will recall, this was initially delayed until mid-August 2021 in the hope that it might then be possible to hold an in-person conference as originally planned. Regrettably, it is clear that the emergence of new virus variants, the slow roll-out of vaccines in many countries, and the travel restrictions imposed by the British Government mean that this cannot happen.

Rather than delay matters further, the Organizing Committee has, in consultation with the Covid Matters Committee (CMC) set up last year, therefore decided to go ahead with a slimmed-down online-only conference featuring the following key elements:

1 - a student event focused on advice for grant applicants and publishing;

2 - plenary sessions focused on 1) Africanising African archaeology; 2) heritage management and development; 3) climate change and societal resilience; and 4) archaeology as long-term anthropology;

3 - a Business Meeting to elect a new Executive and transact necessary SAfA business.

These events will be scheduled to take place over the weekend of **August 14th and 15th 2021** in the hope that this may facilitate access for colleagues in Africa.

Discussions are in progress regarding the best way of providing for individual research symposia in addition to these plenary events. Based on responses to the CMC survey last year, we recognise that such presentations are especially important for early career researchers and critical to facilitating SAfA's mission of facilitating discussions of current research. At the same time, survey responses highlighted concerns about internet access for some SAfA members and the scheduling problems and fatigue associated with long synchronous sessions.

With these factors in mind, the Organizing Committee and the CMC suggest holding online research symposia in staggered fashion in the weeks following the plenary events described above (i.e. in late August and September). Research symposium presenters would upload their papers, posters or recorded presentations to dedicated folders on the SAfA website by **August 13**. In this way, participants will have ample time to download and read/view all contributions before each live event. Each live event could then focus on discussion and meaningful interaction between members.

For these online research symposia to be user-friendly and maximally accessible across the SAfA community, we will need input and assistance from tech-savvy members. SAfA Webmaster Matt Curtis has kindly offered to be the primary contact point. SAfA members willing to share ideas or offer assistance in developing these research symposia are encouraged to contact Matt at the webmaster email address:

webmaster@safarchaeology.org

Arrangements for the reimbursement of remaining conference and accommodation fees held over from 2020 will be announced shortly. We hope that by being held online the 2021 meeting will be able to draw broader attendance than if it had been held in person as originally planned, and we remain committed to bringing the SAfA community together in creative and productive

ways to keep people connected, learn from one another, and continue to chart a course for the future of African archaeology.

With best wishes

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Peter Mitchell', written in a cursive style.

Peter Mitchell