

## AGENDA ITEM 9

### GOVERNMENT'S REVIEW OF POLICIES RELATING TO THE HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT

**To:** Countywide Archaeological Advisory Committee

**Date:** 21<sup>st</sup> March 2000

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#### A PURPOSE

- 1 To advise the CAAC of the progress of the Government's comprehensive review of policies relating to the historic environment.

#### B PROPOSED ACTION

- 2 **The Committee is invited to:**

**NOTE the progress of the review of policies related to the historic environment and its potential implications for Buckinghamshire and the County Archaeological Service in particular.**

#### C RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 3 Additional resources would be required to fully implement the recommendations of the review.

#### D SUPPORTING INFORMATION

- 4 Last year English Heritage was asked by the Government to co-ordinate a wide-ranging review of all policies relating to the historic buildings and landscapes of England with the intended outcome of a new national strategy for our historic environment. A public consultation exercise was held to which the County Council made an official response authorised by the Environmental Services Committee. A report entitled *Power of Place* was published in December and submitted to the Government.
- 5 The *Power of Place* is very wide-ranging comprising 18 headline recommendations aimed at various combinations of central government, local government, heritage organisations, owners and developers. They cover issues such as the legislative, taxation and planning systems; repair, renewal and regeneration policies; agricultural grants; architecture and design; education and training; access, participation and the voluntary sector; character appraisal; research and information systems and leadership. The 18 headline recommendations are as follows:

- 1. Put conservation at the heart of renewal and regeneration**
- 2. Encourage the repair and use of neglected buildings**
- 3. Clear the backlog of repairs**
- 4. Provide more support for rural, coastal and marine environments**
- 5. Promote good design that enhances its context**
- 6. Encourage better maintenance**
- 7. Promote conservation training and craft skills**
- 8. Place the historic environment at the heart of education**
- 9. Remove barriers to access**
- 10. Enable more people to participate**
- 11. Support the voluntary sector**
- 12. Make more use of character appraisal**
- 13. Make the regulatory system work better**
- 14. Encourage research and scholarship to underpin conservation**
- 15. Publish regular “state of the historic environment” reports**
- 16. Create an historic environment information network**
- 17. Support local leaders**
- 18. The Government should lead by example**

Within these 18 headline recommendations are 15 action points aimed specifically at local authorities and regional bodies (see *Power of Place* page 48).

- 7 In general there is a good correlation between report’s recommendations and the County Council’s representations and policy as set out in *A Future for our Past* (The Buckinghamshire Archaeological Management Plan). The need for local authorities to use best value to maintain high quality historic environment services is emphasised. The recognition of the importance of Sites and Monuments Records and the aspiration to develop them into more publicly accessible comprehensive historic environment records is particularly welcomed as is the support for historic landscape character assessment. Projects in both of these areas are being developed by the County Archaeological Service. Other welcome recommendations involve greater recognition for the value of museums and archives and calls for increased emphasis on research and on the historic environment in education and regeneration schemes and for harmonisation of VAT rates for building works. Recommendations for legislative change are notably cautious. In the longer term, the report says SMRs need to be placed on a firm statutory basis. There are also proposals for a statutory duty of care on owners of listed buildings, scheduled ancient monuments and registered parks and gardens (to be supported by increased grants) and a related duty on public bodies. Recommendations are disappointingly weak or absent in areas of potentially damaging permitted development and land use change which currently falls outside the planning system (e.g. agricultural and forestry operations). Finally, there is a specific recommendation that elected members should receive training on issues affecting the historic environment.
- 8 At present the report is simply a series of recommendations to government and it remains to be seen what action will be taken. For the County Archaeological

Service the *Power of Place* is consistent with the implementation of the Management Plan with its emphasis on sound research, developing the Sites and Monuments Record, undertaking Historic Landscape Character Assessment and promoting public understanding and appreciation. There are resource implications for these projects, particularly the development of the Sites and Monuments Record which is the subject of a separate paper. There are, however many recommendations which fall outside the remit of the Archaeological Service but would be relevant to local authorities and other organisations in Buckinghamshire. These relate to county and district planning services, the role of historic buildings conservation officers, community and education services, the county museums and record office and the management of local authorities' property portfolios (especially buildings and public parks). The proposal to review and extend the remit of this committee to cover the whole historic environment could provide an advisory forum co-ordinating activities across such a wider remit, but this would require broad political and technical/professional support to be effective.

#### E. BACKGROUND PAPERS

*A Future for our Past* (The Buckinghamshire Archaeological Management Plan).

*Buckinghamshire County Council's Response to the Review of Policies Related to the Historic Environment*, 4th August 2000

*Government's Review of Policies relating to the Historic Environment: An Invitation to Participate*. (English Heritage, 2000)

*Government's Review of Policies relating to the Historic Environment*, Environmental Services Committee Paper 15th June 2000.

*Review of Policies relating to the Historic Environment* (Five Discussion Papers)

*Power of Place: The Future of the Historic Environment*

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