

AGENDA ITEM 8

Buckinghamshire Archaeological Officer's Report

To: Buckinghamshire Countywide Archaeological Advisory Committee

Date: 26th September 2001

Author: Senior Archaeological Officer

A. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1 To advise the Committee of significant events since the last CAAC meeting.

B. PROPOSED ACTION

2 The Committee is invited to:

- a **NOTE the Service's Outputs and Performance Indicators and the generally satisfactory performance in relation to the latter**
- b **NOTE progress with Strategic and Conservation Projects**
- c **NOTE recent development-related archaeological casework in the county**
- d **SUPPORT the principle of establishing an Archaeological Planning and Conservation Archaeologist Post and the efforts being made to secure funding for this appointment**

C. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

3 All costs are contained within established budgets.

D. SUPPORTING INFORMATION

4 **Archaeology Service Output Measures and Performance Indicators**

Output and Performance Indicator statistics collected for the service as part of the County Council's best value monitoring programme are presented for the 3rd and 4th quarters of 2000 (held over from the previous meeting) and for the 1st and 2nd quarters of 2001.

Output	3rd Quarter 2000	4th Quarter 2000	1st Quarter 2001	2nd Quarter 2001
Total number of consultations handled	198	119	132	129
Number of planning applications handled	126	96	104	107
Number of archaeological fieldwork projects monitored	8	15	5	12
Number of reports received by the SMR	43 (est)	43 (est)	37	36
Number of Sites and Monuments Records enquiries handled: commercial	6	19	19	15
Number of Sites and Monuments Records enquiries handled: non-commercial	12	17	20	14

Performance Indicator	3rd Quarter 2000	4th Quarter 2000	1st Quarter 2001	2nd Quarter 2001
Planning applications responded to within 14 days (target 80%)	93%	92%	96%	96%
Number of successful appeals against advice (target 0)	0	0	0	1 (partial see 7 below)
Number of important sites destroyed or damaged by development or related activity without adequate mitigation (target 0)	0	0	0	1 (see 7 below)
Sites and Monuments Records data inputting backlog (see 5 below)	5472	5515	5552	7280 ¹

5 The Sites and Monuments Record (SMR)

The final draft of the report on the SMR Audit, which was conducted last year to document the condition of the SMR, has been submitted to English Heritage for comment. A paper presented to the 21 March CAAC meeting described

¹ Increase due to the completion and deposition of a long-term volunteer project mapping historic quarries

the main conclusions of the audit and the five key areas identified as needing improvement, namely: Information Technology, Content (the data inputting backlog), Policy & Planning, Access & Outreach and Resources (staffing). Since then a draft SMR Action Plan has been added to the Audit report and work has continued in all these key areas. Progress can be summarised as follows:

- a) Information Technology: The SMR is a pilot study for the County's Electronic Records Management Project and is seeking to develop links with the Archaeological Data Service based at York University. Remote access is likely to form a major element of the proposed "Unlocking Buckinghamshire's Past Project".
- b) Content: The SMR Action Plan includes a costed plan to eliminate the inputting backlog by 2006 and maintain an up to date record thereafter. Some existing staff resources have been "ring-fenced" for data inputting and additional resources have been made available to employ temporary staff this financial year.
- c) Policy & Planning: The completion of the SMR Action Plan is the major achievement in this area.
- d) Access & Outreach: Following CAAC's support for the "Unlocking Buckinghamshire's Past" Project, a member of staff has been seconded from the Heritage Division to help us develop the HLF bid. The first meeting of the UBP sub-committee is to be held on the 1st October.
- e) Resources: The implementation of the SMR Action Plan (most particularly the elimination of the backlog and the HLF bid) are dependent on the establishment of a full-time SMR Officer. Financial support for the establishment of an additional post is being sought from a variety of sources.

6 Strategic and Conservation Projects

The Service is involved with an increasing number of projects which are not based directly upon our development control functions but are of a more strategic, conservation and interpretation nature. Most of these projects are being pursued in partnership with other organisations. Some involve drawing in substantial amounts of external funding. The nature and progress of current projects is summarised in appendix A.

7 Archaeology and Development

A list of recent fieldwork is provided in appendix B - the highlights are summarised below:

The first phase of excavation in advance of mineral extraction at **The Lea, Denham** has revealed the expected evidence for a later prehistoric and/or Roman field system and the edge of an associated settlement. A display is to be set up at the Colne Valley Centre. Further investigation will take place over the next 5 years.

Excavation has commenced on an Iron Age, Roman and early Saxon site on the line of the **Aston Clinton bypass** which is to be built next year. The site lies on the Lower Icknield Way which has often been supposed to have prehistoric or Roman origins. As the work is at an early stage and ongoing, a verbal report will be made to the meeting. We are grateful to the Highways Agency for including a programme of school visits in the project.

The excavation of a single trial trench in a garden at **Rose Cottage, Penn** revealed a well preserved brick-built kiln of 17th/18th century date which had probably been used for manufacturing roof tiles. The find is of particular interest as a later stage of Penn's nationally important medieval tile and pottery industry which involved the production of decorated floor tiles – some decorated tiles were found at Rose Cottage suggesting a production site lies nearby. The kiln is in sufficiently good condition to justify preservation in-situ so the County Archaeological Service recommended that the development proposals be amended to achieve this. Unfortunately, the planning situation is complicated because the site is the subject of an appeal against the refusal of planning consent on non-archaeological grounds and the applicant has so far been unwilling to amend his application. The Archaeology Service provided a written statement to the appeal but the case emphasises the need for planning authorities to insist that evaluations are undertaken before planning applications are determined or, where they have decided to refuse, to cite appropriate archaeological reasons in their refusal notices. The Inspector's decision is awaited.

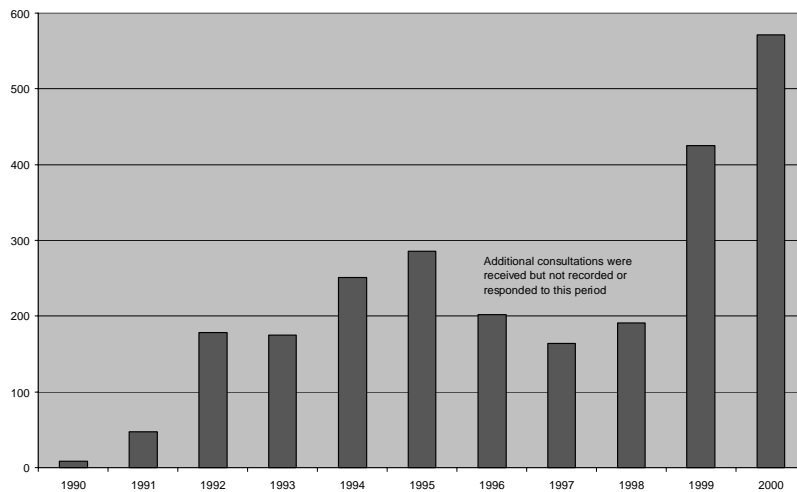
At **Monks Mede, Monks Risborough** an applicant appealed against the refusal of planning permission for residential development in the historic village core close to the church. The County Archaeological Service provided a written statement in support of our request for an evaluation because of the potential for important medieval remains related to the village and the monastic grange held by Christ Church, Canterbury (with which Whiteleaf Cross may be associated). In a curious decision, which is not easy to reconcile with the advice in PPG 16, the Inspector accepted the site was potentially of archaeological interest but declined to refuse permission because an evaluation had not been carried out. The appeal was rejected on other grounds.

Damage to a scheduled ancient monument case occurred at **Woodside, Camp Road, Gerrards Cross** where garden landscaping works were undertaken without scheduled monument consent affecting a section of the ramparts of Bulstrode Camp, an Iron Age hillfort. Works outside the scheduled area should have been covered by a watching brief secured by a planning condition but this was not complied with. Enforcement action was taken on our advice by South Bucks District Council and works in the scheduled area have halted until consent is obtained. Remedial recording of exposed deposits has been required. With the benefit of hindsight, better communication and more robust early intervention might have brought the situation under control sooner.

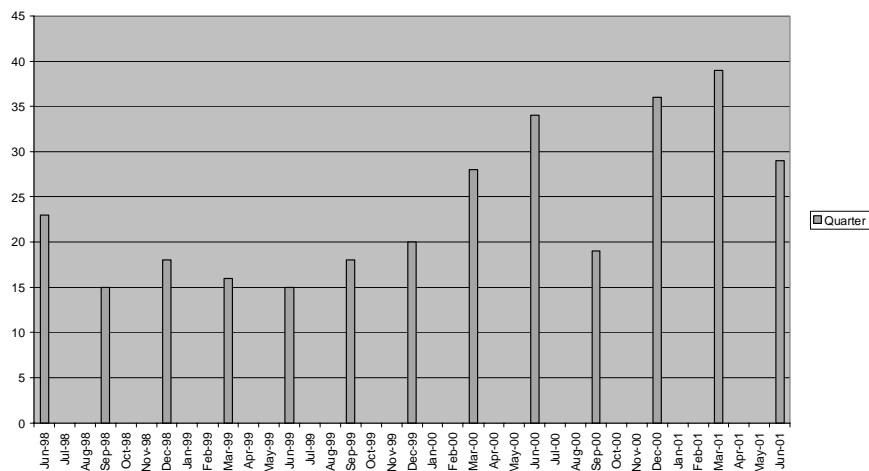
8. Resource pressures

The service faces increasing pressures from planning and conservation casework as well as from the limited staff resources available to cope with increasing numbers of SMR enquirers (up c 50% from 1999) and the major data inputting backlog. These pressures are illustrated by the following graphs:

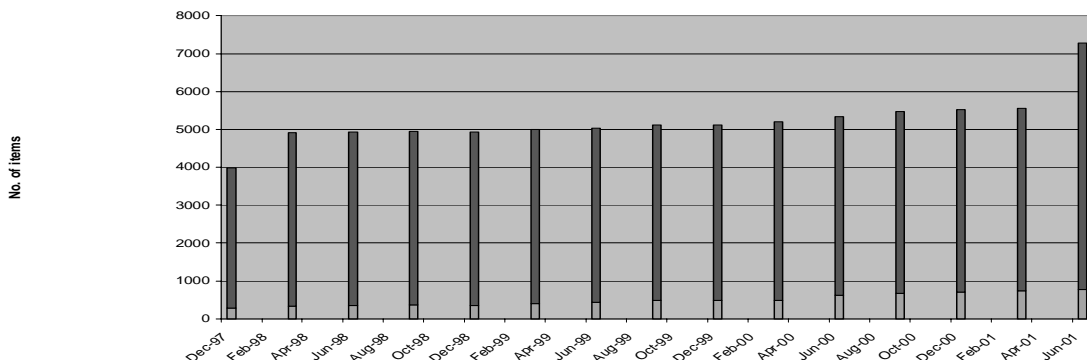
Archaeology Consultations



SMR Enquiries



Total SMR Inputting Backlog



	Dec-97	Mar-98	Jun-98	Sep-98	Dec-98	Mar-99	Jun-99	Sep-99	Dec-99	Mar-00	Jun-00	Sep-00	Dec-00	Mar-01	Jun-01
■ Collections	3707	4574	4574	4574	4584	4601	4601	4630	4630	4715	4715	4815	4815	4815	6515
□ Individual Reports	282	332	353	368	347	392	436	476	478	485	614	657	700	737	765

In order to sustain an effective service and implement the Archaeological Management Plan it is essential to appoint a 3rd member of staff. There will be posts specifically responsible for Planning and Conservation casework and the Sites and Monuments Record both reporting to the Senior Archaeological Officer. Funding is being sought from English Heritage to assist with this reorganisation but in the longer term there will be a need to part fund the new post from other sources. Options currently being explored include levying a wider range of charges and the possibility of SLAs with District Councils and the Shadow Board for the Chilterns AONB.

E. BACKGROUND PAPERS

“A future for our past”. The Buckinghamshire Archaeological Management Plan.

Archaeological Reports submitted to the SMR

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