

UNLOCKING BUCKINGHAMSHIRE'S PAST

To: Buckinghamshire Countywide Archaeological Advisory Committee

Date: 16th October 2002

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A. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1. To report progress on the preparation of the Unlocking Buckinghamshire's Past Project application to the Heritage Lottery Fund

B. PROPOSED ACTION

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

AUTHORISE the Chairman to REPORT the project bid to constituent bodies on the Committee's behalf seeking their written support for the Heritage Lottery Fund application.

C. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

3. The total project budget will be c £153,000, 90% of which is being sought from the Heritage Lottery Fund. The County Council has already provided £5,200 as a contribution in kind to prepare the bid. The remainder of the required match (c £10,000) will be supplied by County Council, the Buckinghamshire Archaeological Society, the Chilterns Conservation Board, and the South Midlands regional branch of the Council for British Archaeology.

D. SUPPORTING INFORMATION

4. In March 2001 the Committee endorsed a proposal that the County Archaeological Service prepare an application to the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) for an outreach programme involving the Sites and Monuments Record (SMR) for new Buckinghamshire. A sub-committee of the Countywide Archaeological Advisory Committee was established as a steering group to advise the County Archaeological Service on the preparation of the bid and has met twice, in October 2001 and in May 2002. The Unlocking Buckinghamshire's Past Project aims to widen public access to information held by the SMR within the framework provided by the Heritage Lottery Fund guidance document "Unlocking Britain's Past".
5. Following the advice of the steering group, consultation exercises were carried out with two of the three main target audiences. A local history/community interest

questionnaire was sent to all members of the Buckinghamshire Archaeological Society, to all societies affiliated to the Bucks Local History Network and to all parish councils. Additional copies were available to visitors at the Local Studies Library, the County Museum and the County Record Office in Aylesbury and on the County Council's public website. A specially designed educational questionnaire was also sent to all the local authority schools in Buckinghamshire. There was an unexpectedly high response rate of 45% to both questionnaires which reflects the potential levels of interest in, and support for, the project. 90% of respondents to the local history/community interest questionnaire supported the HLF bid, whilst 97% of primary and 100% of secondary teachers said that they would use the online resources. In addition a number of teachers responding to the educational questionnaire have indicated that they would be prepared to participate in a teachers' focus group.

6. The overall results of the local history/community interest questionnaire supports the original guidance from the steering group about the preferred target audiences. The majority of the respondents (71%) were members of local history societies and unsurprisingly the preferred target group for most was local historians. The next largest group was the education sector, especially secondary education. 72% of respondents said that they had access to the Internet. The results of the schools questionnaire are particularly useful in providing an indication of the levels of demand for specific educational modules and the priorities for developing specific thematic modules have been revised accordingly.
7. The project will principally involve Internet access to SMR data providing a user-friendly front-end, both map and text based. This will be enlivened by specific modules aimed at the education and recreation sectors and local community and history groups; user-friendly interpretation, including reconstruction drawings or virtual reality models of key sites. Secondary elements of the project involve the refurbishment of the SMR search room, including new furniture, redecoration and a dedicated public access terminal, as well as an outreach programme of lectures and other activities supported by audio-visual aids and information leaflets. The project will involve the employment of an officer for 2 years to prepare the database with additional public access data fields and to make the existing data more understandable to non-specialist users, to support external consultants in developing educational modules, and to assist with outreach activities.
8. The draft bid document was circulated to members of the steering group in July and has been amended in light of the comments subsequently received. Submission of the bid to HLF has been delayed in order to take advantage of the increased funding thresholds now available, allowing additional elements to be included in the modules and contingencies to be built into the costings. The details of the ICT project, specification and costings are being prepared jointly with the County Council's IT Unit. The remaining work required for the bid is the filling in of the HLF application form and the compilation of the supporting evidence. It is proposed that letters supporting the aims of the project and the submission of the bid be solicited by this Committee from the District Councils and other interested constituent organisations. It is anticipated that the bid will be submitted shortly. A decision on the application will take at least 6 months.

Subject to HLF approval, the project will probably commence in the summer of 2003.

E. BACKGROUND PAPERS

The “Unlocking Buckinghamshire’s Past” Project and the future of the Sites and Monuments Record. CAAC Report 21st March 2000.

Unlocking Britain’s Past: a strategic framework for support from the Heritage Lottery Fund for Sites & Monuments Records (Heritage Lottery Fund, July 1999)

Unlocking Buckinghamshire’s Past (bid documentation)

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