



# Buckinghamshire County Council

## Minutes *Buckinghamshire Historic Environment Forum*

**AGENDA ITEM: 3**

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE BUCKINGHAMSHIRE HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT FORUM HELD ON WEDNESDAY 24 SEPTEMBER 2003 IN MEZZANINE ROOM 3, COUNTY HALL, AYLESBURY, COMMENCING AT 2.35PM AND CONCLUDING AT 4.55PM.**

### **MEMBERS PRESENT**

#### **Members**

Mrs C M Aston (Chairman)  
Mr C Cashman  
Mr M Farley  
Cllr Sir John Horsbrugh-Porter

#### **Organisation**

Buckinghamshire County Council  
Aylesbury Vale District Council  
Bucks Archaeological Society  
Chiltern District Council

#### **Officers**

Mr M Andrew  
Mr B Giggins  
Mr A Kidd  
Mrs C Street  
Ms R Tyrrell  
Mr C Welch  
Ms J Wise  
Mr M Woods

#### **Organisation**

Wycombe District Council  
Milton Keynes Council  
Buckinghamshire County Council  
Buckinghamshire County Council  
Bucks County Museum  
English Heritage  
Buckinghamshire County Council  
Buckinghamshire County Council

#### **Guest Speaker**

Mr B Startin English Heritage

### **1. ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN**

#### **RESOLVED**

**That Mrs C Aston be elected Chairman of the Committee for the ensuing year.**

**MRS C ASTON IN THE CHAIR**

### **2 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE/CHANGES IN MEMBERSHIP**

Apologies for absence were received from Mr D Pickard (Bucks County Council), Mr G Marshall (National Trust) Mr R Evans (Oxford Diocese), Mr B Thorn (Bucks County Museum) and Mr B Morsley (Milton Keynes Council).

### **3 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Mr M Farley declared a personal interest as a Consultant Archaeologist.

### **4 MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting of the Buckinghamshire Historic Environment held on 26 March 2003, copies of which had been circulated previously, were agreed subject to the following amendments:

#### **Item 7 County Museum Report**

Paragraph two, second sentence should read, 'The Post was funded by Heritage Lottery and RESOURCE, with additional funding from Buckinghamshire County Council and Milton Keynes Council.

#### **Item 13 Emergency Archaeological Recording Fund**

The first line of Resolution A should read, 'NOTED the current status of the fund and DECIDED NOT to seek contributions to the fund for the financial year 2003/4'.

### **5 MATTERS ARISING**

Members were delighted to be informed that the Heritage Lottery Bid for the Unlocking Buckinghamshire's Past project, had been successful. The value of the project was £160,000 and the funds would allow for Internet access to the Sites and Monument Record (SMR) and educational resources, to be developed. The Sites and Monuments Record Officer was thanked for her hard work in the preparation of the bid.

Members were informed that the start of the Buckinghamshire Monument Conservation Project had been deferred until the next financial year.

### **6 ENGLISH HERITAGE IN THE SOUTH EAST**

The English Heritage Regional Director was welcomed to the meeting. He gave a presentation to Forum Members concerning the work of English Heritage (a copy of the presentation is Appendix A). Members were circulated with 'A User's Guide to English Heritage', and a copy of the brochure, 'English Heritage in the South East 2003-5'.

Members were informed that English Heritage carried out a number of functions including offering statutory and other advice, distributing grants, managing historical properties that are open to the public, and the protection of the historic environment. The Regional Director noted that Buckinghamshire did not feature largely in their priority areas for regeneration, other than one scheme in Wolverton. The reason for this was that Buckinghamshire was considered to be a relatively wealthy area in comparison to some of the other locales (see map of areas of deprivation in the presentation).

The Regional Director informed Members that English Heritage was trying to respond strategically to forces for change, and had established a Regional Historic Environment Forum so that the whole sector could input into the identification of priorities. He reported that English Heritage planned to place more emphasis on areas such as capacity building, historic landscape

characterization, understanding the historic environment and influencing planners early in the planning process, in the future. English Heritage will be collecting statistical information on the state of the historic environment for their "Heritage Counts" report and will undertake a review of their casework delivery strategy.

A discussion ensued with the following points being made:

- Most historical sites open to the public did not make a profit, but any income received from them was maximised to offset costs.
- In response to a query from a Member regarding links with the National Trust, the Regional Director stated that English Heritage provided grant aid to the National Trust and considered it to be a partner organisation and provided some grant-aid to it for historic building/monument repairs.
- The relationship between English Heritage and the Regional Assembly was growing, and English Heritage were endeavouring to find ways in which to ensure their concerns about the historic environment could be expressed. English Heritage was working hard to get recognition for the historic environment in the Milton Keynes/South Midlands Regional Planning Strategy, but was finding the process complex.
- A Member raised the issue of the future management of the scheduled monument at Quarrendon. The Regional Director responded that English Heritage was not currently looking to take more sites into 'guardianship'. The pressures on sites whose context had changed from rural to urban environments was acknowledged, and the Regional Director added that English Heritage were hoping to improve their management advice in this area through the development of a database concerning management issues for monuments. English Heritage was able to provide further support through Local Management Agreements, which the Regional Director suggested could be linked to locally managed sites.
- English Heritage would continue to work closely with the newly formed South East Cultural Consortium.

The Regional Director was thanked for his valuable contribution to the meeting.

## **7 MILTON KEYNES AND SOUTH MIDLANDS STRATEGY**

The Forum received the joint report of the Senior Archaeological Officer and Milton Keynes' Archaeological Officer, which advised on implications for the historic environment of proposed alterations to Regional Planning Guidance set out in the Milton Keynes and South Midlands Sub-Regional Strategy, and which recommended a response to this.

The Chairman informed Members that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the Environment of Buckinghamshire had recently included this as a topic on their agenda, and had put forward a series of recommendations to Cabinet as a result. The Chairman was pleased to report that Cabinet had accepted the recommendations of the Committee.

The Senior Archaeological Officer reported that the closing date for comments regarding the response to the Strategy was 13 October 2003. Treatment of the historic environment in the Milton Keynes Study was very limited and the Officer stressed the need to engage positively with planners to try and influence the process. He suggested one approach would be to develop a report outlining threats and opportunities to the historic environment. Members were pleased to note that a Sub-Committee on the Environment had been established, which would feed into the MK Steering Group.

Members were informed that the draft PPS 7 had just been released for consultation and contained references to sustainability. It was suggested that this could be incorporated in the response, and links with cultural groups could be highlighted.

## **RESOLVED**

### **The Forum:**

- a) **NOTED the contents of the report and implications of the Milton Keynes and South Midlands Sub-Regional Strategy for the historic environment of Buckinghamshire.**
- b) **ENDORSED and SUPPORTED the efforts of Aylesbury Vale District Council, Buckinghamshire County Council and Milton Keynes Council to highlight historic environment issues in their respective responses to the Enquiry Panel and in the establishment of Local Delivery Vehicles.**

## **8. CONSULTATIONS ON THE REVIEW OF HERITAGE PROTECTION AND HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT RECORDS**

Members received the report of the Senior Archaeological Officer, which advised of two government consultation papers and sought agreement of common principles for responses to recommend to member organisations. The consultations were on the Review of Heritage Protection, and Historic Environment records and the deadline for response to both was 31 October 2003.

The Officer expressed concern that although the consultations sought to simplify processes, there was no clear indication of how this would be carried out. Regarding the common principles identified by the Officer in his report, Members agreed that existing protection for elements such as listed buildings should not be diluted and that the existing loopholes mentioned should be plugged. Regarding the unification of designation and consent regimes, some Members expressed their wish to keep the existing grading system.

There was suggestion that the response should be positive but should also include questions such as, 'How would the impact on how items were proposed to be handled, be addressed?', 'Would archaeological monuments be included in the unified designation and consent regimes?', 'How would the distribution of staff be handled?'. Regarding discretionary listings, sometimes a Management Agreement with English Heritage might prove to be the best option but it should be stressed that any action should not be carried out to the detriment of the protection mechanism. The Chairman added that from the viewpoint of the Local Authority, there would be no money available for any reorganisation, and that this should be reflected in the response.

Regarding the proposals for 'sub-regional teams', the response should highlight that this should not be seen as a way to decrease levels of staff, but than an increase in capacity would be welcomed. It was agreed that the proposed pooling of resources could have some potential. It was suggested that there be a unified response to the consultations. Officers would explore this option and compile a more detailed reply.

## **RESOLVED**

### **The Forum:**

- a) **CONSIDERED the implications of the consultations for the historic environment of Buckinghamshire and the delivery of historic environment services**
- b) **RECOMMENDED that a more detailed response be compiled by Officers taking into account views expressed at the Forum and explore options for a unified response to the consultations**

## **9 BUCKS LOCAL AUTHORITY CONSERVATION PROVISION**

Members received a report of the Senior Archaeological Officer informing them of the conclusions of the Survey of Local Authority Conservation Provision in England conducted on behalf of English Heritage and the Institute of Historic Buildings Conservation. The report presented a preliminary overview of the situation in Buckinghamshire in relation to this.

The Senior Archaeological Officer commented that the Survey painted a bleak picture of historic building conservation. Regarding the suggestion in the Survey that Central Government, English Heritage and other agencies should consider how they could more effectively engage with local authorities, Members pointed out the lack of funds currently available. A discussion followed concerning the number of posts dedicated to conservation work in Buckinghamshire where it was concluded that this level fell below the national average, which was already considered to be insufficient. Provision in Aylesbury Vale is under review. Following the retirement of the only full-time conservation officer the service could be reduced to just two half-time posts. It was noted that conservation staff were under significant pressure and could start to leave if further resources were not made available. The Senior Archaeological Officer agreed to reflect this issue in the response to the review.

## **RESOLVED**

### **The Forum:**

- a) **NOTED the report and summary of the local situation.**
- b) **CONSIDERED the implications of the report and the local situation in responding to the Reviews of Heritage Protection and Historic Environment Records.**
- c) **REQUESTED the Chairman to write to the relevant Portfolio Holder at Aylesbury Vale District Council to impress the need to at least retain the existing staffing level of their conservation service.**

- d) **AGREED to ESTABLISH an officer Working Party to consider options for joint projects and pooling resources in the historic environment sector.**

## **10 MILTON KEYNES ARCHAEOLOGICAL OFFICER'S REPORT**

Members received the report of the Milton Keynes Archaeological Officer informing them of current archaeological matters in Milton Keynes. The Officer reported that problems previously experienced with English Partnerships concerning a lack of information had been largely resolved. Milton Keynes Council and English Partnerships have established a joint housing delivery team. It was hoped that this would allow for the importance of the historic environment to be highlighted early in the planning process.

A Member asked if there had been a response to the letter previously sent on behalf of the Forum to English Partnerships concerning the Milton Keynes Hoard. It was confirmed that a response had not yet been received. It was agreed that another letter should be sent indicating that the Forum was still awaiting a response, and that the issue had been raised at the Forum meeting.

### **RESOLVED**

**The Forum NOTED the report.**

## **11 BUCKINGHAMSHIRE COUNTY ARCHAEOLOGICAL OFFICER'S REPORT**

Members received the report of the Senior Archaeological Officer advising them of the work of the County Archaeological Service since the last meeting of the Buckinghamshire Historic Environment Forum.

Members were informed that the restoration work at Whiteleaf Cross was almost complete. The Chilterns Environment Conference had been held in June and had been very successful. The Officer added that the booklet 'New Perspectives on Chiltern Landscapes' was still available for purchase. Members noted that work on the SMR data-inputting backlog was continuing. The Officer was pleased to report on the number of initiatives where partnerships were working together throughout Buckinghamshire.

### **RESOLVED**

**The Forum:**

- a **NOTED the Service's Outputs and Performance Indicators and the generally satisfactory performance in relation to the latter**
- b **NOTED progress with Strategic and Conservation Projects**
- c **NOTED recent development-related archaeological casework in the county**
- d **NOTED progress on addressing the publication backlog.**

## **12 COUNTY MUSEUM REPORT**

Members received a tabled report from the Keeper of Archaeology who was unable to attend the meeting. It was agreed that the Forum would support the

bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund referred to in paragraph 4 of the report, concerning publication of the excavation of certain sites in Aylesbury by the County Museum Archaeology Service. The Senior Archaeological Officer agreed to pursue this with the Keeper of Archaeology.

The Portable Antiquities Officer was welcomed to the meeting and informed Members about the nature of her work. Members were informed that the recording of finds uncovered by metal detection was voluntary, unless the finds fell into the category of 'treasure'. A student would be compiling a brief report on the recent metal detecting rally at Creslow.

### **13 NATIONAL TRUST REPORT**

Members received a report concerning National Trust Archaeology in Buckinghamshire over the period March-September 2003.

Members commented on the problems being experienced at Stowe School. The school had carried out a watching brief but it was unclear how effective this had been. It was suggested that a meeting take place with the National Trust, Stowe School and the County Council to agree a protocol for the process. The level of recording at Stowe House was questioned, as the Aylesbury Vale planners had not attached the relevant archaeological condition. It was agreed that the reasons why the condition had not been attached should be pursued.

The Senior Archaeological Officer agreed to recommend to the National Trust that publishing should take place regarding the important work that had been carried out at the Ashridge project.

### **14 CONSERVATION OFFICERS' REPORTS**

Only one Conservation Officer was present at the meeting. It was agreed that their attendance at the Forum was important and should be pursued.

### **15 EMERGENCY RECORDING FUND**

Members received the report of the Senior Archaeological Officer and Treasurer reviewing the operation of the emergency recording fund.

Members were informed of a revised figure of £2750 for the balance of the fund. The Officer added that recent unexpected discoveries had not led to calls being made on the fund.

### **RESOLVED**

#### **The Forum:**

- a) **NOTED the current status of the fund.**
- b) **AGREED to the Secretary taking over the role of treasurer for the fund.**

**16 DATE OF NEXT AND FUTURE MEETINGS**

Wednesday 17 March 2004, 2.30pm, Mezzanine Room 2, County Hall

Wednesday 22 September 2004, 2.30pm, Mezzanine Room 2, County Hall

**MRS C ASTON  
CHAIRMAN**