

AGENDA ITEM: 7

Buckinghamshire Monument Conservation Project

To: Buckinghamshire Historic Environment Forum

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A. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1 To advise the Forum of the development of the Buckinghamshire Monument Conservation Project which aims to measuring and minimising the risk of damage to important archaeological monuments from non-development related sources.

B. PROPOSED ACTION

2 The Committee is invited to:

- a) **NOTE progress on the targets identified in March 2003 for the financial year 2003/4.**
- b) **APPROVE the targets for 2004/5 specified in paragraph 6.**
- c) **CONSIDER and AGREE criteria for allocating monument conservation grant aid set out in paragraph 7.**

C. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 3 Funding is being sought from English Heritage for the monument conservation grant. Staff costs are contained within established budgets.

D. SUPPORTING INFORMATION

- 4 The background to the Bucks Monument Conservation Project was set out in a paper approved by the Historic Environment Forum in March 2003. It was agreed that the general aims of the project should be:
 - a) To identify and quantify significant threats to archaeological monuments in Buckinghamshire.
 - b) To develop and implement a prioritised Monuments at Risk Action Plan.
 - c) To seek to improve public access to monuments and interpretation of sites which can be visited.

For financial year 2003/4, the following targets were identified:

- a) Complete a preliminary "Monuments at risk" register covering the 139 scheduled ancient monuments within new Bucks. This will identify overall risk and, where appropriate, threat factors.
- b) Continue to improve information for farmers, landowners and agencies such as DEFRA and the Forestry Commission.
- c) Establish a Monument Management Project with c £10k funding per annum from English Heritage.
- d) Prepare a draft "Monuments at Risk Action Plan" for the Bucks HEF analysing the major threats to archaeological monuments in the county and proposing prioritised strategies to address them. It is envisaged that the Monuments at Risk Action Plan should aspire towards comparable status to a Biodiversity Action Plan

5 Progress has been made towards the above targets as follows:

- a) A preliminary scheduled monument at risk register has been established based on existing information, mostly from site visits made within the past 5 years. However, no information was available for 58 out of the 139 monuments. Data has been supplied for the Chiltern AONB Management Plan
- b) Advice has been given to DEFRA on 30 Countryside Stewardship applications. The Archaeological Conservation Officer attended the County Show to promote the service and a web site has been established
- c) A proposal has been submitted to English Heritage to establish the Monument Management Project (see paragraph 7).
- d) Work has begun on the "Monuments at Risk Action Plan" but other workload pressures have delayed its completion.

6 The proposed targets for 2004/5 are:

- a) Institute a programme of updating the monument at risk register by assessing 20% (28) of scheduled monuments annually. Assessment will be by a professional archaeologist on a site visit wherever possible. If access cannot be gained then aerial photography may be utilised. Prioritisation for 2004/5 will be sites for which current condition is not known or where management issues arise.
- b) Continue to promote the conservation advisory service through DEFRA, FWAG, the Chiltern Conservation Board, newspaper articles, training events and the web site.
- c) Establish the Monument Conservation Project (see paragraph 7 below) and instigate conservation works on at least two monuments.
- d) Complete the Monuments at Risk Action Plan, including piloting a range of performance measures.

7 Monument Management Project - English Heritage Agency Agreement

A proposal for a three year agency agreement for Buckinghamshire has been submitted to English Heritage, programmed to commence April 2004. It is proposed to use a simple set of criteria to establish funding priorities:

- Risk
- Access/amenity value
- Importance
- Availability of other income streams
- Practicality of implementation

On this basis we are intending to focus on four sites in the first two years; two privately owned scheduled monuments (Danesfield Camp, Medmenham and Medmenham Camp), one local government owned scheduled monument (Desborough Castle) and one unscheduled monument in a conservation area (Stewkeley Moat).

E. BACKGROUND PAPERS

Bucks Management Conservation Project. Report to the Bucks Historic Environment Forum, March 2003.

Monuments at Risk Survey of England 1995. English Heritage and Bournemouth University 1998.

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