

AGENDA ITEM 8

Unlocking Buckinghamshire's Past Project

To: Buckinghamshire Historic Environment Forum

Date: 22nd September 2004

Author: Sites and Monuments Record Officer

A. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1 To advise the Forum of progress with the 'Unlocking Buckinghamshire's Past' Project.

B. PROPOSED ACTION

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

a) **NOTE progress with the Unlocking Buckinghamshire's Past Project.**

C. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 3 The project is being funded jointly by Buckinghamshire County Council, the Heritage Lottery Fund, Buckinghamshire Archaeological Society, and the South Midlands branch of the Council for British Archaeology. Funding is also being sought from the Chilterns Conservation Board. The project is 90% funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund.

D. SUPPORTING INFORMATION

- 4 Kim Biddulph was appointed as project officer in January 2004 and began work on 8th March. The project officer's first task involved publicity and preparations for the Project Launch on Wednesday 17th March, immediately preceding the last meeting of the Buckinghamshire Historic Environment Forum. The launch itself went well. The three teaching sessions arranged with local schools (Year 4, Oak Green School and two groups from Year 5, Bearbrook School) were particularly lively.
- 5 In April the Project Officer organised four focus group meetings: one each with primary and secondary teachers, and two with local community and local interest groups. These have been extremely useful in formulating the proposals for the content of the educational, local community and access modules, which were agreed at the Project Management Team meeting in June and will be discussed in detail at a meeting of the steering group on Monday 27th September (see appendix for the proposed education topics). Several promising contacts have also been made with ramblers' groups and approaches have been made to the Chiltern Society. It is intended that

Recreational users will be involved in a second phase of meetings later in the project.

- 6 An outreach programme has been prepared covering a series of exhibitions in local libraries, guided walks, lectures and other events. 16 outreach events have been undertaken, with displays at the Council for British Archaeology's regional spring conference, Hazlemere library, Bourne End library, activities and a display at Beaconsfield, Buckingham, Chesham, Farnham Common, Gerrards Cross, Great Missenden and Winslow libraries. Kim has led guided walks around Chesham and two around Quarrendon for local rambling groups. Other events include displays and practical hands-on activities for National Archaeology Day in July and for the County Show, whilst guided walks and the first of regular Saturday openings of the Sites and Monuments Record were organised for Heritage Open Days earlier in September. The hands-on activities aimed at children have been particularly successful.
- 7 Meetings to discuss joint outreach events and partnership working have been held with staff of Bucks Country Parks, Bucks County Museum and also with the National Trust (Thames and Solent Region). The project officer attended the regional launch of a national project 'Inspiring Learning for All' aimed at maximizing the educational potential of heritage information and Kim hosted a meeting of representatives from other Sites and Monuments Records undertaking similar outreach projects.
- 8 The County Council's IT Unit is unfortunately unable to undertake the design and creation of the project website in-house due to the loss of key staff and it is has therefore been necessary for this work be put out to commercial consultants. Two meetings have been held with commercial ICT companies to gather initial comments on the detailed website specification and the specification went out to tender earlier this month.
- 9 Good progress is being made with editing the database to make it more accessible to users. The finds location data has been completed; work on the descriptive text is almost complete; the creation of summary field information and editing monument types, finds types and period data for the whole of Aylesbury Vale is nearly completed.
- 10 A professionally designed project logo has been produced and the Project Officer has completed designs for publicity leaflets and posters. The finalised versions will be submitted to HLF for approval before being sent for printing. A number of press releases about the project and to publicise specific events have been sent to the local and national press, some of which have resulted in articles being published. Information about the project has been added to the County Archaeological Service's web pages and these continue to be updated on a regular basis.
- 11 The scanner and a pc for the use of members of the public using the SMR search room have been installed and improvements to the SMR search room are underway.

- 12 The outstanding tasks timetabled for this financial year include the completion of improvements to the SMR search room, the preparation and pilot testing of the first set of education modules and making the first block of SMR data available online. The following financial year 2005/6 will see two groups of educational modules added to the website and a further block of data available. The final part of the project will be delivered in financial year 2006/7 with the last block of data available online and the public access modules added to the website.

E. BACKGROUND PAPERS

Buckinghamshire County Council Dec 2002 'Unlocking Buckinghamshire's Past Project: An Application to the Heritage Lottery Fund'

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