

AGENDA ITEM 12

Buckinghamshire Archaeological Officer's Report

To: Buckinghamshire Historic Environment Forum

Date: 22nd September 2004

Author: Senior Archaeological Officer

A. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1 To advise the Committee of the work of the County Archaeological Service since the last BHEF meeting.

B. PROPOSED ACTION

2 The Committee is invited to:

- a **NOTE the Service's Outputs and Performance Indicators and the satisfactory performance in relation to the latter**
- b **NOTE the adoption of a revised SMR Access and Charging Policy**
- c **NOTE progress with Strategic and Conservation Projects**
- d **NOTE recent development-related archaeological casework in the county and CONSIDER whether it would be desirable to formulate guidance on redevelopment proposals for major twentieth century civic, industrial and military complexes.**
- e **NOTE progress on addressing the publication backlog and SUPPORT the preparation of an Archaeology Enforcement Policy.**

C. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 3 Over the past two years, much of the casework summarised in this paper has been undertaken by David Radford, the Archaeology Planning and Conservation Officer. This post was established in 2002 with tapering financial support for a three year period from English Heritage. The future of this post is currently the subject of a bid within the County Council's Medium Term Plan.

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 1st and 2nd quarters of 2004.

Output	1st Quarter 2004	2nd Quarter 2004
Total number of consultations handled	192	152
Number of planning applications handled	136	117
Number of archaeological fieldwork projects monitored	7	15
Number of reports received by the SMR	24	32
Number of Sites and Monuments Records enquiries handled: commercial	22	21
Number of Sites and Monuments Records enquiries handled: non-commercial	20	15

Performance Indicator	1st Quarter 2004	2nd Quarter 2004
Planning applications responded to within 14 days (target 90%)	91%	95%
Number of successful appeals against advice (<i>revised target 50% rejection of appeals</i>)	1 out of 1	0 out of 0
Number of important sites destroyed or damaged by development or related activity without adequate mitigation (target 0)	0	0
Sites and Monuments Records data inputting backlog (target: reports < 10; Collections)	Reports = 25 Collections = 5352	Reports = 9 Collections = 5352

The slight fall off of planning response times in the summer of 2003 has been corrected and brought back on target.

Future reporting of performance indicators will need to take account of any BVPIs adopted for the historic environment and new indicators being piloted this year within Planning and Environment.

5 Sites and Monuments Record

Following a decision by the Cabinet Member for Community Services, a revised SMR Access and Charging Policy will come into effect on 1st October 2004. The main changes are an increase in the charging rates for commercial users from £30 to £45 per hour and provision for on-line access as part of the “Unlocking Buckinghamshire’s Past” Project. The SMR is currently being upgraded to the latest version of the Exegesis HBSMR SMR package. Other SMR issues are covered under the papers on the Review of Heritage Protection (Agenda item 4) and Unlocking Buckinghamshire’s Past Project (item 7).

6 Strategic and Conservation Projects

This section provides a summary of projects that are not based directly upon our planning functions but are of a more strategic, conservation and interpretation nature. Most of these projects are being pursued in partnership with other organisations and involve drawing in substantial amounts of external funding. The nature and progress of current projects is summarised in appendix A.

The main achievements since the last meeting have been the appointment of Becky Wilcox to run the “**Getting to Know Bernwood Forest**” Community Archaeology Project (see agenda item 8) and the securing of a £55,000 grant from English Heritage and the Chiltern Conservation Board to undertake the **Chiltern Historic Landscape Characterisation Project**.

English Heritage has confirmed funding for the **Monument Management Project** reported to the March HEF meeting. Negotiations with landowners are underway but no agreements have yet been signed.

Information has been supplied to DEFRA to help target the new **Environmental Stewardship** schemes which are to replace Countryside Stewardship next year. For the Entry-Level schemes we are looking to provide on-line “self help” support for applicants whilst for Higher Level schemes a small fee is expected to be payable for specialist advice.

7 Archaeology and Development

A list of recent fieldwork is provided in appendix B. Several sites in South Buckinghamshire have involved significant discoveries:

At the **Sanderson Site, Denham** excavation of a flood relief channel revealed an undisturbed Early Mesolithic camp site buried beneath a modern factory access road. The site comprised around 1000 worked flints, butchered animal bone, caches of hazel nut shells and a camp fire. Situated only a few hundred meters from a similar site found on the edge of Uxbridge in the late 1980s, it has confirmed this section of the Colne Valley as amongst the most important in England for the study of Late Upper Palaeolithic and Early Mesolithic settlement. A press release was issued on this find.

At **The Lea, Denham** phased excavation in advance of gravel extraction has revealed further Roman burials, mostly in the form of cremation pyres, set within a prehistoric field system.

At **Taplow**, a substantial Iron Age settlement has been investigated where affected by the construction of a Thames Water pipeline. The apparently unenclosed settlement lies on a gravel terrace overlooking the Thames and only a short distance from the Taplow Court hillfort discovered in 1999. Its discovery will complement the substantial body of information recovered from the floodplain during construction of the Dorney Rowing Lake and Maidenhead and Windsor Flood Relief Scheme.

Archaeological building recording at the supposedly seventeenth century **Wood End Cottage, Nash** has shown that it originated as a late medieval cruck building. This complements evidence being gathered by the Whittlewood Project that many buildings dated to the early post-medieval period from exterior inspection prove to have significantly earlier origins when examined in detail illustrating the value of analytical building survey to informing conservation decisions.

Finally, over the last few years a number of consultations and planning applications have been received involving the substantial or complete redevelopment of **twentieth century civil, industrial and military complexes** of significant historical interest – examples include the Royal Canadian Military Hospital at Cliveden, Westcott Royal Ordnance Factory, Princess Marina RAF Hospital at Halton, the Epilepsy Hospital at Chalfont and Pinewood Studios. All present challenges as coverage by conventional designations is at best patchy and the complex as a whole can be perceived to fall between professional responsibilities. In each case the archaeology service has taken the view that the local planning authority to inform decisions on retention or recording should require a specialist assessment. It is important to recognise that many of these complexes are in the process of change from operational sites to “archaeology” and there is only a narrow window of opportunity to capture a full record where preservation is not achieved. The forum may wish to consider whether to formulate some general guidance for planning authorities on handling such cases.

8 **Publication update (Appendix C)**

Further progress can be reported on the matter of archaeological publication. Reports on **Oxford Road Mill, Aylesbury** and **Land off Main Road, Ashendon** have been published in Records of Buckinghamshire whilst the draft report on **Sainsburys, Chesham** is with the Editor of Records of Buckinghamshire. A timetable for completion of Network Archaeology’s backlog has been agreed.

Legal advice has been sought on enforcement issues and the formulation of an explicit policy recommended. Local planning authorities, English Heritage

and the Institute of Field Archaeologists will be consulted on a draft policy shortly.

E. BACKGROUND PAPERS

Archaeological Reports submitted to the SMR

CONTACT OFFICER: ALEXANDER (SANDY) KIDD 01296-382927