



# Buckinghamshire County Council

## Minutes *Buckinghamshire Historic Environment Forum*

### AGENDA ITEM: 3

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE BUCKINGHAMSHIRE HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT FORUM HELD ON WEDNESDAY 22 SEPTEMBER 2004 IN MEZZANINE ROOM 2, COUNTY HALL, AYLESBURY, COMMENCING AT 2.30 PM AND CONCLUDING AT 5.00 PM.

#### MEMBERS PRESENT

##### Members

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

##### Organisation

Buckinghamshire County Council  
Aylesbury Vale District Council  
The Diocese of Oxfordshire  
Bucks Archaeological Society  
Chiltern District Council  
Wycombe District Council

##### Officers

Mr M Andrew  
Ms A Davies  
Mr B Giggins  
Ms C Pudney  
Mr S Kidd  
Mr G Marshall  
Mrs C Street  
Ms J Wise

##### Organisation

Wycombe District Council  
Aylesbury Vale District Council  
Milton Keynes Council  
Aylesbury Vale District Council  
Buckinghamshire County Council  
National Trust  
Buckinghamshire County Council  
Buckinghamshire County Council

##### Guest

Mrs V Hinze English Heritage

#### 1 ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN

##### RESOLVED

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

**MRS C ASTON IN THE CHAIR**

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

Apologies for absence were received from Ms C Murrey (Chiltern District Council), Mr C Welch (English Heritage), Cllr Mr P Bartlett (Milton Keynes Council), and Mr B Thorn (Bucks County Museum).

Members were informed that Cllr Mr P Bartlett would be replacing Mr Brian Morseley as the member for Milton Keynes Council. It was noted that South Bucks District Council would shortly be interviewing for a Conservation Officer who would be invited to be representative on the Forum.

## **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 17 March 2004, copies of which had been circulated previously, were agreed, subject to the following amendment:

Under 5 'Matters Arising', Item 13 National Trust Report, first paragraph, delete 'History of Buckinghamshire' and replace with 'Land Use History of Ashridge'.

## **5 MATTERS ARISING**

### **Item 5 Bucks Local Authority Conservation Provision**

An advert had been placed by Aylesbury Vale District Council for a new member of staff to assist with conservation and listed building work on a one year, full time contract.

### **Item 5 National Trust Report**

Emphasis was placed on the importance of finding resources to publish work on the Ashridge Project.

### **Item 8 Buckinghamshire Monument Conservation Project**

The two sites referred to that would be easiest to access were Desborough Castle and the "Bolbec Castle" Medmenham Hill forte.

### **Item 9 Buckinghamshire Historic Environment Forum: Future Directions**

A meeting had taken place to discuss the idea of a local seminar for Members with Aylesbury Vale District Council. The input of the Forum had been welcomed. A date and venue for the seminar were awaited.

The Senior Archaeological Officer had written to English Heritage regarding the possibility of the Forum being part of the new, sub-regional partnerships that had come about as a result of a recent Ministerial Decision. Virginia Hinze from English Heritage was welcomed to the meeting and invited to respond to the letter.

Members were informed that the new Regional Director of English Heritage, Dr Andrew Brown, was having discussions with similar groups on the same

subject. The proposed Terms of Reference for the regional fora, which included the promotion of best practice in the management of the historic environment, were reported to Forum members. It was noted that the South East Regional Forum had only met a few times so far. The Historic Environment Review Committee, which was the executive body of the Heritage Forum, had written a paper on the Regional Historic Environment Forums and their likely direction. The paper outlined the achievements of the regional fora so far, which included the initiation of research projects. Members noted that the Yorkshire Regional Forum had developed their own strategy document, and were undertaking a study of regional distinctiveness. Out of the nine fora, six were in the process of developing advocacy documents. This had not yet happened in the South East due to reorganisation in connection with the appointment of the new Regional Director.

There had been a proposal that a one day National Seminar should take place to allow for an exchange of ideas. It was also suggested that the minutes from each fora meeting should be shared. It was noted that there was huge potential for cross sector activities but it was important work in the various groups was not duplicated, and that the work of the regional fora was relevant to the particular areas. It was thought that the role of the Forum could be to feed into and respond to issues arising from the South East fora. It was reported that the South East Regional Forum Members were also members of groups that were looking at the South East Plan. It was noted that this could be a useful link.

Members were keen that the positive aspects of their work on the Historic Environment should be emphasised. It was noted that there was a Historic Environment Champion Scheme for elected Members for this purpose, but Members were often constrained by lack of time.

It was agreed that a working group would be set up to discuss key issues relating to the Bucks Historic Environment Forum (BHEF) and the South East Forum. In particular it was felt that the balance of the agenda for the BHEF would need to be reviewed to ensure it covered aspects of the Historic Environment other than archaeology. The working group would feed back any proposals to the BHEF.

It was further agreed that a representative from the Bucks Garden Trust would be invited to attend future meetings of the Bucks Historic Environment Forum.

## **6 REVIEW OF HERITAGE PROTECTION**

Members received the report of the Senior Archaeological Officer, informing them of the Ministerial Decision on the Review of Heritage Protection and the subsequent consultation on proposed Best Value Performance Indicators (BVPs) for the sector, and Ministerial letter promoting the appointment of Historic Environment Champions.

Regarding the longer-term Government requirement for local authorities to establish and maintain Historic Environment Records or have access to them, members expressed concern regarding the resource implications of this.

Greater community involvement in heritage protection was not mentioned specifically, although reference was made to increased public consultation.

It was noted that the Historic Environment Champions for Buckinghamshire were as follows:

<b>Buckinghamshire County Council</b>	<b>Cherry Aston</b>
<b>Aylesbury Vale District Council</b>	<b>Cllr Carol Paternoster</b>
<b>Chiltern District Council</b>	<b>Gill Gowing (officer)</b>
<b>Wycombe District Council</b>	<b>to be confirmed</b>
<b>South Bucks District Council</b>	<b>to be confirmed</b>
<b>Milton Keynes Council</b>	<b>to be confirmed</b>

Members commented that their role as representatives of the BHEF implied that they were all Historic Environment Champions.

Due to concerns about historic environment resources in each of the District authorities, an amendment was made to recommendation 2b of the report, regarding archaeological and built conservation.

## **RESOLVED**

### **The Forum:**

- a) **NOTED the Ministerial Decision on the Review of Heritage Protection and its possible implications for Buckinghamshire.**
- b) **AGREED to continue to MONITOR provision for archaeological and built conservation within Buckinghamshire's local authorities to identify any threatened reductions and encourage development to at least national average, such provision being commensurate with each local authority's historic environment resource.**
- c) **REVIEWED progress with appointing Historic Environment Champions.**

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

Members received the report of the Senior Archaeological Officer advising them of the historic environment response to the Milton Keynes and South Midlands Sub-Regional Strategy (MKSM).

Previously the MKSM Strategy had not given sufficient attention to the historic environment and it was a positive move that these difficulties were now being recognised. The Forum would await further developments with interest.

The initial response from English Partnerships to an invitation to have representation on the BHEF had been positive and a meeting was to be arranged to confirm their involvement.

## **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) **WELCOMED the positive initial response from English Partnerships to the Forum's invitation to join.**

## **8. THE UNLOCKING BUCKINGHAMSHIRE'S PAST PROJECT**

Members received the report of the Sites and Monuments Record Officer advising them of progress with the 'Unlocking Buckinghamshire's Past' Project.

A number of outreach activities were planned, sixteen of which had already been completed. Members were circulated with photographs of the events. A successful launch day had taken place in March 2004. The officer made particular reference to the tremendous efforts that had been made for National Archaeology Day, which had included pottery making and displays on the Unlocking Buckinghamshire's Past Project. Displays had also taken place at the County Show. A particularly enjoyable event had been a 'sandpit excavation', which had attracted attention from a wide age range.

As the County would not be able to undertake work on the website for the project, commercial contractors would be approached for expressions of interest and suitable companies invited to tender. It was not anticipated that funding for the website would prove to be a fundamental problem.

The preparation of the first set of Educational Modules was being strongly supported by curriculum advisers. It was hoped that agreement could be sought from the Heritage Lottery Fund to produce the modules 'in house'. The Educational Modules would be an integral part of the website.

## **RESOLVED**

### **The Forum:**

**NOTED progress with the Unlocking Buckinghamshire's Past Project.**

## **9 GETTING TO KNOW BERNWOOD**

Members received the report of the Senior Archaeological Officer advising them of progress with the 'Getting to Know Bernwood' Project.

Members were issued with a leaflet that had been compiled to advertise the Heritage Open Days that had taken place from 10 - 13 September. The leaflets had advertised the 19 sites that were open to the public for free.

## **RESOLVED**

### **The Forum:**

**NOTED progress with the 'Getting to Know Bernwood' Project.**

**10 BUCKINGHAMSHIRE ARCHAEOLOGICAL MANAGEMENT PLAN:  
REVIEW AND FUTURE**

Members received the report of the Senior Archaeological Officer reviewing the achievements of the Buckinghamshire Archaeological Business Plan and promoting discussion of future plan provision.

The report contained a summary of progress against targets, which had been approved as part of the original Action Plan. Less than 10% of targets had either not been achieved or the priorities for these had changed. The officer was pleased to report that 76% of targets had been achieved or even exceeded; the remainder were "work in progress". A current bid to continue the post of Archaeological Planning and Conservation Officer had received officer level support and was being pursued through the Authority's Medium Term Plan process.

It was suggested that a three-year plan be compiled and submitted to the March 2005 meeting of the Forum, once the Medium Term Planning process had been resolved. The Senior Archaeological Officer requested that members forward any feedback regarding this agenda item directly to him, in due course.

**RESOLVED**

**The Forum:**

- a) **WELCOMED** progress made with implementing the Buckinghamshire Archaeological Business Plan
- b) **ENDORSED** the proposal to prepare a draft 3 year plan (2005-7) for consideration at the March 2005 Forum meeting.

**11 MILTON KEYNES ARCHAEOLOGICAL OFFICER'S REPORT**

Members received the report of the Archaeological Officer, Design and Conservation, Milton Keynes, informing them of current archaeological matters in Milton Keynes. The Officer commented that a reduction in staffing levels had placed considerable pressure on the department. It was hoped that a replacement for Michael Ryan, Chief Conservation Officer, who had retired in March 2004, would be in post in the near future.

The Officer highlighted the two major regeneration schemes in Wolverton and Bletchley, which the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister had promised to fund. He stressed that over 200 acres of possible development land was currently being investigated in respect of archaeology prior to the submission of planning applications. There were insufficient archaeological resources at the council to deal with this significant increase in planning archaeology work, and requests had been made for additional staff.

It was agreed that the Forum would send a letter to Milton Keynes Council expressing concern at the lack of archaeological provision in Milton Keynes, advising that this was resulting in, for example, the non-appearance of final reports.

## **RESOLVED**

**The Forum:**

**NOTED the report.**

### **12 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 Forum meeting.

In particular members noted that the revised SMR would come into effect on 1 October 2004. Rates for commercial users would increase from £30 to £45 per hour.

The redevelopment of twentieth century civil, industrial and military complexes was highlighted as a potential problem, as the sites often fell between disciplines. This meant that conservation options were not always given much consideration and sufficient records were not always being made, or Conservation Officers consulted. It was agreed that there was a need to raise awareness of this issue with Planners, and that the Forum should generate some general guidance for planning authorities on handling such cases. It was suggested that English Heritage be consulted in the formulation of the guidance.

The backlog for publication was being pursued. Legal advice had been sought with the recommendation that a formal, written enforcement policy should be drawn up. Consultation would be taking place with Legal and with Planners on this subject. The Senior Archaeological Officer commented that members of the Forum would be welcome to have sight of the draft Policy.

## **RESOLVED**

**The Forum:**

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

### **13 COUNTY MUSEUM REPORT**

Members received the reports of the Keep of Archaeology and Finds Liaison Officer, and noted developments with interest.

It was noted that comments had been received on the consultation draft portable antiquities leaflet. Members would receive a copy for information.

#### **14 NATIONAL TRUST REPORT**

Members received the report of the Regional Archaeologist, which highlighted the fact that permission for metal detecting had been given erroneously by the tenant at West Wycombe Park, for two fields on the south side of the park owned by the National Trust. The officer had been supplied with a list of the finds and the National Trust was considering carrying out a controlled exercise with metal detectors.

It was confirmed that reports submitted to Forum meetings were accessible to the press and public five clear days before the meeting took place. This could be particularly important if finds were being reported in the paperwork for the meeting. Margaret Smith from the Bucks Free Press had indicated that she could be contacted if members wished to have finds reported in the Press.

#### **15 CONSERVATION OFFICER'S REPORT**

Members received a brief, verbal report from the Conservation Officer, informing them of matters of interest. A draft was to be sent out shortly concerning the conservation area in West Wycombe.

#### **16 EMERGENCY RECORDING FUND**

Members received the joint report of the Senior Archaeological Officer/Treasurer, and Conservation Officer for Aylesbury Vale District Council, reviewing the operation of the emergency recording fund.

Members were reminded of the Protocol for the Emergency Recording Fund, which allowed for the recording of aboveground features of archaeological interest. To date the Fund had only been called upon once. It was now proposed that £1500 of the Fund be used to assist with emergency recording of New Inn Farm, Stowe.

Members noted that this building was of great historic interest and would form part of the long-term work on the conservation of Stowe, which was being supported by the National Trust. The building had not been well maintained by the current owner, but the fact that it had not been modernised was of archaeological interest. The National Trust was in the process of negotiating to buy the building. Once restored, the building would return to its original use as a Visitors Centre for Stowe.

The Buckinghamshire Historic Buildings Trust had offered £1500 towards recording but it was thought that this would be insufficient. Members noted that if the funding from the Emergency Recording Fund was agreed, the Fund would have to be replenished to allow for any other requests to be fulfilled. The amounts that contributors would need to be invoiced for were set out in the report.

A discussion ensued and members concluded that the historic interest of the building was such that the call on the fund should be allowed. However, Milton Keynes Council expressed reservations that such a call would set a precedent for the future. The member from Chiltern District Council



commented that he would do his best to ensure that his Authority would make a contribution, as they had declined to do so in the past.

**RESOLVED**

**The Forum:**

- a) **NOTED the current status of the fund.**
- b) **APPROVED expenditure of up to £1500 to assist with emergency recording of New Inn Farm, Stowe.**
- c) **AGREED to invoice the membership for £2000 of contributions divided pro-rata as agreed in March 2001.**

**17 ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

None.

**18 DATE OF NEXT AND FUTURE MEETINGS**

**Please note change of date:** Wednesday 30 March 2005, 2.30pm, Mezzanine Room 2, County Hall, Aylesbury

Wednesday 21 September 2005, Mezzanine Room 1, County Hall, Aylesbury

**MRS C ASTON  
CHAIRMAN**