

AGENDA ITEM 5

FUTURE OF THE BUCKINGHAMSHIRE HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT FORUM

To: Buckinghamshire Historic Environment Forum

Date: 30th March 2005

Authors: Report of the Working Party

A. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1 To report on the meeting of the Bucks HEF Working Party on 8th February 2005.

B. PROPOSED ACTION

2 The Committee is invited to:

- a) **CONSIDER the recommendations of the working party;**
- b) **AGREE that in future information reports are to be tabled for questions not formally presented.**

C. RESOURCES IMPLICATIONS

- 3 None directly, although some of the recommendations would require resources.

D. SUPPORTING INFORMATION

- 4 The working party considered the difficulties currently being experienced in Milton Keynes with the piloting of new heritage management regimes at the Shopping Centre and Bletchley Park in the absence of legislative back-up. The "Sustainable Communities Plan" is providing resources but with strong delivery pressures potentially in conflict with conservation objectives (e.g. at Wolverton Royal Train Shed). The vulnerability of the industrial heritage resource was emphasised (see agenda item 6).
- 5 The role of Sites and Monuments Records/Historic Environment Records was discussed, including the variable practices for the deposition of reports on building recording. The desirability of a copy of every such report being supplied to the relevant SMR/HER (standard practice in Milton Keynes) was emphasised as this is a permanent public record. A letter has been sent to each District Council asking for their support to achieve this and it is proposed to assess the backlog as part of a quinquennial review of the SMR's Audit and Action Plan.

- 6 Realistic priorities for the Forum, where it could make a difference were the main focus of discussion. The recommendations focussed on five areas:
- 1) Streamlining: with an enlarged membership and remit it is no longer practical for each officer to present an “information” report. These could however still be tabled in writing for questions.
 - 2) Awareness raising: it would be desirable to invite speakers on topical issues (e.g. the presentation by English Heritage’s Regional Director in 2003). Such talks should help encourage participation, could be publicised to all elected members and help raise the Forum’s profile. Suggestions would be welcomed.
 - 3) Lobbying: the Forum already lobbies at a national, regional and local level to improve policies and resources for the historic environment. It should continue to act in that role, for example in relation to the growth pressures at Aylesbury and Milton Keynes and the South East Plan (see agenda item 7)
 - 4) Industrial heritage: this was seen as a particularly vulnerable area in need for priority action to raise awareness of conservation issues (see agenda item 6 for specific proposals)
 - 5) Promoting linkages between archaeology and historic building disciplines: relates to national proposals for legislative change expected in the proposed Heritage White Paper, including the creation of fully-fledged Historic Environment Records. Locally, there may be merit in exploring closer working, and perhaps joint meetings, with the Bucks Historic Buildings Trust.

E. BACKGROUND PAPERS

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