

AGENDA ITEM: 11

Buckinghamshire Archaeological Officer's Report

To: Buckinghamshire Historic Environment Forum

Date: 30th March 2005

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A. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

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

B. PROPOSED ACTION

2 The Forum is particularly invited to NOTE:

- a **the decision to establish the post of Archaeological Planning and Conservation Archaeologist following the expiry of English Heritage grant aid**
- b **the Service's Performance Indicators**
- c **progress towards adoption of an Archaeology Enforcement Policy**
- d **progress with the Getting to Know Bernwood, Historic Landscape Characterisation, Monument Management and Unlocking Buckinghamshire's Past Projects**
- e **recent development-related archaeological casework in the county.**
- f **progress in securing publication of archaeological reports.**

C. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

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

D. SUPPORTING INFORMATION

4 Archaeology Service Measures and Performance Indicators

Service volume measures and Performance Indicator statistics collected for the service as part of the County Council's best value monitoring programme are presented for the 3rd and 4th quarters of 2004.

Volume measure	3rd Quarter 2004	4th Quarter 2004
Total number of consultations handled	144	156
Number of planning applications handled	113	136
Number of archaeological fieldwork projects monitored	10	9
Number of reports received by the SMR	86	37
Number of Sites and Monuments Records enquiries handled: commercial	21	14
Number of Sites and Monuments Records enquiries handled: non-commercial	18	18

Performance Indicator	3rd Quarter 2004	4th Quarter 2004
Planning applications responded to within 14 days (target 90%)	96%	96%
Number of successful appeals against advice (<i>revised target 50% rejection of appeals</i>)	0	0
Number of important sites destroyed or damaged by development or related activity without adequate mitigation (target 0)	2	1
Sites and Monuments Records data inputting backlog (target: reports < 10; Collections)	67	41

5 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 “**Getting to Know Bernwood Forest**” Community Archaeology Project has held a series of walks, talks and events, including two weekends of hands-on research at Claydon House for National Science Week. The education pack has been commissioned. A woodland survey training event is being supported by the Forestry Commission. After long consideration, the Bernwood Day event is to be held on Saturday 25th June in conjunction with the Long Crendon village fete. Long Crendon provides an opportunity to give some prominence to the built historic environment.

A report on the **Buckinghamshire Historic Landscape Characterisation Project** is in preparation. It had been hoped to report this to this meeting of the Forum but progress has been slower than had been programmed, partly due to time spent preparing a report on growth options at Aylesbury. The **Chiltern Historic Landscape Characterisation Project** has commenced but has been delayed by IT problems. Contract for historic buildings characterisation due to be let shortly.

The **Monument Management Project** has successfully secured its first agreement at Medmenham hillfort where scrub has been cleared from the rampart. Negotiations are underway for agreements at Stewkeley Moat and Danesfield Camp (also Medmenham).

Unlocking Buckinghamshire’s Past has let contracts for the web-site and digital illustration respectively to Exegesis Ltd and Oxford Archaeology. Work on the content of the public modules is on target. The new system is expected to come together on a test site hosted by Exegesis in April.

6 **Archaeology and Development**

A list of recent fieldwork is provided in appendix B. The most significant cases are:

Evaluation at “**Preferred Minerals Area 4**”, **Denham** has identified in-situ Late Upper Palaeolithic and Early Mesolithic sites associated with peat deposits spanning the period of rapid global warming at the end of the last Ice Age. Well preserved sites of this type are extremely rare and considered be of national importance - options for preservation in-situ are being explored.

Construction of the **Stoke Hammond and Linslade Bypass** is to begin shortly. Wessex Archaeology will undertake investigations at Chelmscote medieval settlement and an area of prehistoric settlement and fields near Linslade (mainly in Beds).

Negotiations continue over the **Aston Clinton Major Development Area (business park), Aylesbury**, which includes a scheduled medieval moat and possible Roman villa. The main issues relate to how to protect the moat’s setting and the potential for a well preserved villa site.

An appeal has been lodged against refusal of planning permission for major redevelopment at the **National Society for Epilepsy, Chalfont St.Peter**. The site is recognised as a pioneering example of its type but unfortunately illustrates the limitations of the existing designation regime (only four buildings are considered listable) and difficulties that can arise in managing change at such sites. Following the submission of a consultants report, discussions are continuing with the local planning authority over the best approach to the appeal.

7 **Publication update (Appendix C)**

Some further progress can be reported on the matter of archaeological publication as a draft report on **Sainsburys, Chesham** is with the Editor of Records of Buckinghamshire. Unfortunately, the timetable agreed for completion of Network Archaeology's backlog has not been honoured and, following legal advice, potential clients are being advised of this unsatisfactory situation.

E. **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

Archaeological Reports submitted to the SMR

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