

CREATING A BUCKINGHAMSHIRE HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT RECORD

To: Buckinghamshire Historic Environment Forum

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Authors: Report by the County Archaeological Officer and Sites and Monuments Record Officer

A. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1 To provoke debate on mechanisms for establishing and managing a fully fledged Historic Environment Record (HER) and wider implications for historic environment services in the county in the context of the Heritage Protection Reform and Buckinghamshire Pathfinder initiative. To seek agreement on a preferred option. The report considers only the modern administrative county, not the Unitary Authority of Milton Keynes.

B. PROPOSED ACTION

2 The Forum is invited to:

- a **COMMENT** upon the Draft HER Scoping Report
- b **CONSIDER** the management options assessment (see 9 below)
- c **RECOMMEND** to constituent bodies that Management Option 3 for BCC to operate a county-wide Historic Environment Record managed and part-funded through SLAs with the district councils is the preferred mechanism for addressing the anticipated requirements of the forthcoming Heritage Protection Act.

C. RESOURCES IMPLICATIONS

Preliminary assessments of resources are set out in paragraph 8 below and in the draft HER scoping report (attached).

D. SUPPORTING INFORMATION

- 4 The Heritage Protection White Paper published on 8th March 2007 set out the Government's intention to reform the system of heritage protection in England and Wales through primary legislation, for which parliamentary time is being sought in 2008/9 to put the new system into place for 2010/11. One of the proposals in the white paper is that local authorities will have a statutory duty to maintain or have access to an Historic Environment Record.

- 5 At the March meeting of the Buckinghamshire Historic Environment Forum, the Forum considered the implications of the white paper and resolved (inter alia) to **RECOMMEND** to Buckinghamshire County Council and District Councils that the name of the “Buckinghamshire Sites and Monuments Record” be formally changed to “Buckinghamshire Historic Environment Record” and that the Heritage Protection Working Party further consider priorities and options for creating and operating a fully-fledged HER.
- 6 In order to progress the development of the Sites and Monuments Record (SMR) into a full HER, the County Archaeological Service has consulted with District Conservation Officers and prepared a draft report scoping options for implementing the proposals of the Heritage Protection Review in Buckinghamshire (excluding Milton Keynes). A copy of the draft report accompanies this paper.
- 7 The HER scoping report has assessed:
- New information required to be integrated into the HER
 - Other work needed to reach anticipated HER benchmarks
 - Maintenance costs (indicative estimates only)
 - IT implications/costs for providing full access to conservation officers (preliminary only)
 - Possible future management structures (considered in the context of Pathfinder)
- 8 The reports conclusions are that the creation of a full HER from the existing SMR would require:
- A full-time HER assistant for two years to input new information, principally on historic buildings.
 - Thereafter, a part or full-time HER assistant (depending on emerging workload) to help maintain the HER assuming a significant (50%-100%) increase in consultations and reports submitted (This estimate assumes the HER remains a single entity – see options below).
 - Agreement on future management structure and funding arrangements
 - Technical assessment of IT options and funding for improved access.
- 9 A fundamental issue for this review is its relationship to the implementation of Heritage Protection Reform and Bucks Pathfinder. Rather than simply assume delivery within the existing arrangements we have taken the view that a range of options ought to be considered in order to demonstrate that the preferred option will provide best value. These options will be presented to the Forum and have been assessed principally from the perspective of the HER as this would be the central information hub for historic environment services across all authorities. However, we are aware that they raise wider issues! Each structure has been assessed for performance against four criteria: cost, quality of service, practicality and alignment with heritage protection reform. The six management structures considered are:

Option 1: Status-quo - HER and archaeologists at county level, conservation officers at district level

Option 2: HER devolved to Districts – HER and archaeologists devolved to districts forming four separate services

Option 3: BCC runs HER through SLAs – HER and archaeologists at county, conservation officers at district level. HER run through SLA with Districts.

Option 4: BCC runs single centralised service – conservation officers join HER and archaeologists in county service, run through SLAs with Districts.

Option 5: Lead District runs single centralised service – HER and archaeologists and conservation officers amalgamate in a lead District, run through SLAs with county and other districts.

Option 6: Outsourced service – HER, archaeologists and possibly conservation officers all outsourced to a trust or commercial consultancy.

The six management structures were then scored against the four performance criteria as follows:

++ = major positive outcome

+ = positive outcome

O = no change

+/- = mixed positive and negative

- = negative outcome

-- = major negative outcome

Management Option	Performance criteria				Positives	Negatives
	Cost (+ = saving - = cost)	Quality of Service	Practicality	Alignment with Heritage Protection Reform		
Option 1: Status quo	- HER cost to county	o	++	- Fails to fully address HPR joint working	2	2
Option 2: HER devolved to districts	-- Short and long term costs	+/- Creates HE services but fragments HER & Arch	-- Fragmentation of the HER	+ Creates integrated local HE services but county excluded	2	5
Option 3: BCC retain HER, SLAs with districts	- HER cost shared	+ Access to HER	+	+ Moves towards "virtual" HE service	3	1
Option 4: Single centralised service at BCC	o Might allow efficiencies to absorb HER costs?	+/- Creates HE service but separation of COs from Districts	- Staff movements/ Accommodation issues	++ Creates "sub-regional" HE service	3	2
Option 5: Single centralised service at a lead district	- HER cost	+/- Creates HE service but separation of COs from Districts	- Transfer of HER – IT issues	++ Creates "sub-regional" HE service	3	3
Option 6: Outsourced Service (Commercial/Trust)	-- Consultancy externalises all costs	-- Lack of proactive role and local responsiveness	- Transfer of HER – IT issues	o/+ Could be integrated HE service if COs included	0/1	5

10 Conclusion

Management Option 3 for BCC to operate a county-wide HER managed and part-funded through SLAs with the district councils performs best against the criteria and is likely to provide the most practical and cost-effective outcome; although further consideration could be given to a centralised historic environment service based either at the County Council or a lead District Council if that was felt desirable. The status quo does not really address the challenges of HPR and anticipated new statutory requirements whilst other options offer few benefits and significant challenges.

E. BACKGROUND PAPERS

Consultations on the Review of Heritage Protection and Historic Environment Records. Report to Buckinghamshire Historic Environment Forum, 24th September 2003

Heritage Protection White Paper. Report to Buckinghamshire Historic Environment Forum, 28th March 2007

Heritage Protection for the 21st Century. DCMS White Paper (March 2007)

Heritage Protection for the 21st Century. Regulatory Impact Assessment DCMS (March 2007)

Historic Environment Records Consultation. DCMS (July 2003)

Protecting our historic environment: Making the system work better. DCMS (July 2003)

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