

BUCKINGHAMSHIRE HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT RECORD

To: Buckinghamshire Historic Environment Forum

Date: 25th March 2008

Authors: Report of the County Archaeologist and Historic Environment Record Officer

A. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1 To present the Historic Environment Record (HER) Scoping Report and related BCC decision to change the name of the Sites and Monuments Record. The report only covers the modern administrative county, not the Unitary Authority of Milton Keynes.

B. PROPOSED ACTION

2 The Forum is invited to:

ENDORSE the HER Scoping Report as a basis for prioritising HER development work and negotiation between the County and District Councils over implementation of the proposal in the Heritage White Paper for Historic Environment Records to be accorded statutory status.

C. RESOURCES IMPLICATIONS

- 3 An interim assessment of resource needs is provided in the HER Scoping report and summarised in paragraph 6 below. The interim resource assessment will need to be reviewed in the light of the promised guidance on the format and content of HERs. In its analysis of consultation responses DCMS has committed to meet the cost of any additional burdens to local authorities.

Significant progress is considered achievable in 2008/9 and 2009/10, subject to confirmation of District Council contributions to the planning advisory service (covered in Agenda item 5). From April 2010 a bid has been made under the County Council's Medium Term Plan for an HER Assistant Post but it is anticipated that this would be either externally-funded or joint-funded through the negotiations alluded to above.

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 was that all local authorities will have a statutory duty to maintain or have access to an Historic Environment Record. In its analysis of consultation responses to the White Paper, DCMS has re-stated its intention to introduce this duty and says that: “ We anticipate in practice that the current network of HERs that are maintained by upper tier local authorities will continue, with some improvements in service provision. We do not envisage that every local planning authority will have to create an HER from scratch. We also propose to publish guidance on the format and content of HERs.”

- 5 Acting on a recommendation from this Forum, Buckinghamshire County Council has formally changed the name of the “Buckinghamshire Sites and Monuments Record” to “Buckinghamshire Historic Environment Record”. The Council also decided that revised terms of reference and funding arrangements should be negotiated with District Councils to meet the requirements of the forthcoming Heritage Protection Act.
- 6 The HER Scoping Report’s conclusion is that that the preferred management structure (endorsed by this Forum in September 2007) would be for BCC to operate the HER through Service Level Agreements – the HER and archaeologists would remain based at county level, conservation officers would be at district level. Within this structure it is estimated that the creation of a full HER from the existing record 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
 - Technical assessment of IT options and funding for improved access.
 - Agreement on future funding arrangements
- 7 Key Outcomes for the HER have been identified as:

HER Policy and Planning

1. Review and update this HER Action Plan on an annual basis
2. Local recording practice & procedures documentation completed by April 2009
3. Service Level Agreements with District Councils negotiated and in place by April 2010

HER Content

4. Develop the HER into a fully-developed on-line HER by April 2012
5. Recording of national and local designations meet requirements of proposed new heritage protection regime by April 2011

Staff Resources

6. Secure resources for HER Assistant post by April 2010
7. Maintain/develop volunteering with a target of at least 70 hours per annum

Information Technology

8. Migrate HLC dataset into HER database by April 2008
9. Migrate EUS dataset into HBSMR by April 2011
10. Long-term digital data storage & maintenance issues resolved by April 2009
11. Initiate ITU technical appraisal of approved IT option from HER Report by April 2009

HER Access

12. Complete the "Unlocking Buckinghamshire's Past" Project by December 2007. (NB: Completed November 2007)
13. Maintain a program of monthly publicity focused around 'Site of the Month'
14. Continue to promote the UBP web site for educational use and seek resources to maintain related activities
15. Continue to monitor and make improvements in response to customer feedback and also seek opinions of 'non-users' through a residents panel survey

E. BACKGROUND PAPERS

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

Creating a Buckinghamshire Historic Environment Record. Report to Buckinghamshire Historic Environment Forum, 19th September 2007.

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. An analysis of consultation responses. DCMS (November 2007)

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

Historic Environment Records Consultation. DCMS (July 2003)

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