



# Buckinghamshire County Council

## Minutes

## *BUCKINGHAMSHIRE HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT FORUM*

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE BUCKINGHAMSHIRE HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT FORUM HELD ON WEDNESDAY 19 SEPTEMBER 2007 IN MEZZANINE ROOM 1, COUNTY HALL, AYLESBURY, COMMENCING AT 2.30 PM AND CONCLUDING AT 4.00 PM.

### MEMBERS PRESENT

#### Members

Mr C Cashman  
Mr M Farley  
Sir J Horsbrugh-Porter  
Mr H McCarthy  
Mr R Pushman (Chairman)  
Mr F Robinson OBE

#### Organisation

Aylesbury Vale District Council  
Bucks Archaeological Society  
Chiltern District Council  
Wycombe District Council  
Buckinghamshire County Council  
Buckinghamshire County Council

#### Officers

Mr M Andrew  
Mr J Brushe  
Mr N Crank  
Mrs A Davies  
Mr S Kidd  
Mrs S Polhill  
Mrs C Street  
Mr B Thorn  
Ms J Wise

#### Organisation

Milton Keynes Council

Bucks County Museum

### 1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE / CHANGES IN MEMBERSHIP

Apologies were received from Cllr R Smith - Chiltern District Council, Cllr Vanessa McPake - Milton Keynes Council, Roger Evans –Diocese of Oxford, Chris Welch – English Heritage, Gary Marshall – National Trust and Brian Giggins – Milton Keynes Council. Members were informed that Nick Crank was substituting for Brian Giggins for the duration of the meeting.

The Chairman announced that there were three new members of the Forum: Cllr R Smith, Cllr Vanessa McPake and Cllr Sue Polhill.

### 2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Mr M Farley declared a personal interest as a former County Archaeologist.

### 3 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 28 March 2007 were agreed as a

correct record subject to the following amendment:

Page 6, Emergency Recording Fund – in the recommendation, amend the word 'geographical' to 'geophysical'.

#### **4 MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES**

##### **Heritage Protection White Paper**

The County Archaeological Officer reported that there had been little overt progress but it was expected the Draft Bill would be published in time to be considered at the next meeting of the Forum.

#### **5 CREATING A BUCKINGHAMSHIRE HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT RECORD**

The County Archaeological Officer gave a presentation on the issues surrounding 'Creating a Buckinghamshire Historic Environment Record'.

He advised that Julia Wise had been working on assessing the new information to be added into the Sites and Monument Record (SMR) and other requirements to create an HER and had discussed the requirements with Conservation Officers. The impact of the HER creation had forced Officers to look at historic environment services as a whole and how they were structured.

The Officer went through the possible options as detailed in his report. He advised that it was not possible to retain the status quo as the responsibility for HER creation would be across all authorities. In putting together the options, the Officer had examined costs, quality of services, practicality and alignment with the heritage protection regime. The results had been assembled into a matrix scoring system and had shown the preferred option to be Option 3. This option involved keeping the current structure and strengthening Service Level Agreements (SLAs).

Members discussed the proposed options and made the following comments on Option 3:

- Good fit with the Pathfinder Initiative
- Allowed maximum fulfilment for individuals
- Caused the least disruption.

Members were asked to forward any comments on the Draft HER Scoping Report to Julia Wise.

#### **RESOLVED**

##### **The Forum:**

- a) AGREED to forward any comments on the Draft HER Scoping Report to Julia Wise**
- b) CONSIDERED the management options assessment**
- c) RECOMMENDED 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.**

#### **6 QUARRENDON SAM PROGRESS REPORT**

The County Archaeological Officer gave a presentation on proposals for the future management of the scheduled ancient monument at Quarrendon.

The Officer advised that a Working Party consisting of stakeholders and chaired by Chris Williams, Chief Executive BCC, had discussed the future of the site over the past year. A report had been received from the Buckinghamshire Archaeological Society, a management options had been compiled by the County Archaeological Officer and legal advice had been obtained regarding the setting up of a charitable trust. This information had led to the Working Group setting out a number of conclusions as detailed in the Officer's report. These would be forwarded to the Leadership Group and to the Cabinet the following month.

The Officer advised that a bid for Growth Area Funding was in its final stage and would cover much but not all of the preferred option work. In response to a query from a member, the Officer confirmed that the setting up of a charitable company to manage the site was preferred, as the company would be limited by guarantee and therefore liability would be restricted. Charitable companies were also able to receive grant aid.

A member commented that this was a wonderful opportunity to develop and protect an important historic site, and commended the work of all those involved.

#### **RESOLVED**

**The Forum ENDORSED and SUPPORTED the recommendations of the Quarrendon Working Party.**

### **7 EMERGENCY RECORDING FUND**

The Forum received the report of the County Archaeological Officer which reviewed the operation of the Emergency Recording Fund (ERF).

The Officer advised that there had been no further call on the Fund since the last report to the Forum. Although the Forum had given permission to seek to conduct a geophysical survey of the Whaddon Chase Hoard site, regrettably no response had been received and it was therefore unlikely the survey would go ahead.

A member commented on the importance of retaining the ERF as there were no other such funds in existence to meet emergencies of this kind.

#### **RESOLVED**

**The Forum NOTED the current status of the Fund.**

### **8 MILTON KEYNES ARCHAEOLOGICAL OFFICER'S REPORT**

The Forum received the report of the Senior Archaeological Officer and Archaeological Officer, Design and Conservation, Milton Keynes Council, on recent archaeological matters in Milton Keynes.

#### **RESOLVED**

**The Forum NOTED the report.**

### **9 BUCKINGHAMSHIRE COUNTY ARCHAEOLOGICAL OFFICER'S REPORT**

The Forum received the report of the County Archaeological Officer on the work of

the County Archaeological Service since the last meeting of the Forum.

The Officer highlighted resource problems being experienced by the Service resulting from the County's Medium Term Planning Process, which could result in the Service having to charge District Councils for services currently provided free of charge.

The Officer made reference to the second meeting of the Steering Group to support the Buckinghamshire Historic Towns Project which would take place on 8 October – members were warmly invited to attend.

The Officer advised that the Unlocking Buckinghamshire's Past project was nearing completion. The final stage would be to write a formal report to Heritage Lottery. The Officer requested that members advise him of any missing links to other sites or information that could be included on the project website.

The Officer had raised concerns in his report about the Wycombe Local Development Framework which did not include advice from the Archaeology Service on protecting the historic environment. He was obtaining further advice about how to take this matter forward. The Officer stated that, from a heritage point of view, a better response had been received to the Aylesbury Vale Core Strategy and Aylesbury Allocated Sites (preferred options) as the selection of preferred directions for growth had largely avoided the most sensitive areas around each town.

Regarding both these items, members commented on the need for a general policy statement on the historic environment that could be used when considering planning matters, that was pertinent to all the Districts. It was agreed that this matter should be pursued via the Chairman who would seek an agenda item on the Pathfinder Group agenda.

The Officer showed slides of some of the key areas of work that the Archaeological Service was undertaking. A particular area of interest was the site of the Royal Ordnance Factory at Westcott, which had been used for research into rocket production. The Officer advised that the site included a number of very unusual structures that might be worthy of scheduling and provided a unique insight into rocketry in the UK. A member stressed the importance of using history recording for the site, commenting on the need to obtain information from people who had previously worked there who might still live in the local area.

A member referred to the Bronze Age and Saxon Medieval Settlement at Bierton Church Farm. As the contractor had gone bankrupt and the developer was unwilling to take responsibility, it seemed very unlikely that the project would be published. Members discussed how this matter could be taken forward, including the possibility of commissioning someone to take on the work. However, costs for this were likely to be well above 15k and it was unclear how this money could be found. One suggestion was the Buckinghamshire Archaeological Society might wish to see if they could contribute funding for the work. The County Archaeological Officer added that enforcement processes for cases such as these had been strengthened.

## **RESOLVED**

### **The Forum NOTED:**

- a The resource issues raised by the County Council's Medium Term Plan**
- b) The Service's Performance Indicators and contribution to national indicators BV205 and 209**
- c) Progress with strategic projects**

- d) **Historic environment issues related to the Aylesbury and Wycombe Local Development Frameworks**
- e) **Recent archaeological fieldwork**
- f) **Progress in securing publication of archaeological reports.**

## **10 COUNTY MUSEUM REPORT**

The Forum received reports by the Keeper of Archaeology and the Finds Liaison Officer at the County Museum.

Members were advised that Officers had been busy preparing for the Portable Antiquities Exhibition which was due to start within the next two weeks.

The Finds Liaison Officer had highlighted problems with delays caused by the Coroner's Office in that area when making decisions about finds. This was having a negative impact on treasure finders who were honestly reporting their finds, as they were having to wait much longer for their money. It was agreed that a letter of support would be sent to the British Museum from the Forum, the wording for this would be advised by Brett Thorn from the County Museum.

### **RESOLVED**

**The Forum NOTED the report.**

## **11 NATIONAL TRUST REPORT**

Members had received a report from the National Trust on recent activity.

### **RESOLVED**

**The Forum NOTED the report.**

## **12 CONSERVATION OFFICERS' REPORTS**

The Conservation Officer from **South Bucks District Council** reported:

- The conservation area application for Taplow / River had been completed. The County Archaeological Officer was thanked for his contribution to this.
- The Uxbridge Lock conservation area application was out for consultation, and those for Beaconsfield and Denham were in preparation
- The application for a proposed spa at Langley House was likely to be refused.

The Officer advised members of an interesting project at the Old Forge Cottage in Denham. The owner had indicated they were happy to have dendochronology analysis carried out on the timber frame but were not sure how this could be taken forward. It was suggested that Buckinghamshire Archaeological Society could be approached to see if they had any funding for this.

The Conservation Officer from **Aylesbury Vale District Council** reported:

- Preparations were taking place for conservation area appraisals in the areas of Bierton, Dinton / Gibraltar, and Akeley
- Conservation area applications for Long Crendon and Wendover were in production

- Regarding 'Buildings at Risk', Brook House in Wendover had been secured but there continued to be difficulties in liaising with the owner of the property, whose goods were still in the building
- The survey of the historic buildings stock was progressing slowly and was approximately one third of the way through. The Officer carrying out this work had identified a further 30 buildings at risk
- The service continued to be inundated with applications and queries regarding listed buildings.

The Conservation Officer from **Wycombe District Council** reported:

- The Tylers Green and Penn joint working initiative was to go to Committee
- Well-End was to go out to consultation
- A survey was to take place in High Wycombe appraising each character area
- Buildings at risk: High Wycombe Station. A host of applications had been received. The scheme was opposed by the County Archaeological Officer
- A revised application had not been received for Waters Ash Barn. The building was well ventilated
- Many listed building applications and queries had been received.

### **13 ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

None.

### **14 DATE AND TIME OF NEXT AND FUTURE MEETINGS**

- Tuesday 25 March 2008, 2.30pmm Mezzanine Room 3, County Hall, Aylesbury.
- Wednesday 24 September 2008, 2.30pm, Mezzanine Room 3, County Hall, Aylesbury.

**CHAIRMAN**