



Buckinghamshire County Council

Minutes

BUCKINGHAMSHIRE HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT FORUM

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE BUCKINGHAMSHIRE HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT FORUM HELD ON WEDNESDAY 25 MARCH 2009 IN MEZZANINE ROOM 3, COUNTY HALL, AYLESBURY, COMMENCING AT 2.32 PM AND CONCLUDING AT 4.00 PM.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Members

Mr C Cashman
Mr R Evans
Mr M Farley
Sir J Horsbrugh-Porter
Mrs V McPake
Mrs S Polhill
Mr R Pushman (Chairman)

Organisation

Aylesbury Vale District Council
Diocese of Oxford
Bucks Archaeological Society
Chiltern District Council
Milton Keynes Council
Aylesbury Vale District Council
Buckinghamshire County Council

Officers

Ms E Alqassar
Mr N Crank
Mrs A Davies
Mr B Giggins
Mr S Kidd
Ms K MacDonald
Mr G Marshall
Ms J Wise

Organisation

Buckinghamshire County Council
Milton Keynes Council
Aylesbury Vale District Council
Milton Keynes Council
Buckinghamshire County Council
Buckinghamshire County Council
National Trust
Buckinghamshire County Council

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE / CHANGES IN MEMBERSHIP

Apologies were received from Martin Andrew, Hugh McCarthy and Brett Thorn.

2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

3 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 24 September 2008 were confirmed subject to the following:

Nick Crank, Milton Keynes Council attended the meeting but his attendance was not noted.

4 MATTERS ARISING

The Forum was advised that a response to the letter sent regarding Quarrendon Leas

was received from John Byrne – further discussions were taking place regarding possible locations for a crematorium.

5 HERITAGE PROTECTION REFORM

Members had received a report from Sandy Kidd, County Archaeologist on Heritage Protection Reform.

The report updated the Forum on progress with the Heritage Protection legislation and Members were informed that the Draft Heritage Protection Bill was expected to form part of the Queen's Speech in December 2008 but was not mentioned due to the government's decision to focus on the economic downturn.

The report identified actions agreed at the September 2008 meeting of the Forum and the following points were made:

1. A letter was sent to the Buckinghamshire MPs and the responses received were circulated at the meeting. The Milton Keynes Cabinet Member for Communities, Mrs McPake offered to approach Phyllis Starkey, who had not replied.
2. Sandy Kidd agreed to draft a response for the Chairman in relation to consultation on a new draft Planning Policy statement.
3. The County Council has commenced work on the preparation of a costed IT Appraisal for making the HER accessible to District Councils
4. A draft charging policy for archaeological planning advisory service has been drawn up. Legal advice has been sought and a response awaited.
5. The Service Level Agreements for Historic Environment Services have not been agreed due to the delay in the reform. A working party is considering the implications of the Heritage Protection Reform without legislation.

RESOLVED

The Forum NOTED the report.

6 HERITAGE AT RISK

Members had received a report from Sandy Kidd, County Archaeologist on Heritage At Risk.

The Forum was asked to NOTE the conclusions of the survey and CONSIDER whether they would like to receive annual updates.

The officer informed the Forum that English heritage has published an annual Buildings at Risk Register covering grade I and II* buildings at risk of neglect or decay since 1999. The register which will be launched in June, has now been developed to cover 'Heritage at Risk' comprising scheduled ancient monuments, registered historic parks and battlefields as well as grade I and II* listed buildings.

The officer summarised the current situation in Buckinghamshire compared to the averages for the South East and England.

AVDC

11 listed buildings at risk

3 scheduled ancient monuments

Chiltern

0 listed buildings at risk

0 scheduled ancient monuments

Milton Keynes

3 listed buildings at risk

6 scheduled ancient monuments

South Bucks

3 listed buildings at risk

0 scheduled ancient monuments

Wycombe District Council

0 listed buildings at risk

7 scheduled ancient monuments

No data was available for Parks and Gardens or for conservation areas, grade II listed buildings or unscheduled archaeological sites.

Compared to the national average:

I or II buildings at risk*

Buckinghamshire – 3.8%

South East – 1.9%

England – 2.2%

Scheduled ancient monuments at risk

Buckinghamshire – 8%

South East – 16%

England – 21%

Members were informed that Buckinghamshire is above the regional and national averages for buildings at risk largely due to the seven structures at Stowe. There was a discussion regarding whether there was a legal requirement to maintain a scheduled ancient monument and the officer advised that there is generally no legislation which can be applied to enforce an owner when the scheduled ancient monument is in their ownership.

RESOLVED

The Forum NOTED the report and AGREED to receive annual reports.

7 BUCKINGHAMSHIRE COUNTY ARCHAEOLOGIST'S REPORT

The Forum received the report of the County Archaeologist, Sandy Kidd on the work of the County Archaeological Service since the last meeting of the Forum.

The Officer highlighted that the economic downturn has reduced the number of archaeological fieldwork projects. However planning and other consultations requiring appraisal for archaeological impact remain high.

There has been a decline in the use of the HER after a strong start to the year. There

has also been a declining use of the UBP website which could be attributable to the loss of Kim Biddulph's promotion and marketing skills. Promotion and marketing of the UBP website will be taken forward this year within existing resources.

The Officer advised the Forum that a favourable appeal decision was obtained at Mellors Barn, Crafton, where the inspector held that the conversion of a barn to residential use including provision of a new access road would fail to preserve the character or appearance of the conservation areas and would harm the setting of the earthworks associated with the former medieval settlement.

The Solent-Thames Research Frameworks Project is a joint project run by Oxford-Wessex Archaeology and funded by English Heritage has produced a complete series of 'resource assessment' papers for the County. The County papers are available to view on Buckinghamshire CC website. The regional project is now preparing a bid for funding the strategy stage and the officer asked Members if they would like to receive a presentation on this at the next meeting.

Members AGREED to receive a presentation

Action: Sandy Kidd

Members discussed the effect of the economic downturn on contractors and it was highlighted that one of the contractors mentioned in Appendix B had ceased trading. A Member raised concerns over the loss of core skills. It was also highlighted that if a company goes into receivership the site archives are difficult to ascertain.

RESOLVED

The Forum NOTED the report and resource implications and AGREED the proposed actions.

8 COUNTY MUSEUM REPORT

Members had received a report from Ros Tyrrell, Finds Liaison Officer.

RESOLVED

The Forum NOTED the report.

9 MILTON KEYNES ARCHAEOLOGICAL OFFICER'S REPORT

Members had received a report from the Archaeological Service in Milton Keynes.

The Forum was advised that Brian Giggins, Milton Keynes Senior Archaeological Officer will be retiring at the end of March 2009. The Chairman thanked the Officer for his contributions to the Forum and wished him well for the future.

The Officer advised that he is currently in the process of writing a manual for the Historic Environment Record (HER) access database and is working on ensuring the HER database is in the best possible state before his retirement.

The second Milton Keynes Council Archaeology day was held in November 2008. The event was well attended and attracted press and radio coverage.

Three areas of excavation have been agreed, although no further work has been completed. Hopefully another six areas of excavation will be starting in the next month.

The Archaeological service is still in negotiations regarding Broughton in the eastern area of Milton Keynes, which is likely to go to mitigation as there is potentially a large area of preservation in situ.

The Milton Keynes Archaeological Service is hoping to recruit an assistant conservation officer this year.

Mrs McPake noted that English Heritage had provided £300k for Bletchley Park and suggested the Buckinghamshire Historic Environment Forum might like to meet their in the future.

RESOLVED

The Forum NOTED the report.

10 NATIONAL TRUST REPORT

Members had received a report from Gary Marshall, National Trust Archaeologist, Thames and Solent Region which advised members of the recent work of the Trust.

A member asked if Stowe New Inn would be a visitor centre. The Officer advised that the site would be open to the public in 2011.

A member asked if there were any plans to modernise Buckingham Chantry Chapel and were informed that a toilet would be put in.

RESOLVED

The Forum NOTED the report.

11 CONSERVATION OFFICERS' REPORTS

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

- The Conservation Areas programme is still going ahead.
- Officers are currently drafting a Conservation Area Supplementary Planning Document.
- Buildings at risk:
 - Dinton Castle: an Urgent Works notice has been served. Work due to commence on 12 March 2009.
 - Winslow Hall: condition of house and wall being monitored
 - Turweston Manor: there has been good liaison with professional advisors regarding the next stages
 - Mentmore Towers: There are still question marks regarding the

possibility of a change of ownership which is a concern.

- Buildings at risk survey:
 - Work is still continuing. The date for the end of the contract for Lorraine Carter is September 2009.
 - There are a number of grade II listed buildings at risk, which is a by product of the survey identifying the needs
- Historic Buildings casework: still busy, applications have picked up recently and there are always enquiries regarding repairs and maintenance.

A Member asked if Prebendal house was considered a building at risk. The Conservation Officer advised that there is currently a new contractor which should be the sign of something happening there shortly. A Member queried if there were any particular themes relating to particular types of buildings at risk and whether there was anything public bodies could do to respond. The Officer advised that the data hadn't been analysed yet but that part of the function of the survey was to identify problem areas and address the response.

The Officer advised that an update would be provided at the next meeting.

Members were informed that Chicheley Hall, a Grade I listed building in Milton Keynes had been purchased by the Royal Society. The Royal Society has planning permission and listed building consent for conversion of the hall including the insertion of a lift.

12 EMERGENCY RECORDING FUND

The Forum was advised that there had been no calls on the funds and that the funds remain held in a holding account with Bucks County Council.

13 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Mrs McPake informed the Forum that she was a Member of the Buckinghamshire and River Ouzel Internal Drainage Board and that as a Member of this Board she had discovered the existence of a new flood and water bill. Mrs McPake was highlighting the existence of this bill to enable the Archaeology Service to comment on the consultation. Sandy Kidd said he would refer this to the Association of Local Government Archaeologists.

Action: Sandy Kidd

Sandy Kidd suggested Members might like to discuss the future direction/priorities of the Forum. Members were asked to consider if the Forum worked and how it could work better. The Forum was informed that English Heritage used a management cycle and it was suggested that if the Forum drew in other colleagues such as tourism Members could think about how the cycle could work in a more informed way. The Officer highlighted that this tied into sustainability and how Members see the Forum moving in the future. Members were asked for their thoughts on a conference, where wider participants could be involved and the Officer asked if there was any merit in Historical Environment action plans and whether this was something Members might aspire to.

A Member highlighted that a conference was discussed a few years ago and agreed that it had merit. Another Member commented that due to the current economic climate the timing might be right and more people might be interested. Also as people might be taking less holidays it was suggested that it would be a good opportunity for heritage sites and museums to encourage people to use the facilities available in the United Kingdom.

Action: Sandy Kidd agreed to explore the idea of a conference further and asked if Members had any ideas to contact him. The Officer informed the Forum that he would bring an update report to the next meeting.

14 DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

Wednesday 30 September 2009, 2.30pm, Mezzanine Room2, County Hall, Aylesbury.

CHAIRMAN