

Buckinghamshire Archaeological Officer's Report

To: Buckinghamshire Historic Environment Forum

Date: 8 March 2011

Author: County Archaeologist

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 **resources and performance indicators, including the new charging policy and changing managerial structure**
 - b **progress with strategic projects**
 - c **recent planning-related archaeological work**
 - d **progress in securing publication of archaeological reports.**

C. RESOURCES

- 3 At present the service comprises three core staff (2.6 FTE). In addition David Green is externally funded post supported by English Heritage working on the Historic Towns Project and also internally project funded to manage the preparation of a Landscape Character Assessment for Chiltern, South Bucks and Wycombe Districts. Following the resignation of the Natural Environment Team Leader Sandy Kidd has taken the role of Acting Team Leader Natural and Historic Environment – from April to merged team will be joined by the Buckinghamshire & Milton Keynes Environmental Record Centre. These arrangements will be taken into a comprehensive review of Planning, Environment & Development which is to be subject to internal consultation in summer 2011.
- 4 Financial constraints on the County Council are now severe. It was therefore necessary to increase income from fees and charges to recover a greater proportion of the costs of the historic environment

record and archaeological planning advisory service. A charging policy was been consulted upon, agreed with the District Councils and implemented in December 2010. The policy will be reviewed in April 2011 and a copy of the service specification and schedule of charges is attached for comment.

D. SUPPORTING INFORMATION

5 **Strategic Projects**

This section provides a summary of projects with a strategic, conservation and/or interpretation nature. Most of these projects are being pursued in partnership with other organisations and involve drawing in substantial amounts of external funding.

The **Buckinghamshire Historic Towns Project** is funded principally by English Heritage supported by Buckinghamshire County Council and Milton Keynes Council. Studies of Amersham, Aylesbury, Beaconsfield, Bletchley & Fenny Stratford, Buckingham, Burnham, Denham, Gerrards Cross, Great Missenden, Haddenham, Long Crendon, Newport Pagnell, Olney, Princes Risborough and Wendover are currently on the project web site. Chalfont St.Giles, Chesham, High Wycombe and Stony Stratford reports will be available shortly. The project is contributing to Townscape Character Studies being undertaken by Chiltern and South Bucks District Councils in support of their Local Development Frameworks. Presentations of the results have been made to South Bucks District Council and in Milton Keynes, further events are planned. The project is due to be completed in autumn 2011, although the timetable may slip to allow for other work.

The **Solent-Thames Research Frameworks Project** has effectively stalled due to the inability of Oxford-Wessex Archaeology and English Heritage to agree funding for the final stage. If the current impasse cannot be resolved it may be more cost-effective for Buckinghamshire to 'go it alone' to produce a local research strategy.

At **Quarrendon Leas** sources of funding are being investigated for conservation of the church ruin with a linked educational project. Land transfer had been postponed due to the delay in commencing development at Berryfields MDA but it is hoped that progress can be made now development has commenced.

A separate report will be provided on **High Speed 2**.

6 Planning related archaeological work

Volume measures	3rd Quarter 2010	4th Quarter 2010
Total number of consultations handled	162	129
Number of planning applications handled	132	101
Planning applications responded to within 14 days (target 90%)	90%	80%
Number of development-related archaeological fieldwork projects	9	10
Success rate at appeal (target 50% annual success rate)	0 of 0	0 of 0

Considerable uncertainty pervades planning and development due to the combination of economic downturn, revocation of Regional Spatial Strategies and proposed reforms to replace national planning policies and introduce 'localism'. This uncertainty particularly affects Aylesbury Vale where the submission Core Strategy was withdrawn in October 2010 and a new programme is not expected until summer 2011.

A full list of development-related fieldwork from July to December 2010 is provided as appendix A.

7 Publication update (Appendix B)

A revised post-excavation programme has been agreed with Oxford Archaeology for the joint publication of the **Dorney Rowing Lake and Maidenhead, Windsor and Eton Flood Alleviation Scheme**. The situation with other projects is summarised in appendix B.

E. BACKGROUND PAPERS

1. Archaeological Reports submitted to the Bucks HER
2. Historic Environment Service Specifications and Charging Policy (BCC, December 2010)

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