

Minutes

BUCKINGHAMSHIRE HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT FORUM

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE BUCKINGHAMSHIRE HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT FORUM HELD ON WEDNESDAY 16 MARCH 2011 IN MEZZANINE ROOM 3, COUNTY HALL, AYLESBURY, COMMENCING AT 2.30 PM AND CONCLUDING AT 4.27 PM.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Members

Mr C Cashman
Mr R Evans
Mr M Farley
Sir J Horsbrugh-Porter
Mr H McCarthy
Mrs V McPake
Mr G Marshall
Mrs S Polhill
Mr R Pushman (Chairman)
Mr N Crank

Organisation

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

Officers

Mr M Andrew
Mr S Kidd
Mr B Thorn
Ms J Wise
Ms K MacDonald
Ms J Foster

Organisation

Wycombe District Council
Buckinghamshire County Council
Bucks County Museum
Buckinghamshire County Council
Buckinghamshire County Council
AVDC

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE / CHANGES IN MEMBERSHIP

Apologies of absence were received from Brenda Jennings

2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest

3 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 22 September 2010 were confirmed subject to the following:



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE



“Thames & Solent region had merged with the Thames Valley area” should read “Thames & Solent region had merged with the South East region”.

The Chairman thanked Ms McPake for arranging for the last meeting of the Board at Bletchley Park. He said that Members found the tour and the setting most pleasant.

4 MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

There were no matters arising.

5 LOCAL HERITAGE ASSETS: ENGLISH HERITAGE CONSULTATION

Members had received the report of the County Archaeologist.

Mr Kidd said that English Heritage had published a draft consultation on ‘Good Practice Guide for Local Listing: Identifying and Managing Significant Local Heritage Assets’. Members discussed the value of the document and PPS5. Mr Kidd suggested that the Forum should respond to the consultation. He highlighted that only Wycombe District Council has a local list and said that the concept of the local list was broadening.

Members had a discussion around local listing and concern was raised regarding funding. It was highlighted that much can be achieved by local groups but commented that it still requires a staff member to co-ordinate and produce. It was also said that local listing does not bring any additional controls. The consultation document says local listing will increase protection but this was felt to be raising expectation as it introduced no additional powers of sanction.

An Officer said that local lists hold more weight locally. He commented that in the Wycombe area some buildings which are not in a conservation area have been conserved on the basis of local listing. He also advised that there is joint working with local societies who had received training on the criteria for the listing of buildings. He commented that Archaeology aspect would have an impact on this as local residents were not experts in Archaeology and that this would need a higher level of professionalism. The Officer said that local residents in Wycombe were pleased with the local listing although they were not happy with the lack of teeth of the list. Local expertise should add to the local list.

A Member said a benefit of the local listing was to raise awareness in local communities and that the more people are aware, this will in turn raise the value of the buildings and local area in their consciousness. The Member said that the localism agenda and neighbourhood plans may impact significantly on the role of community groups. He commented that there is much opportunity to carry out what Wycombe is already doing.

The Forum was advised that AVDC had completed a list of all listed buildings and put these in categories of risk. They are also encouraging villages to gather pictures of all buildings of interest.

Members discussed the role of validation of the local lists and it was highlighted that in Wycombe the list is validated by the Cabinet Member with that responsibility. Members

of the Forum felt it was important that this element of validation is maintained.

It was suggested that Parish Councils could be requested to draw up local lists. A Member highlighted that it was not just about buildings but also about local landscapes.

Mr Kidd commented to a previous point raised about Archaeology and said that the Archaeological aspect was more specialised and by nature harder to defined. He raised concern over the selection criteria for local lists and the need to ensure that these were comprehensive. He commented that how Archaeology and the landscape were covered required closer consideration.

A Member commented that the wording of any response to the consultation should be carefully drafted and said that if a building etc was on the local list the Local Authority should not be committed to maintaining it.

Members agreed that Mr Kidd respond to the consultation on behalf of the Forum.

6 HIGH SPEED 2

Members had received a report from the County Archaeologist.

The Forum was advised that the public consultation on HS2 commenced on 28 February and can be accessed through the County Council website. He said that the current position is that the Member Project Board is opposed to the project on the basis that the business case has not been proved. An environmental impact statement had also not yet been produced.

Mr Kidd said that at the previous meeting of the Forum a Historic Environment response was discussed, which led to a workshop held in November 2010. At the workshop information was gathered and an appraisal of the route formed. He asked that if any Members had any other further comments to add to forward them to him.

He advised that on a national level the County Council is working with English Heritage and colleagues in other Local Authorities to form a Historic Environment technical panel, which will include advising HS2 of best practice.

The Officer said that the report includes the route consultation, Appraisal of Sustainability and the impact of HS2 on the Bucks Historic Environment. He commented that there is an ongoing debate regarding the legal status of the document and the lack of an Environmental Impact Assessment. Mr Kidd said that there are specific statements in the consultation which almost entirely relates to designated assets such as listed buildings, registered parks and scheduled ancient monuments. He said that no listed buildings in Bucks have been mentioned to be at risk but this does not recognise apparently significant impacts, including at least one probable demolition. He commented that there are significant omissions; such as some impacts on designated assets and that the document also largely misses out heritage which is not designated.

Mr Kidd said that the consultation is quite specific and asked that Forum if they wished to comment on the Appraisal of Sustainability, which seemed the most obvious element for the Forum to consider.

A Member said that he was amazed by the approach in the document and that it appeared to be a cursory approach to elements which residents in Bucks hold dear. He further commented that the electricity authority were not happy with how the line would

be powered.

Mrs McPake declared an interest as Cabinet Member for Transport at Milton Keynes Council and said that Milton Keynes Council were in favour of the principle of HS2 and that the scheme had the support of the business community. She said that she would not be able to participate in the discussion of the route and that she and/or Milton Keynes Council could not be involved in opposing the route. She asked that it be noted that any view presented from the Forum exclude Milton Keynes Council. The Member was asked if Milton Keynes Council supported the line rather than the principle. In response the Member said that Milton Keynes support the principle of HS2 and that Milton Keynes will indirectly benefit from the aligning of the route as it will release capacity of the West Coast Mainline.

A Member said that there was no mention of Doddershall Park which although undesignated forms the setting of a Grade II* listed house. Mr Kidd said he would look into this.

Action: Mr Kidd

7 MILTON KEYNES ARCHAEOLOGICAL OFFICER'S REPORT

Members received a report from Nick Crank, Archaeological Officer, Milton Keynes Council.

The Officer advised of the fieldwork projects undertaken in the Milton Keynes areas between July and December 2010. He said that the British Museum will be carrying out further examination at Manor Farm Quarry, Wolverton in April 2011.

The planning application for a new Tesco on the former Aston Martin site was allowed despite local opposition.

The Officer advised that due to budget cuts the vacant Archaeological post has been deleted following a restructure. Following the restructure the Conservation and Archaeology Team is also to become part of the 'Development Management' Team.

The 'Discover MK' shop unit in Milton Keynes has been wound up, however the service now have space in the Central Library and there will be a revolving exhibition. This will also tie in with the Archaeology Day.

The Forum NOTED the report

8 BUCKINGHAMSHIRE COUNTY ARCHAEOLOGIST'S REPORT

Members had received the report of the County Archaeologist.

The Officer informed Members of the organisational changes and said that he had now taken on the role of Acting Team Leader Natural and Historic Environment and that from April the merged team would be joined by the Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes Environmental Record Centre. The arrangements would also be part of the Planning, Environment and Development comprehensive review later in the year.

The Forum was also advised that due to financial constraints a charging policy had been implemented. The Officer was asked if the Council would be charging for Natural Environment advice. In response the Officer advised that the Record Centre charges for copies of records etc and that in relation to other environmental advice, charging may be necessary in the future.

A Member enquired how many people were employed in the Natural Environment Team and the Officer said the team consisted of 2 Environmental Record Centre staff and 5 staff members in the Natural Environment Team, although this was likely to be reduced to 4 people (not 4 full time equivalents).

The Officer was asked if the summary of charges listed on page 74 of the report applied to District Councils. Mr Kidd said that developers would be charged not the District Council, although if a District Council were to be a developer the County Council would charge in that instance. It was highlighted that the County Record Office is separate and has its own charging policy.

A Member asked for an update on 'The Solent-Thames Research Frameworks Project'. The Officer said that the Project was a collaborative exercise and said that stage 1 is complete and is on the Council website. The Project designers put a bid in to English Heritage for the strategy stage and this had hit some difficulties as English Heritage has less funding available. Mr Kidd said that the question was what to do next. He said that the project could continue upto a certain stage until funds are depleted, funds could be sought or the information published as it is. He said that the consultants and Officers have been through a difficult few months and that the response of the consultants was awaited. He said it is not a satisfactory situation and he said Members may want to consider if they want to develop a statement of Bucks priorities, which may offer valuable support.

9 BUCKINGHAMSHIRE HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT RECORD: UPDATE

Members had received the report of the Historic Environment Record Officer.

The Officer advised the Forum of the work of the Buckinghamshire HER since the last meeting and updated the Forum on the priorities for future HER projects. She said that only three members had responded to the proposed project list. Members were referred to the table summarising the results and the Officer commented that the following projects were prioritised:

1. Local buildings of note in Wycombe, South Bucks and Chiltern districts (priority level 1)
2. Farmstead Characterisation project (priority level 2) the officer said that the Council would be looked for funding from English Heritage to take this phase forward
3. BCC Historic Buildings Officers' photos in CBS (priority level 2)
4. Roger Evans' slide collection in CBS (priority level 3)

Mr Marshall commented that the National Trust has a collection of photos and that he would discuss this with the Officer.

Members NOTED the report

10 COUNTY MUSEUM REPORT

Members had received the report of the Ros Tyrell, Finds Liaison Officer and Brett Thorn, Keeper of Archaeology.

Mr Thorn said that the Museum did not appear to be picking up archives from Milton Keynes and Mr Crank suggested Mr Thorn contact him to discuss.

A Member enquired how finds and PAS Database Records linked in with the HER. The Officer advised that professional finds are added to the HER and individual finds are included on the portable equitable schemes and then feed into the HER.

11 NATIONAL TRUST REPORT

Members received the report from Gary Marshall, National Trust Archaeologist.

The Officer highlighted key points from his report as follows:

Stowe New Inn

The finds within the building have been remarkable including over 65 different wallpapers. The archaeological recording has provided a greater insight into how the buildings and use of the rooms have evolved over time. There will be 6 presentations rooms open to the public hopefully by mid September 2011. The Officer said that he hopes to have the Archaeological report completed by the end of June 2011.

A Member suggested it might be possible to hold a BHEF meeting at Stowe once work has been completed.

Cliveden

This has been a huge piece of work with various phases over several years.

Mr Farley asked that Mr Marshall be congratulated on his work at Stowe New Inn and that this be noted.

12 CHURCH ARCHAEOLOGY

Members had received the report of the Diocese of Oxford.

Mr Kidd enquired if the Diocese had considered the impact of HS2 on Churches along the route. Mr Evans suggested that Mr Kidd should contact Bishop Allen to discuss. It was commented that Twyford Church is a good example of a church affected by the proposed route.

A Member asked if the Forum could ask the Bishop for his view on HS2 and the proposed route.

Action: Mr Kidd/Chairman to draft a letter

13 CONSERVATION OFFICERS' REPORTS

(i) AYLESBURY VALE

The following was reported:

- The Conservation Area Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) was adopted on the 4th of March 2011 following a period of public consultation. The Conservation Areas SPD explains the policy framework and guidance for the process by which conservation areas within Aylesbury Vale District are designated, appraised, monitored and managed.
- The Buildings at Risk survey has been completed and Officers are starting to write to those owners with buildings at risk.

- The grant scheme operated in partnership with English Heritage for Kingsbury has started.

(ii) CHILTERN

Nothing to report

(iii) MILTON KEYNES

The following was reported:

The current conservation Area Review programme is on hold. The Heritage at Risk project is underway. The surveys are being carried out and 103 have been submitted for consideration.

A Member enquired if the Heritage at Risk list was closed and the Officer said that if anyone would like to nominate a building to forward it to him.

(iv) SOUTH BUCKS

Nothing to report

(v) WYCOMBE

The following was reported:

- Work is ongoing on the Conservation Area Appraisal and this is ready to go out for public consultation.
- Wycombe Station – the focus is on getting the landscape completed prior to the work on the station.

14 EMERGENCY RECORDING FUND

Members had received the report of the County Archaeologist/Treasurer.

Mr Kidd advised that the current balance of the emergency recording fund stood at £7250.

The Forum noted the grant of £1000 to the National Trust and Mr Marshall thanked the Forum for the funding.

Mr Kidd advised that radiocarbon dating on one of the skeleton remains found during the excavation of a trench on the north side of the building at 40 Church Lane provided a date of 240-420 AD (not BC as listed in the report). The Officer said that it appeared that the burials were not in isolation and said that some graves were also found at St Pauls Church. He said it would appear to be part of a large Roman cemetery. The excavation generated much local interest.

Members then had a discussion on burial sites. Mr Kidd said that the law on burial was interpreted sympathetically to Archaeology and that human remains could be held in museums. Recent interpretations however from the Ministry of Justice have said that all human remains should be reburied after a year, although this could be extended for a survey but there was not a committed intention to retain in a museum. A Member asked

if the Officer could write a letter asking for this interpretation to be re-examined.

Action: Mr Kidd

15 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

There was no any other business.

16 DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

The date of the next meeting of the Forum is to be rescheduled and Members were asked to remove the date of 21 September from their diaries.

A new date will be circulated in due course.

CHAIRMAN