

Buckinghamshire Archaeological Officers' Report

To: Buckinghamshire Historic Environment Forum

Date: 7th March 2014

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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**
- b strategic issues and projects**
- c recent planning-related archaeological work**
- d progress in securing publication of archaeological reports.**

C. RESOURCES

- 3 The County's archaeological service forms part of the Planning, Advisory and Compliance Service's Environment Team within Place Services. Sheila Keene is Environment Lead Officer, Sarah-Jane Farr the Senior Archaeology Planning Officer, Eliza Alqassar, Archaeological Planning Officer (part-time), Julia Wise the HER Officer.

D. SUPPORTING INFORMATION

4 Strategic Issues/Projects

High Speed 2 – our comments on the archaeological content of the Environmental Statement (ES) were merged with those of the District's built heritage colleagues and submitted by BCC to the Parliamentary Assessor for the 27th February deadline. Our key archaeological concerns with the ES are: the use and representation of Historic Environment information; the delivery and timing of further archaeological investigations; ecological and landscaping impacts on archaeology; the lack of information on deposition and curation of

archaeological archive; commitment to community engagement throughout the scheme.

Strategic Planning – we provided comment on both the Chiltern AONB Draft Management Plan and Chiltern Heritage Strategy.

Charging – In the absence of any Service Level Agreements with the Districts, we have been charging for archaeological planning advice since 2010. We have recently reviewed our charging policy and a Cabinet Report has been approved by the Cabinet Member for Environment. New charges are being introduced from April 2014 for site monitoring visits and preparation of briefs and existing charges for advice are being increased. As part of the background research for this work a rapid survey of other County Councils and their charging policies was undertaken. The proposed increases will bring BCC in line with the charges applied by other Councils.

English Heritage New Model consultation from DCMS - we delivered the BCC response in consultation with our BCC Heritage Champion and Cabinet Member for Environment. Whilst not objecting to the proposed split of English Heritage into a charitable organisation (for its properties) and retention of its national historic environment advisory role as 'Historic England' (HE) – we reinforced the value of the new HE body joint working with local authorities and importance of continued resourcing of their strategic role.

Historic Towns Project – David Green (BCC Landscape Advisor) has completed the summary publication, which will be launched in April.

6 Planning related archaeological work

Volume measures	3rd Quarter 2013	4th Quarter 2013
Total number of consultations handled	99	116
Number of planning applications handled	79	90
Planning applications responded to within 14 days (target 90%)	56%	68%
Number of development-related archaeological fieldwork projects	10	7
Success rate at appeal (target 50% annual success rate)	0 of 0	0 of 0

A full list of development-related fieldwork (July 2013 to February 2014) is provided as Appendix A.

Significant archaeological investigations include geophysical survey and evaluation trial trenching on land east of Buckingham Road, Aylesbury (former Strategic Development Area). A proposed residential and mixed use scheme, the site produced clear evidence of Late Iron Age and Roman settlement activity adjacent to the River Thames. The archaeological information has been supplied in support of a new planning application (original refused planning permission in 2013 with one reason being failure to provide pre-determination archaeological information). The original refusal is subject to Appeal.

Marlow Flood Alleviation Scheme remains at the pre-excavation stage. A large-scale of excavation of a significant Neolithic settlement site and Bronze age funerary site is proposed. Briefs have been sent to the consultant working on behalf of the Environment Agency, and project designs for the excavation of the flood storage area at Lower Pound Lane and other sites have been commented on (not approved). The viability of the scheme is now being reconsidered.

7 **Publication update (Appendix B)**

Oxford Archaeology recently published the second of three volumes on their excavations at the Dorney Rowing Lake and the Maidenhead, Windsor and Eton Flood Alleviation Scheme.

8 **Historic Environment Record (HER) report**

The HER performance indicator statistics are shown in the tables below:

Performance Indicator	3rd Quarter 2013	4th Quarter 2013
Historic Environment Records data inputting backlog (targets: reports < 30 by March 2014)	Reports = 44 Collect = 518 Total = 562	Reports = 51 Collect = 518 Total = 569

Volume measures	3rd Quarter 2013	4th Quarter 2013
Number of Higher Level Stewardship applications handled	0	0
Number of reports received by the HER	20	40
Number of Historic Environment Records enquiries handled:		
commercial	18	25
non-commercial	16	19
	2	6

HER enhancement and volunteer projects

Due other commitments, the HER volunteers have only been able to make very limited progress with the condition surveys of war memorials in the county, however it may be possible to recruit additional volunteers to provide more flexibility over this stage of the project. Steady progress is being made on the milestones project and hopefully the volunteer will be able to move onto inputting HER records for the associated turnpike roads before too long. Buckinghamshire Gardens Trust is currently piloting a research and recording project in partnership with the HER, which will build on the initial research for a review of historic parks and gardens carried out for English Heritage by the County Archaeological Service in 1998. In January Julia gave a talk to a meeting of the SE regional County Gardens Trusts on HERs and partnership working with gardens trusts.

E. BACKGROUND PAPERS

1. Archaeological Reports submitted to the Bucks HER

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