

AGENDA ITEM 12

Buckinghamshire Archaeological Officer's Report

To: Buckinghamshire Historic Environment Forum

Date: 21st September 2005

Author: Senior Archaeological Officer

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 **the Service's Performance Indicators and contribution to national indicators BV 205 and 219**
- b **adoption of the Archaeology Enforcement Policy**
- d **progress with the Getting to Know Bernwood, Historic Landscape Characterisation, Monument Management and Unlocking Buckinghamshire's Past Projects**
- e **recent development-related archaeological casework in the county and SUPPORT the County Council and South Bucks District Council in their efforts to protect the industrial heritage of the Great Western Railway.**
- f **progress in securing publication of archaeological reports.**

C. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 3 At present the service comprises three core staff with a base budget of £107,000 and three externally funded posts funded by the Chilterns Conservation Board, English Heritage and the Heritage Lottery Fund. One of the externally funded posts (Getting to Know Bernwood) comes to an end in October.

D. SUPPORTING INFORMATION

4 **Archaeology Service Performance Indicators**

Service volume measures and Performance Indicator statistics collected for the service as part of the County Council's performance management system are presented for the 1st and 2nd quarters of 2005. The service contributes to national BV indicator 205 – a checklist of Quality in Planning Services and, through information supplied from the SMR, to the Conservation Area Appraisal BV 219. The publication of the County Council's **Archaeology Enforcement Policy** should help secure compliance in the minority of difficult cases.

Performance Indicator	1st Quarter 2005	2nd Quarter 2005
Planning applications responded to within 14 days (target 90%)	87%	93%
Success rate at Appeal (<i>revised target 50% annual success rate</i>)	1 out of 1	0 out of 0
Percentage of evaluations with a positive outcome (target 60%)	100%	100%
Number of important sites destroyed or damaged by development or related activity without adequate mitigation (aspirational target 0)	2	0
Sites and Monuments Records data inputting backlog (target: reports < 10; Collections < 5400 by April 05)	9 5382	38 5304

Volume measures	1st Quarter 2005	2nd Quarter 2005
Total number of consultations handled	144	147
Number of planning applications handled	105	121
Number of development-related archaeological fieldwork projects	14	15
Number of reports received by the SMR	29	107
Number of Sites and Monuments Records enquiries handled:		
commercial	49 18	50 26
non-commercial	31	24

5 Strategic and Conservation 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 HLF funded “**Getting to Know Bernwood Forest**” Community Archaeology Project is coming to an end in October 2005. Together with a wide range of partners, the project officer (Becky Wilcox) organised a program of events, including most recently a “Bernwood Day” fayre in Long Crendon and a series of historic walks/visits for Heritage Open Days. An education pack and museum display are nearing completion. The project outputs comprise:

- A series of 14 walks involving 235 people
- A series of 8 talks involving 180 people
- Organising and publicising Bernwood Heritage Open Days 2004 and 2005 with a total of 39 events.
- Public archaeological survey at Claydon House for National Science Week attended by 100 people, young and old.
- Activities for National Archaeology Days and the County Show attended by almost 200 people.
- “Bernwood Day” medieval fayre at Long Crendon attended by 250 people.
- Web site with over 5,500 visits in the first half of 2005.
- Research for interpretation boards on Bernwood Jubilee Way. Survey at Grange Farm, Quainton to be published.
- Promoting a conservation training event at Quainton organised with DEFRA and involving 20 farmers and landowners.
- Educational activities and bonfire kiln at Brill involving 200 people, mainly local children.
- An interactive education pack free to Key Stage 2 schools in the Bernwood area and to all over the web.
- Woodland archaeology survey training event (planned for autumn 2005)
- Travelling museum display (opening October 2005 for 12 months)

Progress with the **Buckinghamshire Historic Landscape Characterisation** and **Historic Towns** Projects has been reported separately (agenda items 7 and 8). The **Chiltern Historic Landscape Characterisation Project** has completed its first stage creating an integrated HLC map for the Chiltern AONB. Project designs have been prepared for the second stage “deepening” projects and a contract for historic buildings characterisation study awarded to Nick Doggett of CgMs Ltd.

The **Monument Management Project** has secured an agreement at Stewkley Moat whereby scrub has been cleared from the monument,

which is included within the village's Conservation Area. Negotiations are underway for an agreement at Danesfield Camp (Medmenham).

Unlocking Buckinghamshire's Past has let contracts for the web-site and digital illustration respectively to Exegesis Ltd and Oxford Archaeology. Work on the content of the public modules is on target. The new system is being hosted by Exegesis on a test site with the expectation that it will be transferred to the County Council's web site in autumn 2005.

6 Archaeology and Development

A list of development-related fieldwork to the end of June 2005 is provided in appendix A. The most significant cases are:

Excavations in advance of construction of the **Stoke Hammond and Linslade Bypass** commenced in May. Network Archaeology have been engaged by McAlpine's to undertake the work with monitoring being provided by Wessex Archaeology, Babbie and the Archaeology Services for Buckinghamshire and Bedfordshire. Investigations have revealed that a supposed fishpond at Chelmscote medieval settlement is a curious and rather inexplicable post-medieval water management feature. Evidence for medieval occupation and agricultural activity has also been found near Chelmscote. To the southwest of Linslade an extensive area of later prehistoric settlement and fields is under investigation.

Other interesting investigations have commenced at **Wexham Quarry**, where deep Roman pits and wells have been found set within enclosures and associated with evidence of industrial activities, and at **Waddesdon Manor**, where a watching brief unexpectedly uncovered substantial remains from the original 19th century design of the north terrace.

Negotiations continue over the **Major Development Areas, Aylesbury**, which affect two scheduled sites as well as important unscheduled remains. Excavation is expected to commence at Weedon Hill MDA in the autumn. A management plan for basic "care and maintenance" of the Quarrendon SAM has been prepared but its longer term future as potential "green infrastructure" for the town remains a matter of ongoing debate. At Aston Clinton MDA, a geophysical survey has discounted the possibility of a Roman villa indicated by a previous report to the SMR – negotiations here are focusing on safeguarding the setting and future management of the scheduled moat.

An appeal has been heard against refusal of planning permission for major redevelopment at the **National Society for Epilepsy, Chalfont St.Peter**. The site is recognised as a pioneering example of its type

but unfortunately illustrates the limitations of the existing designation regime (only four buildings are considered listable) and difficulties that can arise in managing change at such sites. The outcome is awaited.

The heritage impact of the proposed London **Crossrail** Scheme has caused significant concern. According to Crossrail, electrification of the Great Western Railway to Maidenhead will necessitate the demolition of nine road over-bridges built for Brunel in 1835-8 as part of the original design of his broad gauge railway. Although not currently listed, these bridges form part of what is considered to be the most complete early railway in the world and therefore of national/international heritage importance. Parts of the GWR are on the UK's tentative list of World Heritage Sites. The County Council has consequently raised formal objection to the demolition of the two bridges in Buckinghamshire (Dog Kennel and Thorney Lane, Iver) without a full technical assessment through the unusual procedure of a parliamentary petition.

7 **Publication update (Appendix B)**

Some further progress can be reported on the matter of archaeological publication as one report has been published since the last meeting and several others have been, or should shortly be, submitted to the Editor of Records of Buckinghamshire. An updated review of "difficult" cases is required now that the Archaeology Enforcement Policy has been adopted. An ongoing problem is the timetable for completion of Network Archaeology's backlog, for which previous commitments have not been honoured – the Institute of Field Archaeology and potential clients are being advised of this unsatisfactory situation.

E. BACKGROUND PAPERS

1. Archaeological Reports submitted to the SMR
2. World Heritage Sites. The Tentative List of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. DCMS, 1999.
3. Crossrail. Technical Assessment of Historic Railway Bridges. RPS Planning and Environment, 2005.

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