

# Minutes

## *BUCKINGHAMSHIRE HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT FORUM*

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE BUCKINGHAMSHIRE HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT FORUM HELD ON MONDAY 2 MARCH 2015 IN MEZZANINE ROOM 3, COUNTY HALL, AYLESBURY, COMMENCING AT 2.30 PM AND CONCLUDING AT 4.28 PM.**

### **MEMBERS PRESENT**

#### **Members**

Mr C Cashman  
Mr M Farley  
Mr H McCarthy  
Mr N Crank  
Mr W Chapple OBE  
Mr W Whyte  
Mr R Pushman

#### **Organisation**

Aylesbury Vale District Council  
Bucks Archaeological Society  
Wycombe District Council  
Milton Keynes Council  
Buckinghamshire County Council  
Buckinghamshire County Council  
Bucks Heritage Champion

#### **Officers**

Mr B Thorn  
Ms J Wise  
Ms E Alqassar  
Mr P Markham  
Ms S Griffin  
Mr S Newell

#### **Organisation**

Bucks County Museum  
Buckinghamshire County Council  
Buckinghamshire County Council  
BCC  
BCC  
PAC Service Environment

### **1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE / CHANGES IN MEMBERSHIP**

Apologies for absence were received from Martin Andrew and Gary Marshall

### **2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

The following members declared an interest;

Mr Chapple as a Trustee of the County Museum  
Mr Whyte, Mr Cashman and Mr Pushman as members of the Archaeology Society  
Mr Cashman as his partner has an interest in Quarrendon Leys

### **3 MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting held on 18 September 2014 were agreed subject to the



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE



following amendments;

*Declarations of Interest*

Mr Chapple is a Trustee of the County Museum

#### 4 MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

*Oxford Diocese Representation*

Confirmation has been received that Julian Mumby is the representative for the Oxford Diocese. Unfortunately Julian has not responded to an email sent about attending future meetings of the Forum or providing a written update.

*Development Land transfer at Quarrendon Leys*

Discussions are on-going. The solicitor has received an email advising that the developer is not prepared to pay for legal fees. The legal costs have doubled due to the delays encountered. The matter will be discussed with the Service Director, Legal.

**Action: Richard Pushman**

*Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and Berkshire (BOB) Conservation Group*

English Heritage has been advised of the 2015 meeting dates for the BHEF.

*Membership of the Forum*

The Royal Institution of British Architects for Buckinghamshire is to be contacted to discuss representation.

**Action: Chairman**

*Excavation projects in Aylesbury Road, Bierton & Bridge Street, Buckingham*

A copy of the letter sent to Sue Polhill, Aylesbury Vale District Councillor about the project at Bierton and the 68 page report on the Bridge Street Investigation in Buckingham have been circulated to elected members.

*Open Day at St Mary's Church, Stoke Mandeville*

The open day was well organised and attended. In terms of HS2, if there is a tunnel for Wendover, the line will be moved slightly and will be adjacent to the church.

Mike Farley reported that 'HS2: Heritage on the Line', a one day conference on what the HS2 high-speed rail line would do to Buckinghamshire's Heritage is taking place on Saturday 16 May at Weston Turville Village Hall. Tickets are available from the County Museum in Church Street, Aylesbury, or by post from Buckinghamshire Archaeological Society. The programme will be a full day with ten speakers, including Helen Glass, Archaeology and Heritage Manager for HS2 Limited.

Bill Chapple referred to the visit to the local area from the Parliamentary Select Committee for HS2 which is supposed to take place in the spring. It looks likely that the visit could be delayed due to the elections taking place in May. It is hoped that the Select Committee will look at Stoke Mandeville in great detail.

#### 5 CONSTITUTION

Members of the Forum AGREED the following amendments to the Constitution.

*Part 3 – Membership and Representation*

a) iii) portfolios are to be amended to Planning and Environment and Transportation.

*Part 7 – Quorum and Procedure*

Attendees of the Forum meetings are to be reminded about their duty to disseminate

information appropriately.

*Part 8 – Admission of the Press*

Title to be amended to Admission of the Media and Public

The wording of the paragraph is to be amended to 'the Press and members of the public shall be admitted to meetings of the Forum unless excluded by resolution of the Forum'.

Part 9ii – Variations of the Constitution is to be deleted.

## 6 DE-CLUTTERING PROGRAMME IN TOWN CENTRES

The Chairman reported the following;

The de-cluttering programme in town centres has not progressed as quickly as anticipated due to the restructuring of the Conservation Area Team at Aylesbury Vale.

The de-cluttering programme is led by the District Councils through Conservation Area staff. Most of the work is carried out by Highways and is therefore being delivered by Transport for Buckinghamshire (TfB). The programme includes signage and pavement repairs.

Regular meetings are taking place with the Local Area Technician in North Bucks about the final project. The Bucks Scheme has been topped up by English Heritage Grant funding and by maintenance monies.

It has been quite difficult arranging a co-ordinated approach to the de-cluttering programme.

The following question was asked.

**Has consultation taken place with town councils about the de-cluttering programme?** Yes, town councils have been consulted about the programme. A disability access audit took place last autumn. The funding is in place for the programme and has been signed off. The work needs to be ordered and agreed.

## 7 BUCKINGHAMSHIRE COUNTY ARCHAEOLOGICAL SERVICE REPORTS

Philip Markham, Senior Archaeological Planning Officer gave the following update.

*High Speed 2*

Discussions are ongoing. HS2 Ltd has responded to the formal petition submitted to the Government by Bucks County Council. Bucks Archaeological Officers have subsequently requested clarification of certain aspects of the response via the HS2 team. A meeting to discuss the petitioning points is likely to be held shortly to try to get clear and responsive answers. Archaeological officers still attend the HS2 Heritage Sub Group meetings. A 30/40 page report of generic written schemes for investigation (WSIs) has been received which contains very little detail. Comments have been sent to HS2 Ltd.

A meeting took place in Birmingham to discuss the delivery strategy. The Archaeological Officer from Buckinghamshire advised that the baseline standard needs to be up to date before the strategy can be looked at in detail and comments made.

*Buckingham*

Discussions about the significant Roman findings in the site adjacent to St Rumbold's Well, Buckingham are ongoing. The preferred option would be to preserve the

archaeology in situ.

### *Solar Farms*

Evaluation of the sites confirmed the presence of Romano-British settlement remains in most cases. Options for protecting the site are being discussed.

During discussions, the following comments were made and questions asked.

HS2 Ltd documents show a distinctive line of the HS2 route but there are no details about maintenance/access roads. Officers need to bear in mind the effect of these roads on the area when an archaeology report is submitted.

**Where there is evidence of corners being cut during discussions, has this been well documented as this could provide basic future evidence in court of bad practice.** There is no evidence of corners being cut in the documents that have been supplied. The documents advise that the details will be provided in due course. Where archaeological officers have asked for further detail, the relevant documents have been provided often lacking detail.

**The extended tunnel option has quite substantial additional works associated which will be very disruptive.** HS2 Ltd documents include certain items that the archaeological officers would like to see covered. We try to influence the process but once the Bill has been signed, this is technically outside the planning process.

**Has the impact of the tunnel on potential archaeological sites been looked at and have archaeological officers been consulted?** Archaeological officers at Bucks County Council and staff at Wycombe District Council have not been consulted. Stoke Mandeville is an individual element. There is the need for some HS2 Ltd points to be generic to cover all eventualities, such as the archaeological investigation of compound sites.

**If the HS2 route is moved away from St Mary's, the line will run closer to the village of Stoke Mandeville where there could also potentially be sites of historical interest.** The details about the potential revised routes for HS2 have not been received as yet. It is also about strategic planning.

Appeals against four large planning applications around Aylesbury have been dismissed. There is the need to be vigilant with the applications.

There were some transport related issues as well as environment issues with the planning applications that were refused. The applications could well re-appear in the future.

**Has an excavation taken place on a Roman Town jointly with Milton Keynes?** Nick Crank, Senior Archaeological Officer, Milton Keynes explained that archaeological investigation has taken place on a site in Fenny Stratford, Bletchley. The geophysics produced indicates a roman defended town with surrounding multi vallate defences and slight earthworks. There is also potentially a roman road from Watling Street. The northern area of the site is a Scheduled Ancient Monument. There appears to be lots of features in this area.

A Member raised the possibility of the scheduled area being extended.

**A Member said that they were not aware that volunteers helped to update the historic environment records.** Julia Wise, Historic Environment Record Officer explained that there has been a well-established group of volunteers for quite a while.

The Historic Environment Records (HER) were originally largely developed by volunteers before an officer was appointed.

**Concern was expressed about the constant receipt of new reports and staff shortages.** Julia Wise explained that the backlog of reports had been considerable particularly when at times when there were staff shortages. A lot of effort has taken place to try to reduce the backlog which includes the field work reports. The process is now a lot more controlled than previously. However the backlog still does remain a concern and an HER assistant is needed.

In terms of updating the HER, there appears that about 6 months work is outstanding. The concern is that if the information is not on the system, no-one else can access it.

**Reference has been made to the use of volunteers to update the HER. Does this include prisoners on day release as they could potentially be a less expensive source of expertise for record keeping?** Julia Wise explained that the main problem with taking on HER volunteers is the lack of staff capacity to supervise them. The current volunteers are well trained. Some have an existing expertise and high level understanding of the material being recorded.

**Is there the opportunity for a small charge to be attached to planning conditions to fund the post of an assistant to update the Historic Environment Records?** It is not possible to add a small charge to planning conditions as the Planning Authority has a Service Level Agreement (SLA) in place within Milton Keynes. Possible funding options such as S175 can be discussed with the Director of Growth and Strategy.

**Action: Philip Markham**

The Lead Officer, PAC Service explained that the County Council has maintained the current archaeological level into 2016 which is commended. Archaeology also generates an income and met its targets for 2014/15. Looking at possible opportunities to increase income is strongly recommended which includes looking at a wider level across planning, the flood team and archaeology and establishing a baseline to ensure a common approach across the County Council. Could this be brought to the Forum for discussion?

Brett Thorn, Keeper of Archaeology, Bucks County Museum explained that every commercial excavation includes the cost for archiving and data entry on the system. Could this principle be extended?

Other parts of environment services such as ecology receive funding from District Councils.

A Member said that Arla Dairy, Aston Clinton has submitted an application for an anaerobic digester. The installation of a digester would involve major works in one corner of the site. The Archaeological Planning Officers have seen the application and have responded to it. It is not clear whether the site will be predetermined or if it will go straight to excavation.

## **8 MILTON KEYNES ARCHAEOLOGICAL OFFICER'S REPORT**

Nick Crank, Senior Archaeological Officer, Milton Keynes referred Members of the Forum to the report included with the agenda which gave details overview of archaeological matters that have taken place in Milton Keynes. The following key points were noted.

### *Field Work projects*

A resistivity survey and trial trenching have recently been carried out in Stantonbury to inform proposals for a new country park at Stanton Low. The project is largely funded by S106 monies. The area contains a considerable amount of heritage interest such as the well preserved foundations of the manor house, an ornamental pond and various pathways. The aim is to try and build on existing records without compromising the findings. Further stabilising work is needed on the church as well as improvements to the security. A management plan including designation proposals will be produced. It is hoped that the site will be respected and valued as it has not been well looked after.

### *Planning*

The high number of consultation requests on planning matters has continued over the last three year. Recruitment is currently taking place for an additional Conservation Officer.

### *Historic Environment Record*

A business case for the appointment of an HER assistant is currently being prepared.

### *Archaeology Day 2014*

The 8<sup>th</sup> annual Milton Keynes archaeology day took place on 8 November 2014. The event was well attended. The programme of activities and talks included a lecture from Sadie Watson from the Museum of London Archaeology on the British Archaeological Award winning excavations at the Bloomberg site.

### *Conservation Matters*

Reviews of conservation areas tend to be requested by local residents. A recent review of the Loughton Conservation Area has resulted in the proposal of a revised boundary as well as management proposals.

## **9 EMERGENCY RECORDING FUND REPORT**

Eliza Alqassar, Historic Environment Record Officer advised the following.

The Emergency Recording Fund was used in October 2014 to fund the excavation of a Roman casket burial, found by a metal detectorist during a rally on land near Whitchurch, Aylesbury. Oxford Archaeology was commissioned to excavate the burial which took place over a period of three days.

The find included a Roman wooden casket burial, Samian ware cups and dishes, a pottery flagon, an iron lamp holder, a red jasper intaglio ring and a bronze handle. The find has emphasised the importance of the site.

The excavation cost was £1572, micro excavation of the cremation was £1400 and the report was £1600, giving a total spent of c.£5000 to date.

In the interim there is still a small amount of work to be paid for to complete the excavation and to prepare the items for archiving. This includes the excavation of the base of the flagon at a cost of £880 plus vat. Further costs are also anticipated to complete the archive for the publication and conservation of the items. A quote of £3600 has been received for publication costs. Members of the Forum were asked if they would agree to these further costs.

During discussions, the following comments were made and questions asked.

**What is the definition of publication costs?** As all archaeological fieldwork, removing a find from the ground is the start of a process which is not completed until the objects

have been conserved, stored in a recognised repository and a full report on the find has been made publicly available.

Brett Thorn explained that the County Museum has agreed to pay for the conservations costs and the long term care of the artefacts but there is work to be done in the laboratory to get the items ready to be archived. Fund raising would have to take place for the monies to complete the works.

- The Emergency Fund is in place for finds such as this. The District Councils put a small amount of funding into the Emergency Fund each year. It is good to see it being spent on something worthwhile.
- Does the Emergency Fund include covering costs for publication?
- There is £3000 remaining in the Emergency Fund. This is a ludicrously small amount for an emergency. Metal detecting activity is highly unpredictable.
- Metal detecting is a commercial activity. Metal detecting organisations/groups hire fields from the landowner and charge individuals to take part in an event.
- The Government is trying to cut the post of Finds Liaison Officer
- Thought needs to be given about areas that are not developer funded and what can be done about future finds.
- The Bucks Historic Buildings Trust has funding which they have not spent. Is it possible to access these funds? The meagre figure in the emergency fund to deal with any potential major finds is a concern. There is also the issue of how the Emergency Recording Fund can be replenished.
- The key word is the emergency aspect. If items are dug up and are recorded and well archived, a report can be written and published at a later date.
- Is there any mileage in approaching the Weekend Wanderers for a donation to the Emergency Fund as the fund was used to excavate a find which was produced at another of their events? They fund the event via gate money.
- In Oxfordshire s106 officers are financed from applications received. Could 1% be used to top up the emergency fund?
- Would Aylesbury Vale Community Chest be an appropriate body to look at for funding for publication?
- The amount of funding has not increased in 10 years. An increase is long overdue. Could this be looked at?

The Senior Archaeological Planning Officer said without the Emergency Funds the finds would not have been excavated and the reports would not have been done. Buckinghamshire is very rare in terms of the Historic Environment Forum having emergency funding available. The usual method is for any finds to be dug up and for the Museum to be informed what has been found and the location.

**What amount went into the Emergency Fund last year?** The fund stood at £7600. The contributions from Milton Keynes and Wycombe District Councils are still outstanding.

A short paper explaining the use of the emergency fund, the benefits of the fund and the proposed increase in contributions is to be sent to relevant Local Authorities and District Councils.

**Action: Eliza Alqassar/ Chairman**

The emergency fund is to be discussed with the Cabinet Member for Environment

**Action: Chairman**

**Members of the Forum NOTED the use of the Emergency Recording Fund; the current status of the Fund and AGREED to review the protocol for the Emergency**

**Recording Fund, including the title of the protocol, the criteria and the addition of publication costs.**

**Members of the Forum AGREED the excavation of the base of the flagon and preparation of the artefacts to a condition where they can be archived at a cost of £880 plus vat.**

## **10 COUNTY MUSEUM REPORT**

Brett Thorn, Keeper of Archaeology, Bucks County Museum explained that he has been involved in a new important research project with two post graduate students and three volunteers to look at human skeletal remains, using DNA to look at origins and to see if migrants in history can be spotted.

In December a hoard of more than 5200 silver was discovered at a site near Whitchurch. This is the second largest find of coins. The last find was over 100 years ago. Quick identification of a few of the coins suggests they are probably silver pennies of Ethelred and Cnut whose reign ended in 1035. 40 different Mints are included in the find. One coin is from the Buckingham Mint.

The coins fit the criteria to be declared as a national treasure. There will be the opportunity for the County Museum, Aylesbury, the Milton Keynes Museum, Ashmolean Museum, Oxford, and the British Museum to try to acquire the coins. The coins would be a fantastic acquisition for the County Museum.

The Trustees will make a decision about what to do with the coins after they have been evaluated. The full market value will be split between the finder and the landowner. This is estimated to be at least a six figure sum.

During the update, the following points were made and question asked.

With regard to the project looking at human skeletal remains and DNA research, the Bucks Archaeology Society strongly suggests the remains at the Stoke Mandeville site should be preserved above ground for future study and academic interest. It is very important to be able to have access in due course.

County Museum Trust is still located in premises belonging to the Archaeological Society. Discussions are taking place with the Legal Department at the County Council but there has been difficulty in reaching a decision. A meeting is taking place with the Chair of the Trust next week. A holding lease is in place at the moment.

The feelings about the find are mixed because of its sheer size. The coins would entice visitors to the County Museum and would be a major draw. The value of the hoard needs to be discussed and confirmed. There are national grants available but a sum of money would need to be drawn together locally for the long term storage and care of the coins.

**Has the possible acquisition of the coins been discussed with the Buckingham Old Gaol Museum?** If the County Museum manages to acquire the coins, there is no reason why parts of the collection should not be loaned to other museums.

## **11 NATIONAL TRUST REPORT**

National Trust report tabled at the meeting  
Noted by members of the Forum



Check Typo in the report

## 12 CHURCH ARCHAEOLOGY

No report was received

## 13 CONSERVATION OFFICERS' REPORTS

### ***Aylesbury Vale District Council***

Corry Cashman gave the following update.

The Buckland Conservation Area has been reviewed. Ivinghoe and Quanton are in the process of being reviewed. Little Horwood is likely to be the next review undertaken.

The Buildings at Risk Volunteer survey is going well. Packs are being put together for volunteers to go out into the field and survey buildings (from the public highway only). The English Heritage online tool for data entry will then be tested. It is hoped that the information packs for the first tranche of volunteers will be sent out shortly.

Otherwise business as usual

### ***Wycombe District Council***

Hugh McCarthy reported the following.

The profile for the Brunell Railway Building has been raised with the Department for Transport. It would be good for the mural to be improved and for interest in the building to be increased.

### ***Milton Keynes Council***

Conservation matters for Milton Keynes were covered under Item 8 of the agenda

No reports were received from South Bucks and Chiltern District Councils.

## 14 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

### *Development plans*

**Villages are putting together development plans. Do archaeological officers get involved at this stage?** The Senior Archaeological Planning Officer said that archaeological officers are involved in neighbourhood plans and development plans; however they are not usually consulted. The officers look at what is published by the Districts and attend to give advice and suggest that consultation takes place with HER.

Aston Clinton has started work on their development plan. Bearing in mind the activity taking place in the local area, early involvement from archaeological officers would be welcomed.

**In terms of the protocol for the County Council and parishes, have archaeology officers been involved in Neighbourhood Planning.** The Archaeological Planning Officer advised that she has been involvement in Neighbourhood Planning.

### *Agenda items*

Members of the Forum were advised that suggestions for future agenda items to make the meetings as useful and productive as possible are welcomed.

**15 DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING**

Monday 21 September 2015, 2.30pm. Venue to be confirmed

**CHAIRMAN**