

Appendix A: Buckinghamshire Archaeological Officers' Report

To: Buckinghamshire Historic Environment Forum
Date: 5th March 2020
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A. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1 To advise the Forum of the work of the County Archaeological Service (BCAS) since the last BHEF meeting (12th September 2019).

Report Summary

- The team have worked hard to promote the archaeology service through recent talks, events and interviews. We are also improving our presence online through changes to our website and the production of a blog.
- Improvements to the HER database are underway and improved public access to the online HER should be completed in spring.
- HS2 Ltd: Due to purdah the next meeting of the HS2 Heritage sub Group is scheduled for March. We have been kept up to date by Fusion and a monthly update has started coming through from HS2. Evaluation works are being undertaken in a number of places including Twyford and Newton Purcell. A large excavation is being undertaken near Wendover where an interesting circular alignment of pits has been recorded. We have yet to see the updated St Mary's Stoke Mandeville project plan.
- East–West Rail: We are continuing to have discussions over the documents and conditions which should be included in the Transport and Works Act Order (TWAO). Atkins supplied the Draft Heritage Delivery Strategy and we made a number of comments. We attended a meeting with Network Rail and Atkins in January to discuss project plans and a way forward was agreed. A revised Heritage Delivery Strategy has been supplied for comments.
- Western Rail Link to Heathrow: We have received the Archaeological Mitigation Strategy and have made comments and asked for clarifications.
- Heathrow New Runway: Discussions are progressing with HAL and a number of meetings have taken place. The most significant was in January with Historic England, Wood and the relevant County Archaeology Services. There are concerns over the current lack of evaluation and this may be an issue for Secretary of State.
- Oxford/Cambridge Expressway: There have been no updates

B. PROPOSED ACTION

2 The Forum is particularly invited to NOTE:

- resources
- strategic issues and projects
- recent planning-related archaeological work
- progress with external hosting of the HER database and with HBSMRWeb

C. RESOURCES

3 The County's archaeological service forms part of the Transport Economy Environment Service's Environment Team within Environment Services. Philip Markham is the Senior Archaeology Officer, Lucy Lawrence is the Archaeology Officer, Julia Wise is the HER Officer (part time), Paul Clements is the HER Assistant and Eliza Alqassar is the Environment Team Leader.

D. SUPPORTING INFORMATION

4 Strategic Issues/Projects

High Speed 2: We continue to provide advice through the HS2 Ltd Heritage Sub-Group and the next meeting is in March. Few Schedule 17 works consultations have come through recently but we are now being invited to the monthly update meetings.

Field work has and is taking place in a number of areas and Fusion and/or their archaeological contractors supply us with draft project specifications for comment and we sometimes request minor amendments. There have been no new updates on St Mary's at Stoke Mandeville.

The two Historic Environment Research and Delivery Strategy (HERDS) Managers, Rachel Wood and Dan Hounsell, employed by Fusion, keep us informed on works. They ensure that all field work and recording is undertaken to the same standard and format. We are being invited to monitor the work and make comments, which appears to be working well. So far there are 177 field work events completed and ongoing in Bucks. This number will rise as new sites come on line. This breaks down as:

2017 - 2019

Historic Landscape Surveys	3
Built Heritage Surveys	12
Evaluation Trench Sites	23
Excavation Areas	2
Geoarchaeological Evaluations	2

Geophysical Survey Areas 67

2019 – 2020

Built Heritage Surveys	6
Evaluation Trench Sites	29
Excavation Areas	25
Geoarchaeological Evaluations	7
Woodland Test Pit Surveys	1

East–West Rail: East–West Rail: We are continuing to have discussions over the documents and conditions which should be included in the Transport and Works Act Order (TWAo). To address the archaeological evaluation and mitigation issues a Heritage Delivery Strategy has been produced and comments have been made. After a flurry of sites a few months ago this project has been relatively quiet. We have recently received some draft geophysical survey results at Fleet Marston which extends the ladder settlement to the east along Akeman Street. So far 48 field work events have been completed in Bucks, which include:

Geophysical Evaluations	33
Evaluation Trench Sites	14
Watching Briefs	1

We are expecting over 50 additional fieldwork events following TWAo; however some of these are relatively small sites such as the creation of passing places on some roads.

Heathrow New Runway: There have been a number of meetings during the last few months over the PEIR (Preliminary Environmental Information Report) and the Heritage Strategy. A position statement has been produced by the archaeology services, which has been agreed by BCC and Historic England’s Advisory Committee. The main issue is the lack of proposed evaluation. This statement is in line with the Planning Inspectorate and Government Policy. A meeting in January with Historic England, Wood and the relevant County Archaeology Services discussed the lack of evaluation and raised that this may be an issue for Secretary of State. For Bucks the largest impact is likely to be from the proposed flood mitigation sites.

Western Rail Link to Heathrow: Archaeological evaluation and fieldwork has been undertaken and a report supplied. Due to access and ownership issues further evaluation will be required following consent. We have responded to the Development Consent Order consultation and ‘issues and asks’ meetings are continuing. Part of the route is currently a mineral extraction site and excavation has been undertaken prior to each phase. An Iron Age settlement is likely to be in the next phase. We have received the Archaeological Mitigation Strategy and have made comments and asked for clarification.

Oxford/Cambridge Expressway: There have been no recent updates.

Chalk, Cherries, Chairs and the Chilterns Hillforts Project: These are two projects being run by the Chilterns Conservation Board. Members of the Environment Team attend steering group meetings and provide advice and we have provided financial support and HER information to both projects.

Within the Chalk, Cherries and Chairs project BCAS are most heavily involved with the 'Mystery of Grim's Ditch' and 'Routes to the Past' projects.

New National Designations: there were no new designations between July and December 2019.

Heritage at Risk: The October 2019 Heritage at Risk register (published by Historic England) showed four buildings within Buckinghamshire to have been removed from the list. These comprise:

- Church of St Michael, Waddesdon
- Church of St Mary, Long Crendon
- The Queens Temple, Stowe
- Temple of Friendship, Stowe

ICT Digital Data Recovery: The team (in partnership with ICT) has made considerable progress on recovering deleted reports and planning casework files following the accidental deletion of digital data in April 2018, which was reported to the March 2019 Forum meeting. This continues to be a major focus of work.

5. Planning related archaeological work

Volume measures	3rd Quarter 2019	4th Quarter 2019
Total number of consultations handled	120	137
Number of planning applications handled	79	105
Planning applications responded to within 21 days (target 90%)	79	104
Number of development-related archaeological fieldwork projects	21	18
Success rate at appeal (target 50% annual success rate)	N/A	N/A

A full list of development-related fieldwork is provided as Appendix B.

Significant archaeological investigations include:

The most significant investigation currently is the ongoing HS2 excavation near Wendover where a probable Late Neolithic/Early Bronze Age circular alignment of pits 65m in diameter has been uncovered. HS2 kindly supplied a plan which will be circulated at the meeting.

There has been considerable media interest over a site near Buckingham (reported to BHEF in March 2019). This excavation took place in 2018/19 and we currently understand that the post excavation works required by Planning Condition will now be funded. Network Archaeology kindly supplied a photograph which will be circulated at the meeting.

6 Publication update (Appendix C)

7 Outreach and Publicity

In July we took a display on HS2 in Buckinghamshire to the Festival of Archaeology family fun day organised by the County Museum in Aylesbury and in September we helped with the BAS market stall in Aylesbury for Heritage Open Days. We gave a talk to Aston Clinton U3A in September. In October we produced a themed display on social housing for the Bucks Local History Network Conference, and we gave a talk on Archaeology and HS2 to the Oxfordshire Historical and Archaeological Society. We gave a presentation to the Portable Antiquities Scheme meeting in London in December and we also gave an interview for Wycombe Sound.

8 Historic Environment Record (HER) report

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

Performance Indicator	3rd Quarter 2019	4th Quarter 2019
Historic Environment Records data inputting backlog (targets: reports < 30 by March 2020)	Reports = 11 Collect = 512 Total = 523	Reports = 12 Collect = 512 Total = 524

Volume measures	3rd Quarter 2019	4th Quarter 2019
Number of Countryside Stewardship applications handled	0	0
Number of reports received by the HER	27	45
Number of Historic Environment Records enquiries handled:		
commercial	6	18
non-commercial	1	8

Countryside Stewardship Consultations

The Countryside Stewardship scheme is now expected to continue for at least 2 years and probably until 2024 when a new scheme will come on stream. The 2020 application period opened in February this month but we haven't yet received any consultations. The scheme is continuing with the cut-down consultation process initiated by the Rural Payments Agency last year as a cost-cutting exercise, as reported to the Forum last September.

HER Audit

We are currently undertaking a full HER Audit, with Historic England's Heritage Information Partnerships team. This is a grant funded project which assesses the HER against nationally agreed standards and best-practice and also involves compiling an Action Plan. The HER underwent a full Audit in 2000 and we subsequently produced Action Plans on a regular basis, however a full Audit will be undertaken on a 5-year cycle in future. The Audit will be completed in March and we will report on the results at the next Forum meeting.

HER enhancement and volunteer projects

We have now formally commissioned the work to move the HER database to external hosting and upgrade the Unlocking Buckinghamshire's Past website to new software, which we reported to the last Forum meeting. Work is currently well underway on the external hosting part of the project and we expect to start user testing imminently. The website development will follow, probably in March, April and May although the detailed timetable has still to be agreed with the software developers.

The HER volunteer working on the milestones project is currently editing the existing entries with additional information from a new source.

The Buckinghamshire Gardens Trust Research and Recording Project is continuing to make good progress with 66 reports completed, 5 report in draft and work underway on a further 8 gardens. As reported at the last Forum meeting, the volunteers are also researching artists' gardens in Buckinghamshire, which will probably be published as a short article.

9. Emergency Recording Fund

The Buckinghamshire Historic Environment Forum (BHEF) manages the Emergency Recording Fund. The Emergency Recording Fund was established in September 2000 by BHEF. The purpose of the fund is to enable the emergency recording of important archaeological remains which are unavoidably under imminent threat of significant damage or destruction without adequate provision for their recording. The fund covers the administrative areas of Aylesbury Vale District Council,

Chiltern District Council, Milton Keynes Council, South Bucks District Council and Wycombe District Council. Following Unitary the fund will cover the administrative areas of Buckinghamshire Council and Milton Keynes Council.

Since 2000 the fund has been called upon five times. The most recent uses of the fund include the excavation of a high-status Roman casket burial discovered by metal detectorists near Whitchurch (cost c. £6k), and the excavation of Neolithic human remains in Milton Keynes (cost c.£2k). In both cases the recovery of these significant remains would not have been possible without the Emergency Recording Fund. The fund has not been utilised since 2014.

In 2001 it was agreed that contributions should be weighted depending on the size of each local authority (doubled in the case of Milton Keynes Council to reflect its unitary status). The table below shows the current contribution made by each local authority. Income is typically £1000 per annum, although occasionally the contributors have had a “holiday” when the fund has not been called upon.

Table: Size and contribution of each authority (as agreed in 2001)

	Area (km ²)	% Contribution	Contribution made 2019/20 (£)
Aylesbury Vale District Council	903	20%	200
Buckinghamshire Archaeological Society	n/a	5%	50
Buckinghamshire County Council	1564	40%	400
Chiltern District Council	196	5%	/
Milton Keynes Council	309	15%	/
South Bucks District Council	141	5%	/
Wycombe District Council	325	10%	100

These contributions will need to be reviewed as we transform into a Unitary authority. The current balance of the fund currently stands at c. £5,700 and is managed by the Environment Team.

E. BACKGROUND PAPERS

1. Archaeological Reports submitted to the Buckinghamshire HER

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