

### Purpose

1. To agree the draft final report and recommendations of the Conservation and Heritage Review.

### Summary of Evidence

2. On the 8<sup>th</sup> November 2010, Nic Broomhead (Head of Country Parks and Conservation) and Heather Stokes (Conservation Team Manager) gave a scene-setting presentation for the Communities and Environment Standing Committee Review of Conservation and Heritage. This provided an introduction to the County's heritage, the legislative and policy framework and outlined the work of the Conservation Team's heritage specialists. Members agreed that the review should have a strategic focus, looking particularly at the management of heritage assets and how the County Council works with others.
3. Site visits to Rufford Abbey, Southwell, Bestwood Winding Engine House and Beauvale Priory were undertaken on the 7<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> March 2011, highlighting the key areas of work of the heritage officers and the scope of the authority's influence across the whole of the county's historic environment. The visits were supported by Ursilla Spence (Archaeology Leader), Jason Mordan (Historic Buildings Leader) and Gareth Broome (Countryside Team Manager, Rufford only).
4. At Rufford Abbey Members explored the range of issues affecting the ongoing management of one of the County's major heritage attractions and the special issues surrounding the council's responsibilities for, for example, the 15 Designated Heritage Assets, including grade I and II\* listed buildings and a Scheduled Ancient Monument. Issues such as the preservation of the fine Medieval monastic remains, both above ground and buried archaeology, tree maintenance, health and safety and visitor pressures were all discussed.
5. Southwell provided Members with an insight into the complexities and significance of the historic environment in Nottinghamshire and into the role of heritage advice in planning decisions. The County

Council's heritage officers play a key role in providing advice to districts and to the authority's own development planning section, as well as advising on the heritage implications of development plans. This is a considerable proportion of the section's work and is core to the protection and enhancement of Nottinghamshire's heritage. It is underpinned by the data held in the County Historic Environment Record.

6. Heritage issues arising from other NCC operations and the activities of partner organisations were highlighted during the walk-about of Southwell. The need to develop a "Heritage Protocol" to guide the management of all NCC-owned heritage assets and any other NCC operations likely to impact on the County's heritage was discussed.
7. Heritage at Risk issues were discussed at Bestwood Winding Engine House and at Beauvale Abbey. The overall rate of 'Heritage at Risk' within Nottinghamshire is higher, at over 7%, than the national average of just over 5% of historic buildings and archaeology at risk through disrepair, negligence or other pressures. The Council's heritage officers have a proactive and often critical role in reducing the number of 'at risk' heritage assets within the county, advising on and supporting funding bids, the implementation of projects and on-going management.
8. Mr Bob Gow, of The Friends of Bestwood Winding Engine, and Mr and Mrs Whyte, owners of Beauvale Abbey Farm, provided Members with an excellent demonstration of the important role of volunteers and private landowners in managing the County's heritage assets. They explained how the sites had reached a critical state, detracting severely from the image and pride of the local communities, and how officer support and expertise had been critical to their recent achievements. The projects were complex to initiate and deliver but have brought about dramatic change in relatively short time-frames, including public access.
9. At the meeting on the 11<sup>th</sup> April, Members explored the relationships with other Departments and with the District and Borough Councils. Chris Higginson (Team Manager, Property Strategy and Development), Oliver Scott and Michael Tagg (Conservation Officers, Bassetlaw District Council) explained the specialist advisory role of the County heritage officers and the critical importance of having access to the County's Historic Environment Record.
10. Members then received a presentation from Dr Anthony Streeten, East Midlands Planning Director for English Heritage, on the national heritage framework and managing heritage in changing times. Dr Streeten explained the key elements of the heritage cycle in understanding, valuing, caring for and enjoying the historic environment. He highlighted the need to be able to deploy expert capability at the right time and at the right level, reinforced the importance of maintaining the Historic Environment Record and

emphasised the government's desire for positive and proactive strategies.

11. The role of communities, volunteers and local interest groups in Conservation and Heritage was discussed at the meeting on the 23<sup>rd</sup> May 2011. Mrs Audrey Winkler, Chairman of the Trustees, Ruddington Framework Knitters Museum, explained the international importance of the work of the volunteers and the role of the County Council in providing funding support and expertise. Mr Bill Whittaker, Secretary of East Bridgford Local History Society, explained how the County Council has supported the Society on a number of projects, from community excavations to field walking, with funding, information and advice.
12. Mrs Virginia Green, project manager for the Trent Vale Landscape Partnership, outlined the aims and objectives of this £2.6m Heritage Lottery funded project including the critical role of the County Council in providing specialist advice, match funding and project delivery.
13. County Council funding has been a key to unlocking larger national and sub-national funding and in supporting the work of communities and volunteers. In the last two years, external funding of over £5 million has been brought in to the County for heritage projects (including the £2.6 million Trent Vale Landscape Partnership project). The County Council's LIS programme (and its predecessor) has been particularly important, and will be increasingly so as the Conservation Service budget for match funding projects disappears.
14. Ursilla Spence also gave presentation on the A46 Ice Age finds and the challenges of working with major infrastructure projects in the County. The County Council played a key role in negotiations with the Highways Agency and in site monitoring, resulting in the discovery and recording of settlements, buildings, burial grounds and artefacts from Prehistoric, Iron Age, Roman and Saxon periods. Two in situ scatters of flint tools and flint waste were uncovered and Members were given the opportunity to view some of the artefacts.
15. Further site visits to King John's Palace, Kings Clipstone and to Creswell Crags were undertaken on the 6<sup>th</sup> June 2011. Mr Martin Bradley (landowner) described the recent Time Team visit to King John's Palace and Members discussed the importance of the custodial role of private landowners and the role of the County Council in providing advice and match funding to unlock national funding from English Heritage.
16. Mr Ian Wall, Director of Creswell Heritage Trust, gave Members an insight into managing a heritage attraction which straddles the boundary between Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire. The visit concluded with an inspection of the cave art which, along with the A46 flint scatters, has helped to make Nottinghamshire of international importance for Palaeolithic studies.

## Key Issues

17. In summary, the key issues raised during the course of the Review were:
- How do we ensure that the County's most important heritage assets are protected?
  - Should the County Council have a Heritage Protocol to guide its operations?
  - How do we meet the demands of visitors and the need for income while preserving the special qualities of sites like Rufford?
  - How will heritage advice for planning be provided in future?
  - How do we ensure that the Historic Environment Record is fully maintained and accessible?
  - How will we continue to identify and monitor heritage at risk across the County?
  - Should NCC continue to play a lead role in heritage-led regeneration?
  - How do we maximise the "heritage dividend"?
  - Should we continue to seek to attract external funding for heritage projects? And if so, how?
  - How will communities and the voluntary and private sector access support (funding and advice) in the future?
  - Should NCC continue to take a lead role in providing heritage advice on major projects within the County?

## Recommendations

- A Heritage Strategy should be developed for the County which would identify all the County's heritage assets and provide a strategic plan for their conservation and management.
- Management of the most important County Council-owned heritage assets should be conservation-led and conservation management plans should be in place to guide marketing, business, access and transport plans and strategies.
- A Heritage Protocol should be developed which would identify all NCC operations likely to have an impact on the historic environment and provide guidelines for avoiding or mitigating any negative impacts.
- The knowledge and expertise within NCC's heritage service is a hugely valuable resource, providing advice on a range of issues, including development control, spatial planning and projects. To ensure that this knowledge and expertise is retained, options for charging for some services currently provided free of charge, such as planning advice to District and Borough Councils, should be explored.
- The Historic Environment Record is recognised as a strategic asset that should continue to be held and maintained at County level and should continue to be publicly accessible. Ways of funding the maintenance and upgrading of the HER should be investigated with the District Councils.

- The County Council should continue to play a lead role in heritage-led regeneration and greater engagement with volunteers to identify and monitor Heritage Assets at Risk should be investigated.
- The external facing role of the heritage specialists must be maintained, providing advice and support to local communities and groups to enable them to continue to play a role in managing their heritage assets.
- It is recognised that Members' Divisional Funding and the Local Improvement Scheme have been highly important in providing funding for small heritage projects and match funding for Heritage Lottery/ English Heritage funded projects. It is recommended that this role continues and is strengthened by ensuring that all Members are aware of heritage groups and opportunities in their wards.
- The County Council should continue to play a lead role in developing and delivering major heritage projects in partnership with other local authorities, groups and organisations. The development of such projects attracts significant amounts of investment into the County and provides opportunities for delivering economic benefits through, for example tourism.
- A marketing strategy should be developed, as part of the over-arching Heritage Strategy, and Members should be encouraged investigate opportunities to publicise events and projects in partnership with local groups.

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