

CHAPTER 10 - Archaeology and Local History

Aims:

- **Conserve and enhance archaeological and historic sites and landscapes.**
- **Encourage public awareness and understanding of historical and archaeological sites and landscapes within the Forest.**

- 10.1** Sites of archaeological and historical interest are a finite and non-renewable resource in the Forest. They represent a record of how the physical landscape has been changed by mankind in the past and therefore how our present landscape has been formed. They also provide a link to our cultural, social and spiritual development and give clues to the future. Much of this heritage is invisible or only evident to the expert eye; much is also not yet known or discovered.
- 10.2** New woodland proposals through the Forestry Commission's Woodland Grant Scheme are notified to the local authority archaeologists and checked against the Sites and Monuments Record. Where significant archaeological sites or structures are present, schemes are modified or recommended for refusal in line with councils' archaeological policies to ensure damage is not caused. It is less clear in instances where remains are suspected. The Woodland Grant Scheme does not at present provide for detailed evaluation, so close liaison with the councils' archaeologists will be needed to highlight areas of sensitivity in advance.
- 10.3** There are also potential benefits through discovery of new sites of interest and, most importantly, by improving access and encouraging the community to take an interest in and learn about this hidden heritage. Opportunities exist to promote sites as part of visitor strategies for the area e.g. Bristol's engineering heritage could be interpreted by linking recent projects such as the Second Severn Crossing with those of the past (e.g. Brunel's Suspension Bridge).
- 10.4** A number of nationally important archaeology sites in the Forest have been designated as Scheduled Monuments by the Department of Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS), advised by English Heritage. Archaeologically important buildings may also be accorded some protection inclusion in the List of Buildings of Special Architectural or Historic Importance, (by the DCMS) whilst historic parks

and gardens and historic battlefields may be included on registers maintained by English Heritage. By far the largest number of archaeological sites are simply included in the councils' Sites and Monuments Record which, whilst not affording direct protection, indicates the existence and sensitivity of archaeological sites for planning and related purposes.

- 10.5** Where archaeologically sensitive areas are within a woodland site, these should be incorporated into the overall design in a way consistent with the policy of 'preservation in situ' outlined in PPG 16 Archaeology and Planning. In some cases, the removal of trees and shrubs may be required. Sites may be suitable for public access and interpretation unless their sensitivity precludes this. Many sites are in private ownership and permissive access would need to be negotiated.
- 10.6** Landscapes themselves may be of archaeological or historical significance. These include designed parks and gardens, field boundaries, earthwork remains of former settlements or field systems, Conservation Areas, Registered Battlefields, hedgerows and woodlands themselves. The Forest will itself be a force for change but will need to be created in such a way as not to destroy or obliterate these examples but to add to them. The Forest will not aim purely to preserve all past landscapes in suspended animation but to integrate them into a dynamic and changing scene, which itself will become part of a future mosaic. Tree planting in historic landscapes needs to be carefully designed and historic interest should be assessed as part of the initial design. Historic parks and gardens already play an important role in the landscape, as identified in Chapter 6, and in leisure, tourism and nature conservation.

Proposals

10.7 The Forest partners will aim to:

- protect areas of historic and archaeological interest against potentially damaging woodland planting; existing consultation procedures will form the basis of this work and areas of likely conflict will be identified in advance;
- encourage landowners with sites containing features of archaeological or historical interest to manage the land with their protection and, where practical and desirable, their interpretation and accessibility as key objectives;

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- work with landowners to create or improve access to and the interpretation of appropriate sites of historical or archaeological interest; this may be in the context of farm diversification or the restoration of historic parks and gardens; sites close to key access routes or forming part of Forest gateways will be a priority;
- identify landscape features such as veteran (very old individual) trees, field boundaries and earthwork remains, hedgerows, ditch and bank features and protect them where appropriate with Tree Preservation Orders or management agreements, or offer to assist in their management for their historical value;
- develop more information and interpretation of the area's heritage as part of a visitor strategy.