

The Bath and North East Somerset Historic Environment Record Information Service Procedures and Guidelines

Background

Historic Environment Records began life in response to the loss of the archaeological resource through urban and rural development. From their original remit of recording archaeological sites, they have been developed to encompass a wide range of information about the historic environment which has been reflected in the change of name in England and Wales from Sites & Monuments Record to Historic Environment Record [HER]. Today they provide a unique information resource, forming the basis for sustainable conservation and playing an important role in informing public understanding and enjoyment of the local historic environment.

The historic environment includes all aspects of our surroundings that have been built, formed or influenced by human activities from earliest to most recent times. An Historic Environment Record stores and provides access to systematically organised information about these surroundings in a given area. It is maintained and updated for public benefit in accordance with national and international standards and guidance. An HER makes information accessible to all in order to:

- advance knowledge and understanding of the historic environment;
- inform its care and conservation;
- inform public policies and decision-making on land-use planning and management;
- contribute to environmental improvement and economic regeneration;
- contribute to education and social inclusion;
- encourage participation in the exploration, appreciation and enjoyment of the historic environment

The information held in HER databases and collections thus provides a starting point for management processes, conservation, fieldwork and research into the historic environment and also informs local communities about their area. In turn, many of these activities generate new information which feeds back to HER managers in the form of reports and archives that are used to enhance the HER.

The Bath and North East Somerset HER

The B&NES HER consists of two electronic databases, the B&NES Historic Buildings and Sites and Monuments Record [HBMSR] and the Bath City Urban Archaeological Database [UAD], as well as paper records of archaeological investigations carried out within the authority.

B&NES Historic Buildings and Sites and Monuments Record

The HBMSR database contains a total of 4342 records of archaeological remains and historic sites, 3096 archaeological and antiquarian investigations, and references to associated documentary sources. The HBMSR was developed by the software company exeGesIS SDM, in cooperation with English Heritage and the Association of Local Government Archaeologists. It complies with the MIDAS data content

standard, the recommended event-monument-archive data model, INSCRIPTION wordlists and English Heritage National Monument thesauri. It is used by over 60 local authorities, English Heritage and the National Trust. The Bathnes HER has used HBSMR since 1998 and is currently on version 3.76.

Bath City Urban Archaeological Database

As part of the Bath Intensive Urban Survey Project, the former Bath City Council was given grant aid by English Heritage to compile the Bath City Urban Database [UAD] in 1995. Using information held in the Bath City Museum SMR, Avon County SMR, Bath Archaeological Trust excavation records, antiquarian and other miscellaneous documentary sources a Geographical Information System [GIS] and database of sites and events was created within the Bath city area. A total of 125 monument and 661 site records were created in 1995. Over half of the records were associated with existing SMR records. The rest, about 40%, were created as part of the project. There are still records held on the UAD which remain to be merged with HBSMR; this will be one of the main tasks of the HER Officer over the next year, at the end of which it is hoped that HBSMR will be the only active database.

HER Resources

In addition to the electronic database(s), the B&NES HER holds paper records from the former Avon SMR and other sources as well as site reports for archaeological excavations carried out in the district since 1979 with new site reports being submitted on a regular basis. An ongoing part of the HER Officer's workload will be to catalogue the paper collections and ensure that these records are properly referenced within the database(s).

Management Framework

The HER is maintained within the Historic Environment Team, part of Planning Services. It is managed by the Archaeological Officer and the HER Officer.

The BathNES HER is a computerised register of known sites and find-spots documenting the earliest human activity in the area to the present day. It is used by the Bath and North East Somerset Historic Environment Team mainly for managing and conserving the historic environment as part of the planning process, but is also consulted by a variety of different users:

- Archaeological contractors and consultants
- Planning consultants
- Bath and North East Somerset Council departments
- Utilities companies
- Academic researchers
- Students
- Local archaeological groups
- Members of the public
- National bodies

The aim of the HER is to gather the known information about the historic environment and present its records, within national and international standards, in a format accessible to its users in order to:

- help advance research and understanding of the historic environment of Bath and North East Somerset;
- help care for the Bath and North East Somerset historic environment through conservation and environmental enhancement programmes and projects;
- inform policies and decision-making in land-use planning, development control, statutory undertakings, agri-environment and forestry schemes;
- raise public awareness of Bath and North East Somerset's historic environment by contributing to educational programmes and projects to encourage public and community participation in the historic environment.

Access

The Bathnes HER is based within Planning Services and is available for consultation by arrangement only. Appointments can be arranged between 10am and 4pm, on Mondays to Wednesdays, when the HER Officer is available (access to the HER outside of these hours may be arranged under special circumstances). However space is limited and groups wishing to access the HER may need to request the booking of a meeting room, which may be arranged on an occasional basis through the HER Officer.

Access to the information held in the HER is available under the provisions of Section 141 (1) of the 1972 Local Government Act and The Environmental Information Regulations 1992. Requests to consult the HER should be made to the HER Officer. Arrangements may also be made for consulting the Council's aerial photographic collection in the same offices.

Bath and North East Somerset Council is committed to the protection, conservation and enhancement of its archaeological heritage. In order to ensure that information from the Bath and North East Somerset HER is used responsibly, those applying to consult it are requested to provide details about the nature of their enquiry and to follow the Guidance for Users of the HER. Permission to use the HER may be refused or limited in certain circumstances (see Guidance for Users, sections 8, 9 and 10).

Due to copyright restrictions, we are unable to offer translations of HER data into minority languages, however large print and alternative formats are available on request.

Prospective HER users should read the Guidance for Users then send in details of their request to the Bath and North East Somerset Sites and Monuments Record Officer at the address given below.

Historic Environment Record Officer
Historic Environment Team
Planning Services
PO Box 5006
Bath
BA1 1JG

or by e-mail to archaeology@Bathnes.gov.uk

Charges

Commercial Enquiries

A charge is normally made for the supply of information from the HER, although this may be waived in exceptional circumstances, for example, for restricted educational or personal research. The charge will cover the staff time involved in dealing with the request for information, any incidental expenses and an element relating to the cost of obtaining original data.

The rate for the HER service is £50 +VAT per hour, charged to the nearest half hour. Users who are charged will be invoiced after the completion of the work.

Estimates of time and costs can be provided upon request.

Enquiries relating to Higher Level Stewardship applications have their own scale of fees which are set nationally by DEFRA depending on the size of the holding in question. Currently these are set at £75 +VAT for holdings of up to 50ha and £150 +VAT for larger holdings.

Incidental Expenses

All HER users may also be liable for incidental expenses such as photocopying, printing, CDs and postage. The costs are as follows:-

Photocopying/Printing	£0.10 per A4 sheet, £0.20 per A3 sheet CDs £1.00 per CD
Postage	Users may be charged postage if search exceeds 100 pages. Please contact the HER for further details.

GUIDANCE FOR USERS

1. Bathnes HER users are requested to inform Bath and North East Somerset Council of the following, in writing or online by submitting the form below:

(a) the subject and purpose of their enquiry;

(b) the use to which the information will be put; and

(c) the names of any other bodies or individuals outside their organisation to whom it is intended to pass HER information.

2. Every endeavour is made to respond to enquiries within 20 working days. (Might this be higher up the list?)

3. A service charge is made for enquiries to the Bath and North East Somerset HER but this is normally waived for enquiries for educational or personal research or for permitted development searches. The costs of paper, printing and other incidental expenses may be charged to all users.

4. The Bath and North East Somerset HER is the copyright of Bath and North East Somerset Council. Some information held in the HER may also be the copyright of others. It is the user's responsibility to ensure that copyright law is not breached.

5. Users are requested to inform, and to make their research available to the Bath and North East Somerset HER where new archaeological sites or data are discovered as a result of their work.

6. Users are requested to make appropriate acknowledgement of the Bath and North East Somerset HER in any publication or report which has made use of its data.

7. While efforts have been made to verify the data held in the Bath and North East Somerset HER, Bath and North East Somerset Council cannot accept responsibility for the accuracy of any particular data and its source.

8. Access to all or part of the information requested may or must be refused in certain circumstances, as set out in Section 4 of The Environmental Information Regulations 1992. The user's attention is drawn to the following circumstances in particular.

9.1 Information may not be disclosed if:

(a) it relates to the subject matter of any legal or other proceedings, actual or prospective (including Local Planning Inquiries);

(b) it relates to confidential, internal communications of the Bath and North East Somerset Council;

(c) it is contained in a document or other record which is still in the course of completion

9.2 Information will not be disclosed if:

(a) it was supplied to the Council by another party who was under no legal obligation to do so and could not have been put under any legal obligation to supply it and has not consented to its disclosure;

(b) its disclosure would increase the likelihood of damage to the historic environment effecting anything to which the information relates

10. A request for information may be refused, under the provisions of The Environmental Information Regulations 1992, 3.(3), if it is manifestly unreasonable or is formulated in too general a manner.

11. All HER users are asked to conform to the Association of Local Government Archaeological Officers Code of Practice for HER Users (available from ALGAO, c/o C. Ingle, Heritage Conservation Group, Planning Division, Essex County Council, County Hall, Chelmsford. CM1 1QH). www.ALGAO.org.uk (external link, see terms)

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