

Title of meeting: Culture, Leisure and Economic Development Decision Meeting

Date of meeting: 18 November 2022

Subject: Historic Environment Record Audit Report

Report by: Director of Culture, Leisure and Regulatory Services

Wards affected: All

Key decision: No

Full Council decision: No

1. Purpose of report

- 1.1 To review the outcomes of the Historic Environment Record (HER) Audit Report (Appendix 1).

2. Recommendations

It is recommended that:

- 2.1 The outcomes of the HER Audit Report are noted.**
- 2.2 The HER Officer creates and implements a Forward Plan based on the five-year action plan contained within the Audit Report.**
- 2.3 The HER Officer drafts an Access and Charging Policy, Recording Policy and Information Services Policy to be taken to a future Cabinet Member meeting.**

3. Background

- 3.1 The Portsmouth Historic Environment Record (HER) is the primary source of information relating to the historic environment of the City of Portsmouth. It includes a database linked to digital maps that contains information about remains from the prehistoric period to the present day. The records provide information on buildings and other structures, earthworks, buried remains, stray finds, landscape features, archaeological investigations and historic sites that may have been destroyed or are known from documentary sources.
- 3.2 The HER is used to inform planning decisions and is consulted by planners, developers and archaeologists working on a variety of projects. It is also an



invaluable tool for anyone interested in the historic environment of the city, whether for academic research or personal interest, and HER data is accessed by a variety of users. The HER is based within Portsmouth Museums.

- 3.3 The HER began as a Sites and Monuments Record (SMR) which primarily recorded archaeological sites and findspots. The SMR appears to have been established in the 1960s by staff at Portsmouth Museum and consisted of a card index cross-referenced to annotated Ordnance Survey maps. Between 2003 and 2005 the original SMR index cards were computerised. Prior to 2012 the SMR/HER fell under the remit of staff who also had responsibility for other duties and therefore no real enhancement of the record was carried out between the mid-1980s and 2012.
- 3.4 Following the appointment of a part-time Historic Environment Record Officer (0.4 FTE) in 2012 a sustained programme of improvement and enhancement of the HER has taken place. Work has included addressing a large backlog of archaeological reports, adding missing designation data and assets recorded on the Local List and identifying and adding details of fieldwork and finds from museum files. The standard of existing HER records has been greatly improved, and research projects carried out with assistance from an HER volunteer. As a result of this work the database has more than doubled in size over the last ten years and now contains records for a broad range of sites relating to the historic environment of the city. The profile of the HER has been enhanced with engagement through social media and events such as the Festival of Archaeology and Heritage Open Days.
- 3.5 HER data must be recorded in line with national standards, including those set out by MIDAS Heritage (the UK Historic Environment Data Standard) and the Forum on Information Standards in Heritage (FISH). Historic England have issued guidance for managing HERs in line with best practice and accepted standards to ensure the record is kept up to date with accurate information in order to meet the requirements of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).
- 3.6 Historic England (HE) run a national HER audit programme, which HERs are encouraged to participate in. The HER Audit Specification sets out the criteria by which the HER undertakes self-assessment against nationally agreed requirements for HERs with regard to content and coverage, data standards and security, access and engagement, and infrastructure (service delivery). The audit aims to encourage, support and document development of the HER in line with this guidance and the Principles of the Heritage Information Access Simplified strategy (HIAS). HIAS Principle 1 states that Local Authority HERs should be the first point of contact and primary trusted source of investigative research data and knowledge.
- 3.7 The HER undertook an audit between May and September 2022 in order to provide Portsmouth City Council and HE with an accurate picture of the HER's service and

data holdings. The strengths and weaknesses revealed by this exercise will enable the HER to identify forward actions and guide it through the process of continuous improvement.

- 3.8 The HER is now in a 'live' audit cycle. A detailed audit report (Appendix 1) has been produced by Historic England in liaison with the HER Officer. This includes a five-year action plan to be reviewed at the next audit in 2027. HE will contact the HER in two and a half years' time to review current progress on the tasks identified in the action plan.

4. Reasons for recommendations

- 4.1 The HER Audit Report (Appendix 1) and Audit Summary (Appendix 2) identify the HERs main areas of success and achievement, which include:

- Good record quality and record management. Significant enhancement over the last five years. Mission Statement and indexed reference collection. List of backlog items
- Inclusion of a range of other datasets providing comprehensive reference to the historic environment
- Fully MIDAS compliant. Detailed Recording Manual. Robust and clearly defined data back-ups and storage procedures further documented in a Data Management Statement
- Enables others to contribute to the record by engaging volunteers
- Proactively promotes access through outreach activities and social media
- The HER is covered by service/corporate Disaster and Business Continuity plans and has a Succession Plan
- The HER has highly qualified and experienced staff with more than 10 years' experience in work of this nature

- 4.2 The report has also identified a number of areas for future work which have been incorporated as specific tasks into a five-year action plan:

- Create a forward plan to timetable and prioritise the work of the HER over the next five years
- Create an Access and Charging Policy, Recording Policy and Information Services Policy
- Work through backlog tasks of high priority
- Undertake enhancement work to improve coverage for under-represented monuments and periods as detailed in the Portsmouth HER Enhancement Projects document
- Make HER data available online and join the Heritage Gateway
- Undertake research into user and non-user groups to understand the current user-base of the HER and target services to current and new audiences

- Seek formal adoption by the host authority (this may not be required if the Levelling Up Bill is passed, as this proposes to make HERs statutory)
- Undertake a staffing and resourcing review as a priority to appraise options for increasing staffing level and budget allocated to HER work

5. Integrated impact assessment

5.1 The integrated impact assessment is included at appendix 3.

6. Legal implications

6.1 There are no legal implications arising directly from the recommendations in this report.

7. Director of Finance's comments

7.1 The recommendations contained in this report will be implemented within the existing approved budget resources of the Museums Service.

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Signed by:

Stephen Baily

Director of Culture, Leisure and Regulatory Services

Appendices:

Appendix 1 - Portsmouth City HER Audit Report 2022

Appendix 2 - Portsmouth HER Audit 2022 Summary

Appendix 3 - Integrated Impact Assessment

Background list of documents: Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972

The following documents disclose facts or matters, which have been relied upon to a material extent by the author in preparing this report:

Title of document	Location

The recommendation(s) set out above were approved/ approved as amended/ deferred/ rejected by on

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Signed by:

Cabinet Member for Culture, Leisure and Economic Development