

Open Report on behalf of Richard Wills, Executive Director (Development Services)

Report to:	Councillor Poll
Date:	10 January 2011
Subject:	Exemption from tendering for technical archiving of digital files held in the Historic Environment Record
Decision Reference:	01835
Key decision?	No

Summary:

The purpose of this report is to request an exemption from tendering for technical archiving of digital files held in the Historic Environment Record in order to make them more accessible to the public and to colleagues in the District Councils. The value of the work proposed for single tender action is estimated at £32000, out of an estimated total of £45000.

Recommendation(s):

It is recommended that approval is given for the Head of Spatial Planning to commission the Archaeology Data Service (ADS), part of York University, to accept the deposit of the digital archive of historic environment reports from the Historic Environment Record and to curate this archive in perpetuity.

Alternatives Considered:

1. Commission the Archaeology Data Service to accept the deposit of the digital archive of historic environment reports from the Historic Environment Record.
2. Undertake full tender process.
3. Do not archive the digital files of historic environment reports.

Reasons for Recommendation:

The digital files that are held in the Historic Environment Record represent a unique information resource that needs to be professionally archived so that its survival for the future can be guaranteed.

The ADS is the only national digital archive repository that specialises in archaeology and the historic environment and at the same time makes its collections available to the public. The ADS will undertake to curate the digital

archive in perpetuity.

Currently Mouchel Business Services do not have the capacity to archive files in perpetuity.

The County Council has a responsibility to maintain an accessible Historic Environment Record. If the digital files were not archived then the historic environment reports would be less accessible to members of the public and to colleagues on the District Councils. There would be a risk of data becoming lost and in ten to twenty years it is possible that the files would no longer be usable as computer software and hardware advances make the data files unreadable.

1. Background

The Lincolnshire County Council Historic Environment Record (HER) consists of a computerised record that acts as an index to supporting hard copy and digital files, in various formats. The Lincolnshire HER is recognised as the primary record of information on the historic environment, including archaeology and historic buildings, for the Lincolnshire County Council administrative area. It is used by local authorities across the county, particularly within the planning system, as well as by professionals and by members of the public. The Historic Environment Team (HET) has responsibility for maintaining and enhancing the Lincolnshire HER.

One of the most important sets of data held by the HER are historic environment grey literature reports. Grey literature reports are reports that have never been formally published, each one has usually only been produced in small numbers and they are difficult for people to find and access. The HER holds copies of reports on work covering a wide range of survey, excavation, desk-based assessment and building recording projects throughout Lincolnshire, mainly in response to development proposals arising from the planning process. These reports have been produced since the late 1980s and there are over 4000 of them in the HER. These reports hold some of the most important and recent information on the historic environment in Lincolnshire.

The HET wishes to enhance the content of the HER by digitising information only currently available in hard copy from the HER. Paper-copy reports held in the HER are to be scanned so that they can be added to the digital library. This allows the files to be more readily accessible to staff in the HET when accessing County Council systems remotely, thus facilitating New Ways of Working, and, linked with other current projects, allowing wider access to Conservation Officers and for members of the public. The HER will be a more useful tool in giving consistent and timely advice to those using their services. The publication of Planning Policy Statement 5 has strongly underlined the need to consider providing wider access to HER data.

The digital data created by the scanning of the reports will need to be deposited in a secure digital archiving facility where the archive can be curated professionally, maintained in perpetuity for the future and accessed easily. This will ensure the integrity and long term viability of the data so that it will continue to be accessible in

the future. The Archaeology Data Service will archive the data and will also provide public access to the data through its on-line catalogues.

The scanning and archiving of historic environment reports would also be beneficial by increasing accessibility to information used for the evidence base for Local Development Documents (particularly Core Strategies).

The HET aims to establish the most effective and efficient means of sharing HER data in Lincolnshire, and therefore achieving greater consistency and effectiveness in the protection and enhancement of Lincolnshire's rich historic environment so that it can be enjoyed by residents and visitors long into the future.

The total cost of the work involved would be around £45000, and the value of the proposed single tender action would be £32000.

2. Conclusion

The archiving of the digital reports is an important part of future-proofing public archives. The scanning and archiving of the historic environment reports is extremely worthwhile, with benefits for the County Council, the District Councils and the residents in, and visitors to, Lincolnshire. The digital archiving of reports would also facilitate New Ways of Working as it would enable information to be accessed remotely.

3. Legal Comments:

The Council's Constitution states that, in exceptional circumstances, where a Chief Officer believes that an alternative route to the usual procurement process is required, for contracts with a value between £10,001 and £75,000 approval in writing can be given by the Chief Officer. Although, if he wishes, he may refer this matter to the Executive Councillor. The Chief Officer should keep a record of the contracts approved as exceptions and the reasons why. This decision is therefore lawful and within the remit of the Executive Councillor.

4. Resource Comments:

Financial procedures require Executive Councillor approval where normal tendering procedures cannot be followed. In this case normal procedures cannot be followed as there is only one national supplier. Negotiations with the supplier, ADS, will be undertaken to ensure value for money.

5. Consultation

a) Has Local Member Been Consulted?

n/a

b) Has Executive Councillor Been Consulted?

Yes

c) Scrutiny Comments

n/a

d) Policy Proofing Actions Required

The conclusion is that there is likely to be a positive impact on local distinctive character and heritage, and that it likely to make a positive contribution to the objectives in the Local Development Framework.

6. Background Papers

The following background papers as defined in the Local Government Act 1972 were relied upon in the writing of this report.

Document title	Where the document can be viewed
Planning Policy Statement 5 (PPS5)	www.communities.gov.uk/publications/planningandbuilding/pps5

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