

WORLD WAR TWO DEFENCES IN ROCHFORD DISTRICT

1 SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report seeks Members' views on a request for a financial contribution towards the completion of a survey of World War II defences in Rochford District.

2 SURVEY EXPLAINED

- 2.1 Essex County Council has been conducting a project to locate and record the County's World War II defence sites. So far, 1,600 sites have been recorded, from an estimated total of 2,800.
- 2.2 Initially the work was funded by Essex County Council, but since 1998 the continuation of the project has been dependent on a mix of funding from the Essex Environment Trust, Hanson Environment Fund, Essex Heritage Trust and Chelmsford, Maldon, Colchester, Southend, Brentwood and Braintree Councils.
- 2.3 Rochford is the least recorded of the Essex Districts, with just 19 of an estimated 150 sites having been visited, but the County Council is keen to complete the work and has been discussing a way forward with the Rochford Hundred Field Archaeology Group.
- 2.4 All the work undertaken by the Rochford Hundred Field Archaeology Group would be unpaid. However, there would be a cost of £34,100 for detailed recording work, documentation, data entry and production of reports.
- 2.5 The County indicates that a major part of this funding may have been identified under a Countryside Agency 'Local Heritage Initiative' (£25,000). In addition, a contribution of £5,000 is likely to be provided by a Building Society. Taken together, with a contribution of £1,750 from the County, the outstanding balance to enable the project to proceed would be £2,350 and a contribution of this amount is now being requested from Rochford District Council to enable the overall recording project to continue seamlessly

3 DISCUSSION

- 3.1 There is no doubt whatsoever that a project to record World War II defence sites in the District is fully justified and the information will make a valuable contribution to our understanding of the period.

- 3.2 Inevitably, the cost of such projects is high, due to the detailed work required to ensure that sites are properly recorded and documented. It is not clear why the County Council has offered only £1,750 towards the cost of the project, but if Members did decide to assist with funding the project, one option would be to make a contribution that matched that from the County (i.e. £2,050 from each authority).
- 3.3 Certainly the principle of the project merits support, but Members will need to decide whether a financial contribution is justified in this instance. It may be that without a Council contribution at this stage, the work could be carried out, but not published. On the other hand, the ability to obtain grant funding for projects from bodies such as the Countryside Agency is normally dependent upon some match funding from other sources.

4 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The total cost of the recording project is £34,100 and a contribution of £2,350 is being sought from Rochford District Council. No budget has been identified for this project, but provision could either be found from contingencies or from savings in the current financial year.

5 RECOMMENDATION

It is proposed that the Committee **RESOLVES**

That Members determine whether or not to make a financial contribution of £2,350 towards the cost of recording World War II defences in the District.
(HPS)

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Background Papers: Letter from Essex County Council - 4th February 2002.

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