

## **Mowsbury Hillfort – Marketing Strategy**

### **Introduction**

1. This document sets out the Friend's strategy for marketing the Scheduled Mowsbury Hillfort site.

### **Site location, features and characteristics**

2. The site is located to the north-east of Mowsbury Golf and Squash Complex, Cleat Hill, Ravensden (TL06610 53189) and measures approximately 4ha in area. The Hillfort is a scheduled monument (list entry no.1015588) and county wildlife site in the ownership of Bedford Borough Council and is managed as a public amenity area. The monument is situated on a spur of chalky boulder clay overlooking the Ouse Valley. It comprises an early Iron Age slight univallate hillfort, within which a Medieval Moated Site was constructed in the Middle Ages. The habitat on site includes lowland wildflower meadow on boulder clay, broadleaf woodland, traditional orchards, scrub areas and ephemeral ponds.

3. The main remaining archaeological features are Iron Age ramparts on the south and the west of the monument; a Medieval ditch some 2 metres deep and 10 metres wide within the Iron Age ramparts which encloses an inner island and partially encloses an outer island; medieval fishponds north of the islands and north of the traditional orchard (east); and a leat stream north of Mowsbury Hill Meadow.

4. A public footpath runs west of Mowsbury Hill Meadow and turns east to run along part of the monument's northern boundary.

### **Habitat and wildlife**

5. The site contains a wide variety of habitats including semi-improved and species rich neutral grassland, traditional orchards, lowland mixed deciduous woodland and a series of moats and ponds. The courtyard meadow especially contains a good diversity of herbs including common spotted orchid, wild liquorice, and yellow rattle. The orchard contains a mix of fruit trees including apple, pear, plum and medlar. There is also a wild service tree. In summer there is a wide variety of butterflies, bumblebees and other invertebrates. Mammals include rabbits, badgers and muntjac deer.

### **The Friends of Putnoe Wood and Mowsbury Hillfort**

6. The Friends are a formally constituted local community group with an active task membership of 20, with many more non-active supporters. The Mission of the Friends is to promote Mowsbury Hillfort and Putnoe Wood for the benefit and the wellbeing of the local people and wildlife. The Friends web site is at [www.putnoemowsburyfriends.org.uk](http://www.putnoemowsburyfriends.org.uk). The Friends produce a web based and emailed newsletter three times per year with an e-mailed

circulation of 60+. Facebook and twitter updates regularly receive between 150 to 3000+ hits dependant on subject.

### **Aims/Objectives of the Strategy**

7. The main aim of the Strategy is to promote the Hillfort to the wider local community, explaining its Historical and Wildlife importance, which will hopefully help to ensure the long term preservation and protection of the site. The Strategy, in particular, aims to engage with interested community groups, such as Parish Councils, WI, Wildlife Trusts and with local Schools. The Strategy is informed by the SWOT analysis undertaken for the Friends Mowsbury Hillfort Vision.

### **Access and Accessibility**

8. The site is accessed via a public footpath running from the south-eastern corner of the car park belonging to the Mowsbury Golf and Squash Complex, Cleat Hill, Ravensden. The Friend's web site gives location information, history and photographs, together with details of the Friends Group and it's activities.

9. The site is wholly owned by Bedford Borough Council and is accessible all year round. The site is accessible to the disabled over unmade footpaths, however, some paths within the Scheduled monument may be challenging in terms of wheelchair access.

### **Site promotion**

10. The site is promoted through the Friend's web site. A leaflet (copy attached) has also been prepared covering the history and ecology of the site, copies of which are available at local libraries, Higgins Museum and through the web site. There is an information board at the bottom of the hill by an entrance gate. A signage board at the entrance the monument indicates its status as a Scheduled Monument and Local Nature Reserve.

### **Public engagement**

11. The Friend's group has, in addition to making the leaflet widely available, for a number of years, organised an annual winter Wassail. This has proved very popular and opened up awareness of the site to hundreds of local residents. The Friends have, on request, taken groups of people around the site to explain it's archaeological and wildlife significance. The Friends have also spoken at local events, giving presentations to WI and Church groups in Putnoe about the site.

12. The Friends are currently in discussion with local Schools about the opportunity to build access to the site into their curriculum. A visit by Ravensden WI is planned for July? It is also proposed to include visits to the site as part of the local Archaeology week in ....?

### **Site management**

13. The site is maintained jointly by the Friends and Bedford Borough Council. The Friends meet one afternoon a week (split between Mowsbury Hillfort and Putnoe Woods) to undertake tasks such as scrub management, grass cutting and litter picking.

## **Resources**

14. The Scheduled Mowsbury Hillfort benefits from a Higher Level Stewardship agreement, which runs to 2023. This provides funding for a formal management plan, hydrological and archaeological surveys and ongoing maintenance. The agreement also contains funding for 3 interpretation boards on the site. The Friend's and Borough Council are in active discussion on the design and siting of these boards.

## **Implementation**

15. The Friend's will lead on implementation of the Strategy, liaising as appropriate with Bedford Borough Council, Natural England and Historic England.

## **Monitoring**

16. The Friend's will monitor and discuss progress against the Strategy with representatives from Bedford Borough Council at regular monthly meetings and, at less frequent meetings, with representatives from Natural England and Historic England.