

# **BLHA** Bedfordshire Local History Association

## **Strategy**

**2023/24**

The future direction of the BLHA has been a focus of the Committee for the first few months of 2023. The issue arose from the concerns that the numbers of members in our Societies was decreasing as a direct result of the Covid pandemic and the consequent realisation that the average age of our membership was inevitably going to lead to a decline in numbers. This would possible manifest itself in

1. The Societies struggling to appoint sufficient committee members.
2. Attendances at Society events would decline.
3. Support to BLHA events and Conference would fall.

We therefore decided we would have to examine how BLHA

- could assist with Struggling Societies
- could enhance their own programme to attract younger members
- remains an effective network for its member societies

It is thought that the Aims and Purposes given in the constitution do not in themselves need to be revised but it is accepted that BLHA activities need to be reviewed to ensure the BLHA remains resilient and effective in the coming years. The debate on whether we continue to focus solely on Historical activities or whether we widen our brief to include Heritage and Culture activities has been started but remains to be concluded. It is important to understand why this change of strategy has been successful in other counties.

At this point we have concluded that any move towards a wider brief should be minimal but that the BLHA programme should be reviewed and updated.

The final agreement of our strategic direction will define what activities we retain, which activities need modification and what new activities are needed.

This document is a first step in developing our strategy and the next programme of activities. It is essential we define our strategic goals so we can tailor the activities and hence agree the timelines/resources for their implementation.

It is envisaged that we will appoint working groups to devise a plan for each of the new initiatives and this document will provide the framework to help those groups plan the implementation of the new activity and to present their detailed and costed recommendations to the full committee.

So far, the Strategic goals/initiatives we have identified are:

1. Enhance BLHA Committee to provide new ideas and resources to develop and implement this strategy.
2. Encourage greater collaboration between Member Societies.
3. Encourage greater collaboration between BLHA and other Heritage groups in Bedfordshire.
4. Encourage greater collaboration between BLHA and the Associations from neighbouring Counties – this should lead to the possibility of joint meetings and eventually to across-county projects at Society level.
5. Explore new initiatives based on the experience of neighbouring counties e.g., Award Schemes, History Fairs etc.
6. Encourage the greater involvement of younger people through collaboration with educational organisations e.g., Schools, Colleges.
7. Ensure that BLHA has the appropriate IT tools/skills to support these new initiatives.
8. Ensure BLHA has a sound financial policy to fund these initiatives including the necessary sponsorship/grants. We need to identify what locations / resources and funds are available to support any part of the strategy.
9. Ensure The BLHA has the resources to help struggling Societies.
10. Ensure BLHA has the resources to establish /support any workshops that Member Societies have requested.
11. To comply with our insurance requirements, we need to develop the skills/tools needed to apply Risk Assessments to future activities.
12. Provide Speaker List to facilitate programme coordinator's role.

This list is not, as yet, in any priority order nor in timeline order. It is also recognised that a single new initiative may address more than one goal e.g., galvanising different goals as different Categories within an Award scheme. However, it seems right that the collaboration within Bedfordshire Societies should be given a higher priority than across County collaborations.

This document should be regarded as organic hence will be liable for update as our discussions on the Strategy Programme progress and the implementation plans for each initiative are reviewed.

Presented at the BLHA AGM and Conference on 22nd June 2024