

MINUTES of the MEETING of the HERITAGE SUB-COMMITTEE held at THE COUNCIL OFFICES, THE GROVE, SWANSCOMBE, on TUESDAY 25 FEBRUARY 2020 at 10.00 AM

PRESENT: Councillor Lesley Howes – Chairman
Councillor Linda Hall – Vice-Chairman
Councillor Emma Ben Moussa
Councillor Sue Butterfill
Councillor Ann Duke
Councillor Peter Harman (ex-officio)

ALSO PRESENT: Martin Harding, Assistant Town Clerk/RFO
Lis Dyson, Kent County Council (KCC)

ABSENT: There were none.

508/19-20. ARRANGEMENTS AND CONSTRAINTS REGARDING FILMING OR RECORDING THE MEETING.

The Chairman explained the arrangements and constraints relating to the filming or recording of the meeting.

509/19-20. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Anita Barham.

510/19-20. SUBSTITUTES

There were none.

511/19-20. TO DECLARE INTERESTS IN ITEMS ON THE AGENDA

There were none.

The Chairman gave the opportunity for the meeting to be adjourned at this point to accept questions from the public.

512/19-20. URGENT ITEMS / MATTERS ARISING FROM PREVIOUS MINUTES.

There were none.

513/19-20. TO CONFIRM AND SIGN THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 5 DECEMBER 2019.

Recommended: That the Minutes of the meeting held on 5 December 2019, be confirmed and signed as a true record.

514/19-20. HERITAGE PARK IMPROVEMENTS.

The ATC/RFO informed members that the corporate tree planting event had successfully taken place on 4 February 2020 with the Town Mayor in attendance. North West Kent Countryside Partnership (NWCKP), who had facilitated the event, would refer any other interested companies to the Town Council in future for consideration for the Heritage Park.

NWKCP were continuing to investigate a possible funding stream for the pond, as well as the other funding options the ATC/RFO was working on.

Natural England had provided information on Earth Science Week from 11 to 17 October 2020. Members were asked to consider whether this was something the Town Council would like to work in partnership with and consider activities for. This would be discussed at the next meeting of the Sub-Committee

Recommended: That the ATC/RFO continue progressing the pond improvements and continue with the other heritage based projects as detailed.

515/19-20. NATURAL ENGLAND – SWANSCOMBE SKULL SITE NATIONAL NATURE RESERVE (NNR) AND SITE OF SPECIAL SCIENTIFIC INTEREST (SSSI) - VISUAL MANAGEMENT PLAN/LEASE.

The ATC/RFO advised members of the recent positive meeting held with Natural England to review the Management Plan for the site. Natural England were pleased with the progress the Town Council had made.

Natural England recommended that the Town Council consider looking at protection for the wider Heritage Park and had suggested investigating Local Nature Reserve (LNR) status.

Members agreed for the ATC/RFO to investigate this and report back to the next Sub-Committee meeting.

Recommended: That the information be noted and that the ATC/RFO investigate the process of LNR designation for the wider Heritage Park.

516/19-20. FRIENDS OF SWANSCOMBE HERITAGE PARK (FOSHP) REPORT OF ACTIVITIES.

Unfortunately no member of the FOSHP was in attendance and there had been no report submitted prior to the meeting.

Recommended: That the item be noted.

517/19-20. **HERITAGE PARK WEBSITE**

The ATC/RFO reminded members that any items to be included on the website needed to be forwarded to him.

Recommended: That the item be noted.

518/19-20. **ANY OTHER ITEMS RELATED TO HERITAGE.**

The Chairman confirmed that an invitation had been extended to Mark Harrison from Historic England to attend the next meeting of the Local History Group and this was pending.

Lis Dyson advised that KCC were currently working on a mapping exercise for archaeology and find sites within the area, and would like to undertake a presentation to the Sub-Committee on their findings. Members agreed that this presentation would be most welcome.

Lis Dyson confirmed that KCC were liaising with Ebbsfleet Development Corporation (EDC) on heritage interpretation within the area. A meeting would be arranged with the ATC/RFO to discuss the original interpretation proposals submitted to EDC previously.

Members wished to thank the ATC/RFO for the work he had undertaken, since joining the Town Council, on both improvements to the Heritage Park and raising the profile of the Town Council with organisations' such as Natural England.

519/19-20. **DATE OF NEXT MEETING.**

Recommended: That the next meeting be scheduled for Tuesday 21 April 2020 at 10.00am.

There being no further business to transact, the meeting closed at 10.35 am.

Signed: _____ Date: _____
(Chairman)

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HERITAGE PARK PROJECT AND FUNDING

Background

The Swanscombe Heritage Park is situated to the east of Knockhall Park, Greenhithe, west of Craylands Lane, Swanscombe and north of Alkerden Lane, Swanscombe. The site is also accessible from kissing gates within Gilbert Close and public footpaths DS6 and DS7.

The site has significant local, national and international interest due to its designation as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) for both its Archaeological and Geology importance. Most notably the discovery of the Swanscombe Man (400,000-year-old female skull remains) occurred on the site in 1935.

The site also has the designation of a National Nature Reserve (NNR) and the wider park is a popular recreation ground.

Both the SSSI and NNR are shown on the map below outlined in yellow. This area is owned by Natural England and Leased to the Town Council with a specified management plan. The wider park outlined in white is owned by Henley Camland Development and Leased to the Town Council under a 999-year Lease.



Over the last 10 years multiple attempts have been made to source funding and have works undertaken to improve the site as a whole. Whilst some have been successful others, for example the pond, have been subject to Anti-Social Behaviour and failed to establish.



Decking and fencing installed around pond boundary



Original pathway installed by Bluewater and first pond liner by NWKCP (both damaged and eventually replaced)

Funding

Further to minute 81/22-23 (Recreation Leisure & Amenities Committee 29 June 2023) Members were made aware that a bid for £28,550, in partnership with North West Kent Countryside Partnership (NWKCP), had been put into the Lower Thames Crossing (LTC) Green Infrastructure Fund and had been successful.

This was originally scheduled to deliver improvements over a three-year period as per the breakdown of award below. Due to the late decision date of the LTC this now has to be delivered over a two-year period.

Budget requested from Designated Funds			
Category/ Budget item	Year 1 (2022)	Year 2 (2023)	Year 3 (2024)
Annual surveys	£750	£500	£750
Restoration of pond	£11,000		
Meadow creation	£800	£2000	£2000
Meadow maintenance		£500	£500
Picnic area – wildflower planting	£550		
Beetle banks / hibernacula	£1000		
Vertical deadwood features		£1000	
Bird/bat boxes		£500	
Hedgerow whips, mats and shelters plus planting		£950	
Bee posts		£1000	
Interpretation panels plus installation			£3000
Cameras		£500	
5 year management plan			£750
End of project report			£500
Confirmed funding available from other sources			
Source	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
Total project costs:	£28,550		

Objectives

The funding award was agreed on the basis that Swanscombe and Greenhithe Town Council, in partnership with NWKCP, could deliver the following objectives within the now two-year period.

1. Bring the site's pond back from poor to good condition through restoration.
2. Plantation of 0.35ha of wildflower meadow and install varied wildlife features and habitats such as:
 - a. Beetle banks / wildlife mounds and hibernacula
 - b. Vertical stumpery / deadwood habitat for invertebrates
 - c. Underground nest chambers for bumblebees
 - d. Dead hedging
 - e. Bird and bat boxes
 - f. Mammal hideaways
3. Plant a native hedgerow measuring 30m
4. Plant wildflower plugs around the picnic area
5. Paths to be mown through wildflower meadow habitat to discourage trampling.
6. Leave a positive legacy for the local community through increased interpretation boards concerning chalk habitats.
7. Install trail cameras and nest box cameras to provide wildlife imagery and video for monitoring and public engagement purposes.
8. Carry out annual surveys to monitor the improvement in condition and to allow actions to be targeted as required
9. Prepare a five-year site management plan based on survey findings to inform future management
10. To provide a comprehensive report at the end of the funding period to demonstrate the improvements compared to the baseline

Delivery Plan

NWKCP have provided the below delivery plan for required works to meet the objectives over the next two years.

[illegible][illegible]

Update

In response to some initial queries NWKCP have confirmed the following:

1. The survey work being undertaken on site during the project will consist of Habitat Condition Assessments to both create a baseline and assess improvement to the site. Some other more informal species surveys will be undertaken for bats, mammals, and birds.
2. The agreed 5-year management plan being created as part of the project will be in partnership with the Town Council to ensure it is deliverable within the resources available. This will also consider the current formal management plan in place with Natural England for the NNR site.
3. Whilst this funding stream has no provision to help create, support a volunteer conservation group for the park, NWKCP would be happy to support this and would welcome community volunteers to support activities being undertaken during the two-year process.

To maximise the funds to be spent on actual improvements to the park, NWKCP have contacted companies that they regularly use for corporate events to see whether they would be willing to fund, support any of these activities. The first of these has been arranged for Friday 17 November with a company called MSK, who will be aiding with the planting of wildflowers plugs on site.

During August officers from the Town Council met on site with NWKCP to walk through the project and meet contractors tendering for the pond works and installation of the beetle banks / wildlife mounds. Following consideration of cost and specification, a contractor has been instructed and a start date awaited.

Recommended:

To note the work being done to implement the objectives set out in the Lower Thames Crossing funding award.