

MINUTES of the MEETING of the HERITAGE PARK / SKULL SITE SUB-COMMITTEE held at THE COUNCIL OFFICES, THE GROVE, SWANSCOMBE, on TUESDAY 25 OCTOBER at 10.00 AM

PRESENT: Councillor B E Read (Chairman)
Councillor Ms L C Howes (Vice-Chairman)
Councillor R J Lees
Councillor D J Mote

ALSO PRESENT: Martin Harding, Assistant Town Clerk & RFO
Brenda Bobby (FOSH)

ABSENT: None

232/16-17. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor's Mrs S P Butterfill and P C Harris.

233/16-17. SUBSTITUTES

There were none.

234/16-17. 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.

235/16-17. URGENT ITEMS / MATTERS ARISING FROM PREVIOUS MINUTES.

There were none.

236/16-17. TO CONFIRM AND SIGN THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 13 SEPTEMBER 2016.

Recommended: That the Minutes of the meeting held on 13 September 2016 be confirmed and signed as a true record.

237/16-17. HLF BID – PROGRESS TO DATE.

The ATC/RFO gave an update on the progress of the HLF bid. A draft of the bid would be circulated to all members by close of business on Friday 28 October 2016 for consideration.

The ATC/RFO asked members to consider the Town Councils preferred management model for the new visitor centre. A discussion was held comparing the

different models available. Members decided that the ATC/RFO would discuss this further with the Program Management Board in November with the Town Council preferring to retain management in the first instance but with agreements with partnerships regarding ongoing use and decision making. This would include a review to consider setting up a Trust to manage the building.

Recommended: That the progress of the bid be noted.

238/16-17. **NATURAL ENGLAND – SWANSCOMBE NNR MANAGEMENT PLAN.**

The ATC/RFO updated members on the information provided by Eleanor Brown of Natural England in relation to the visual management plan and that an update was awaited on the Lease renewal.

Recommended: That the update from the ATC/RFO be noted.

239/16-17. **FRIENDS OF SWANSCOMBE HERITAGE PARK (FOSHP) REPORT OF ACTIVITIES.**

Brenda Bobby confirmed that the Halloween Disco was scheduled for this Friday. A litter pick had been considered but the site was felt to be in relatively good order at present

Recommended: That the item be noted.

240/16-17. **HERITAGE PARK WEBSITE**

This item reminded everyone that any items to be included on the website needed to be forwarded to the ATC/RFO.

Recommended: That the item be noted.

241/16-17. **ANY OTHER ITEMS RELATED TO THE HERITAGE PARK / SKULL SITE.**

There were none

242/16-17. **DATE OF NEXT MEETING.**

Recommended: That the next meeting be scheduled Tuesday 8 November 2016 at 10.00am

There being no further business to transact, the meeting closed at 10.40 am.

Signed: _____ Date: _____
(Chairman)

Realising the Potential (HLF bid) Swanscombe Heritage Park

Project Title (50 words)

Footprints in Time

Project Summary (150 words)

Swanscombe Heritage Park is a hidden treasure! This SSSI site was first recognised for the discovery of a Palaeolithic skull known as Swanscombe Man. It is also a National Nature Reserve. This project will preserve, protect and sensitively develop this internationally important archaeological, geological and biologically important heritage site and make it accessible.

The project will provide a prestigious focal point for the ancient town of Swanscombe, listed in the Domesday Book. The site will be used for a variety of activities, including learning and research, educational entertainment, leisure and volunteering activities.

The local community, schools and colleges, national and international learning institutions and tourists will benefit from the project.

Project Elements will include:

- Construction of a multi-use, learning and visitor centre.
- Construction of an outdoor viewing platform showing superimposed virtual landscapes of pre-history to the present day's actual landscape.
- Provision of a variety of volunteering, learning and community activities

2a. What is the heritage that your project will focus on? NEED LIS' TIMELINE

- Archaeology and geology from the Palaeolithic (from the time of the discovery of the Swanscombe skull)to the present day.
- The initial focus will be on Palaeolithic and the Industrial period when discoveries and changes brought about by industry and quarrying in the 19th century changed the landscape.
- Biodiversity - Swanscombe Heritage Park (excluding the SSSI and NNR and as part of Alkerden Lane Pit) is designated as a Local Wildlife Site (LWS).

Palaeolithic Archaeology & Geology

The site is nationally and internationally important for its exceptional preservation of Palaeolithic archaeological artefacts, faunal remains and geological deposits.

Swanscombe Skull Site is a National Nature Reserve (NNR). The Swanscombe Skull Site (SSSI) and is notified for a Palaeolithic skull and rich fossil and sediment assemblage relating to the

ancestral River Thames. The first two pieces of the 400,000 year old Swanscombe skull were found in 1935 and 1936 by Alvin T Marston, in 1955 by John Wymer who conducted a series of excavations and found a third piece of the same skull. It was originally known as Swanscombe Man, but is now thought to be the skull of a young woman. Swanscombe Woman is thought to belong to a now extinct species of humans called *Homo heidelbergensis*. The skull found at Swanscombe is the second oldest human fossil in the UK. Numerous flint tools, including hand axes from two different traditions have also been excavated from the site.

The site contains one of the richest Pleistocene vertebrate localities in Britain, and by far the richest locality relating to the Hoxnian Interglacial period. The extreme rarity of fauna of equivalent, Holsteinian age, from Continental Europe makes Swanscombe a site of considerable geological importance. The fauna includes 26 mammalian taxa (eg man, macaque, lion, straight-tusked elephant, two extinct rhinos, horse, several deer, aurochs and small mammals) and many birds. A horizon of fossil footprints, unique in the British Pleistocene, occurs immediately on top of the Lower Loam.

The project will preserve the remaining Pleistocene deposits within the site, and conserve the undug Boyn Hill deposits underneath the Alkerden Lane Allotments. .

Industrial archaeology

This is an important feature of the park. Gravel extraction and chalk quarrying took place in Swanscombe and surrounding areas in the latter decades of the 19th century until the closure of the main Blue Circle cement works in 1990. These works shaped the current landscape of Swanscombe and the surrounding area and are directly responsible for the formation of Swanscombe Heritage Park and Craylands Gorge.

Biodiversity and Ecology

Swanscombe Heritage Park (excluding the SSSI and NNR and as part of Alkerden Lane Pit) is designated as a Local Wildlife Site (LWS). The site is designated as an LWS because of the suite of nationally scarce and county scarce plant species that it supports. The site is also important for its invertebrate populations, including burrowing bees and wasps. The site supports a good bird fauna. Reptiles, included great crested newts, have also been recorded on site.

Management and preservation of biodiversity and natural eco-systems have been limited due to a lack of resources. The project will implement conservation of rich biodiversity and preserve the well-established natural eco-systems on which the conservation of flora and fauna depend. The project provides an exciting opportunity to educate and increase awareness of ecology, natural biology and evolutionary development of species by considering changes in fauna on the site from pre-history to the present day.

2.b Is your heritage considered to be at risk? If so, please tell us in what way.

The site is at risk in various ways.

A large proportion of the local population are unaware of the significance of the site. It is unprotected and has been left to decay.

Given the quarrying activity at the site, and that it is continually used for recreation by young people ride motor-cross bikes, the site continues to suffer significant damage. An example of impact of this follows:

The first 2 pieces of the skull found were in good condition; however the third piece, discovered 20 years later, was in very poor condition and collapsed into 9 pieces. Since 1955 excavations at Swanscombe have shown that important fossil materials in the NNR were highly decalcified and vertebrate bones found in the 1980s were too soft to be recovered for study.

It is likely that the unroofing of the fossil horizons has led to this decalcification as well as bacterial degradation of bone. As such there are serious concerns about the perseveration of fossils, including the potential for further ancient human remains. This is, undoubtedly, an internationally important site. Urgent measures need to be taken to preserve and arrest any further degradation of material still present. An assessment is desperately needed to see if adjacent deposits in the wider SSSI and surrounding area that haven't been quarried are still intact, and if so to enable appropriate conservation measures to be put in place.

2.c Does your project involve work to physical heritage such as buildings, collections, landscapes or habitats?

If yes: Tell us the name of the building(s), collections, landscape or habitat area

Please see section 2a

Land known as Swanscombe Heritage Park where various significant Palaeolithic finds have been found since 1881. It is a site of special scientific interest, a national nature reserve and has geological significance.

If yes: Do you, or a partner organisation, own the building, land or heritage items outright?

Part of the site is owned by Natural England who is a partner in this application and the remainder by Land Securities.

If no: Do you, or a partner organisation have a leasehold on the building, land or items?

Natural England (a partner in this application) own part of the site (see above) and the applicant, Swanscombe and Greenhithe Town Council hold a 25 year lease from Natural England and was granted a 999 year lease by Land Securities.

If yes: How many years are left to run on the leasehold?

25 years on Natural England Lease; 991 on the Land Securities Lease

If no: If you do not currently meet our ownership requirements, tell us the date by when you expect to do so?

3. Your Project

3a Describe what your project will do.

- 1 Investigate, conserve and protect the substantial archaeological, geological and historical heritage of the site
- 2 Conserve and protect the special biodiversity of the natural environment as a site of special interest.
- 3 Improve the site to give access to the general public, schools and colleges for interest for leisure and learning
- 4 Establish a national and international centre of excellence.

Outputs will include:

- a. Field surveys, assessment mapping of the remaining intact deposits and a preservation of fossil materials inside and outside the NNR and check and map stratigraphy and the distribution of sediments relating geo-heritage.
- b. Plan and implement conservation works based on surveys. This will include landscaping of the site to conserve while giving safe public access.
- c. Construction of a visitor centre and learning space. The centre will include public access information and refreshment area, meeting rooms and administration offices. The centre will provide a focal point for visitors whether from the general public, students or academics to discover more about the site, to engage in active learning and research activities.
- d. Construction of a viewing tower to give 360 degree views of the surrounding landscape over a 20 mile radius. Visitors will be able to see virtual landscapes of pre-history to the present day superimposed on to today's actual landscape.
- e. Activity programmes for visitors. These will range from family heritage trails, to schools tours and educational 'entertainment pieces' for the general public.
- f. Three Education packs will be produced targeting; the general public; schools and colleges; higher learning institutions.
- g. The establishment of a 'Centre of Excellence' for learning. Activities such as practical archaeological exploration, bio and eco conservation, geological studies and social heritage will be implemented. The Centre of Excellence will be of interest to academics from national and international institutions.

3b. Explain what need and opportunity your project will address.

There is an urgent need to prevent further degradation of the site and to identify whether current conservation mechanisms in the surrounding area are adequately conserving the site resource. To date, no comprehensive surveys to inform management of the geo-heritage have been carried out at Swanscombe. Given the ongoing degradation of the fossils at Swanscombe it is necessary to do this work now to underpin the ongoing conservation and management of the site within the Ebbsfleet Garden City area.

This is also an opportunity to create a cohesive, civic community bringing together the old community of Swanscombe and new residents of Ebbsfleet Garden City and build pride and a strong sense of identity for all residents.

The objectives at the heart of the project are three-fold; to achieve step-change in the quality and breadth of the interpretation on the site, to substantially increase its use by the public (especially for education and wider learning), and to put in place a more robust and financially-sustainable management regime to safeguard the heritage for future generations.

Most notably, land surrounding the Heritage Park has recently been designated by Government as a 'Garden City', with the prospect of up to 15,000 new homes built over the next few years, and the London Paramount Leisure Resort, designed to attract 40,000 visitors a day, scheduled to be open in 2020. This degree of change presents challenges (eg potential risk to the heritage), and opportunities (a rapidly expanding local population and visitor destination), which the project is designed to address.

3c. Why is it essential for the project to go ahead now?

There are major developments happening all around the site: Ebbsfleet Development Corporation (EDC) is currently in the process of building Ebbsfleet Garden City which is a development of 15,000 new homes immediately surrounding the site. There is now a need to integrate the growing new community with the old, established community if we are going to offset the stress that increased population and demographic change brings. This project will significantly contribute to that, especially as the town of Swanscombe sits in the centre of these developments and has no planned allocation of resources or interventions to support this old, Domesday Book listed community.

The development of Swanscombe Heritage Park is timely in order for the community to benefit from the changes. If the site is not developed at this time, it is in danger of irreparable damage and decay and this internationally significant site could be a lost completely.

In addition if the project does not go ahead at this time, there will be a loss of knowledge and expertise about Swanscombe's industrial heritage as the older population, who are the repository of this knowledge declines.

3d. Why do you need Lottery funding?

The complexity, specialist heritage focus, and scale of the project requires funding that no other appropriate funding stream can provide. As a specialist, heritage project of national and international significance, it fits the criteria and grant range of lottery funding perfectly.

We require capital investment to improve facilities and access as well as revenue to engage local residents with the heritage of the park. Some grant funders will only cover one or the other and often not to the scale we require to make this project succeed.

Our vision for the future of Swanscombe Heritage Park requires increased awareness of its industrial and natural heritage, and participation from a variety of stakeholders, in its on-going management. The Heritage Lottery Fund carries the prestige and authority of the HLF brand that will also give confidence to stakeholders and other contributors to the project.

- 3e. What work and/or consultation have you undertaken to prepare for this project and why?

In February 2016 a mapping exercise was carried out in Barnfield Pit (the NNR) to georeferenced the existing sections and areas where previous research has taken place. This will inform the development of a Visual Management Plan to enable targeted vegetation clearance to take place around key sections of the site which are now overgrown. The map data will also inform the geoarchaeological survey work which we envisage will be undertaken in the Development Phase.

We have already developed a close relationship with stakeholders and partners. We also have ongoing consultations with The Ebbsfleet Development Corporation and with London Paramount. We have conducted a variety of surveys and consultation events with the local community. (MARTIN – FINDINGS)

4. Project Outcomes

- 4a. What difference will your project make for heritage?

In short this will enable us to assess and therefore conserve an interationally important geoarchaeological site which is also a National Nature Reserve and Site of Special Scientific Interest. In order for successful management in the future, particularly in the context of ongoing development in the wider area and ptoentioa loss of unnotified resource, it is therefore timely to conduct this work now.

This project will also make a difference to heritage by introducing better interpretation in the visitor centre as well along the heritage trails, which will better explain the landscape, heritage and habitats of Swanscombe Heritage Park. The education programme and community activities will increase awareness and understanding of the industries and the impact they have had on the area over the centuries. There will be a variety of activities for all ages, aimed at getting people involved in supporting and making decisions about their heritage for the future. There will be a mixture of hands on activities, practical tasks and information points for visitors to learn more about this heritage. The project will also provide the foundations for future work of archaeological and geological significance across other periods of prehistory.

- Palaeolithic archaeology and geology – The project will enable survey work to be undertaken to map the surface distribution of the sediments, and to investigate the condition of the archaeological and geological resource. The survey work will help to
- identify sensitive geological and archaeological areas
- It allows a fossil record to be established for the area
- investigate whether there are areas where fossils are deteriorating. If appropriate, these areas will then be covered with a protective layer to prevent further deterioration.
- Raising awareness of the heritage value of the site will help to address anti-social behaviour such as digging and it will inform local people about the importance of the site.

- The site will become recognised as a site of National, aspirational international centre of excellence for archaeology, geology conservation and ecology.
- Biodiversity – The project will enable conservation management to be implemented on site, which will improve the biodiversity of the site.

4b. What difference will your project make for people?

- Leisure, learning and skills access to educational and/or leisure entertainment, such as outdoor immersive theatre illustrating what life might have been like going back through time
- Visitors and the local population will experience a living history of Swanscombe and give a cultural and archaeological perspective stretching to pre-history.
- Enhancing access to and within a significant local open space
- Enabling people to learn more about an internationally important site for Palaeolithic archaeology and geology through the provision of organised activities and improved interpretation
- Enabling people to learn more about the industrial heritage of the site and the surrounding area through the provision of organised activities and improved interpretation
- Foster personal pride in residents tend to suffer from low self-esteem
- Providing an opportunity for different age groups in the community to interact by taking part in an oral history project
- Enabling people to learn more about wildlife on their doorstep through the provision of organised activities and improved interpretation
- Provide opportunities for people to become involved in the conservation management of a local site. This would include training opportunities that would provide skills for future employment
- Enabling local schools to use the site as an outdoor classroom by providing resources linked in to the National Curriculum

4c. What difference will your project make for communities?

- Build community pride and make more attractive to future residents,
- Provide leisure & learning opportunities
- Community leisure venue
- Bring income to the area
- Motivate and inspire other communities to celebrate their heritage by the example of Swanscombe Heritage Park delivery model.

4d. What are the main groups of people that will benefit from your project?

Local, national and international scientists working on the evolution of man, Palaeolithic, archaeological and Quaternary science.

- Local people of all ages: general public, schools, colleges, community groups
- National & international tourists - link to Paramount and Ebbsfleet International
- schools, colleges and university students around the country
- Research and academic institutions throughout the UK and internationally

4e. Does your project involve heritage that attracts visitors?

Yes

If yes: What are your existing visitor numbers?

MARTIN TO COMPLETE

If yes: How many visitors a year do you expect on completion of your project?

MARTIN TO COMPLETE

4f. How many people will be trained as part of your project, if applicable?

Estimate: 10 volunteers per annum - these can be members of the general public – will not only learn project specific skill such as heritage related skills but will learn transferable skills that will aid employability

4g. How many volunteers do you expect will contribute personally to your project?

30 per annum.

4h. How many full-time equivalent posts will you create to deliver your project?

5. Project Management

Development phase

5a. What work will you do during the development phase of your project?

Essentially this should take the following form (to discuss and work up with Lis Dyson and estimate costs)

- Updated desk and field based assessment mapping the extent of the remaining intact deposits and the preservation of fossil material in Barfield pit (the NNR). (Preparation and desk survey of archives and publications 4 days field survey, 3 days map and write up to 3 days)

- Desk assessment mapping the potential areas of surviving deposits outside the NNR (within the SSSI and the surrounding areas including the remainder of the Heritage Park). (4days). List of here archived material is from Swanscombe (for reference use in developing interpretation and also potentially borrowing material for interpretive purposes.)
- Field survey of areas identified as having potential for surviving deposits to check the stratigraphy and preservation status of fossil material. This could take the form of an initial non-invasive survey if deemed suitable (eg ground penetrating radar, electrical resistance tomography) followed by a targeted invasive survey (eg using trial pits or boreholes.). Some laboratory work to analyse fossils, sediment geochemistry etc, will also be required. (2 days) planning, 5 days in the field, 2 days in the lab, 3 days writing up.
- Statement of Significance – final output will be a map and assessment of the conservation status of surviving deposits in the NNR and surrounding areas and recommendations for conservation mechanism going forward. This would also inform other aspects of the Stage 2 application including access management, interpretation, visitor facilities etc. in order to provide geoheritage data to inform plans and projects as well as minimise impact of new infrastructure on the remaining resource.
- Total 26 days @ £1000 per day = £26,000 plus VAT plus expenses £30,000 estimated.

During the Development Phase, the project board will ensure all stakeholders have a say in the future of Swanscombe Heritage Park. This will be facilitated by Swanscombe and Greenhithe Council. All activity undertaken during this phase will be supporting and working towards the stage 2 application and will include the following work:

- Access enhancements – A contractor will be employed to prepare detailed designs and tender documentation up to RIBA Stage D relating to the path improvements.
 - Education Pack development stage – A organisation will be employed to undertake development work with the 4 local schools to work towards the production of an Education Pack for the site. This will include site visits with the schools to look at the park potential and learning opportunities; planning and research work regarding what opportunities could be offered; consultation and liaison with the schools to develop ideas; the production of a proposal with an outline plan for the overall design and content of an education pack based on feedback from the schools.
 - Survey work to investigate the condition of the archaeological and geological resource including a field survey to map the distribution of sediments. This will inform the methodology used to protect the archaeological and geological heritage.
- Further information to be supplied by Lis Dyson from Kent County Council.**

Landscaping and Site Masterplan (L1 Stages A-D)

The project Board will appoint a Landscape Architect to liaise with stakeholders and draw up a site Masterplan that will include: options for the location of the visitor centre and the proposed viewing platform, pathways, cycle ways, seating and opportunities for public art. All detailed designs up to Planning Application stage.

School and Community Consultation

Although some consultation has led us to this point, further consultation with schools, community groups and other potential visitors to the site are required. We will deliver pilot projects and organise activities and events which will be used to engage and consult with people. These will include guided walks around the site, conservation task days such as path clearing, supervised school visits and general public meetings to update people on the plans. The consultation will feed into the community and education programmes and into the plans for the visitor centre and security for the site.

Visitor centre and viewing platform plan

We will appoint a contractor to work with us to design and plan the buildings which will be home to the visitor centre and viewing platform. A specialist container supplier will be used who have extensive experience in this area. Initial plans will be drawn up that will be used for discussion amongst stakeholders. These will be used during consultation with the local community. The contractor will also support the planning application process.

The Project Officer appointed to oversee the Development Phase will also work with the appointed contractor and our Landscape Architect, to design and plan access and landscaping around these new buildings. This will require consultation and research into standards for disabled access into the facilities.

Lease agreement

During this phase of the project, the Project Officer will support Swanscombe & Greenhithe Town Council to renegotiate an extended lease to meet the requirements of this funding (lease until ???). This will be completed before the stage 2 application is submitted.

Activity Plan

The project delivery activity plan will be produced by the Project Officer. This will be based on feedback on conservation days, school visits and consultation with the community.

Business Plan, Management Plan and Conservation Plan

A Business Plan, Management Plan and Conservation Management plan will be developed to ensure the delivery of the project goes hand in hand with the aim of long term maintenance and sustainability. A community and education program will also be required to feed into this to ensure the facilities and interpretation put in place are suitable. It will also outline the long-term costs of maintaining the site and how income will be generated to sustain it.

Partnership funding

The Project Officer will work closely with the Project Board to secure match funding towards the delivery of the project. We anticipate partnership funding to come from????.

Stage 2 Application

Finally, the Project Officer will continuously be working towards completion on the Stage 2 application. We aim to submit this by June 2018. All the above activities will feed into the development of the project and this application. This will focus on refining the budget ensuring costs are as accurate as possible especially for the capital works such as the visitor centre, access pathways and viewing platform. It will also strongly focus on the Business and Management Plans as these will map out the delivery of the project but also the future and the long-term sustainability. All elements of the project and its delivery will feed into this to ensure the site and the facilities will be used and interpreted by the local community and how income will be generated to maintain and sustain the site and it's heritage for the long-term.

- 5b. Who are the main people responsible for the work during the development phase of your project?
Martin Harding, Assistant Town Clerk & RFO; Project Officer (new post); Natural England, Project Board

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