

MINUTES of the MEETING of the HERITAGE PARK / SKULL SITE SUB-COMMITTEE held at THE COUNCIL OFFICES, THE GROVE, SWANSCOMBE, on THURSDAY 2 JULY 2015 at 1.30 PM

PRESENT: Councillor B E Read (Chairman)
Councillor Ms L M Cross (as substitute for Councillor Mrs S P Butterfill)
Councillor Ms L C Howes
Councillor R J Lees
Councillor Mrs C K Openshaw

ALSO PRESENT: Sara Stapleton, Responsible Financial Officer (RFO)
Becky Plunkett, Natural England
Joanna Carter, Natural England
Lis Dyson, Kent County Council

ABSENT: Councillor Mrs S P Butterfill
Councillor D J Mote

119A/15-16. TO ELECT A CHAIRMAN FOR THE FORTHCOMING YEAR (2015 – 2016).

MOVED by Councillor R J Lees and seconded by Councillor Mrs C K Openshaw.

Recommended: That Councillor B E Read be elected as Chairman for the forthcoming year (2015 – 2016).

119B/15-16. TO ELECT A VICE-CHAIRMAN FOR THE FORTHCOMING YEAR (2015 – 2016).

MOVED by Councillor B E Read and seconded by Councillor R J Lees.

Recommended: That Councillor Ms L C Howes be elected as Chairman for the forthcoming year (2015 – 2016).

120/15-16. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were submitted and accepted from Garnet Johnson, Groundwork (other meeting).

Recommended: That the apologies for absence and reasons, as listed, be formally approved.

121/15-16. SUBSTITUTES

Councillor Ms L M Cross substituted for Councillor Mrs S P Butterfill.

122/15-16. 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.

123/15-16. URGENT ITEMS / MATTERS ARISING FROM PREVIOUS MINUTES.

The RFO advised members that she had received an email from the British Museum regarding a three day conference they were hosting for the European Society of Human Evolution (ESHE) in September of this year and that there would be a field excursion on the 13 September to the Skull Site. The British Museum was requesting permission to open up some of the sections that had previously been opened to show to the conference delegates. The excursion was expected to attract c.160 delegates. The RFO confirmed that she had forwarded the email to Natural England as permission would need to be sought from them.

124/15-16. TO CONFIRM AND SIGN THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 26 MARCH 2015.

Recommended: The Minutes of the meeting held on 26 March 2015 be confirmed and signed as a true record.

125/15-16. HLF BID – PROGRESS TO DATE.

Garnet Johnson was unable to attend the meeting as he had to attend a meeting with Cabinet Office in London. Members expressed concern that the resubmission of the bid was taking a long time. It was agreed that Groundwork should provide a draft bid by Friday 10 July which would give sufficient time for members to review it before the next meeting on 23 July 2015. Groundwork were to be advised that if the draft could not be provided by this date, the Town Council would need to consider its options regarding future partners for it to work with to prepare the bid.

Recommended: That a draft bid submission should be provided by Groundwork by 10 July 2015.

126/15-16. NATURAL ENGLAND – SWANSCOMBE MANAGEMENT PLAN.

Becky Plunkett confirmed that the management plan was still in draft form, but she wished to discuss the maintenance of the site which the Town Council was responsible for. She provided members with a copy of the Town Council's lease for the skull site, along with a copy of a maintenance plan on a similar National Nature Reserve Site and Natural England's requirements for the future management of the Skull Site. Natural England expressed their concern that the Town Council was not managing the site as contained within the lease. It was clear that the Town Council was not clearly aware of its obligations contained within the lease and it was agreed that the members of the sub-committee should meet with Natural England separately to discuss this in order for the Town Council to meet its commitment for managing and maintaining the site. Members expressed to Natural England that the Town Council was committed to keeping the site under its control and were keen to understand its obligations in order to do so, the importance of the site to the area was noted.

Recommended: That a meeting be held on Friday 17 July 2015 at 10.00 am with Natural England to discuss the Town Council's obligations in full detail in relation to managing and maintaining the site.

127/15-16. FRIENDS OF SWANSCOMBE HERITAGE PARK (FOSHP) REPORT OF ACTIVITIES.

Members expressed their condolence at the sad loss of Margaret Bull who was an integral member of the FOSHP. A written report was provided of the activities organised by the FOSHP, which included, an Easter Egg Hunt on 2 April 2015, with over 110 people attending. A fish and chip evening attended by 70 local residents which was so well received that the FOSHP has been inundated with requests for similar events. The event was funded by the FOSHP but they requested donations and raised over £420 which would be donated to the Ellenor Hospice, in memory of Margaret Bull as her favourite charity. The Teddy Bear's Picnic was due to take place during the school summer holidays along with a litter picking event late in the summer.

Recommended: That the report be noted.

128/15-16. HERITAGE PARK WEBSITE.

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

Recommended: That the item be noted.

129/15-16. ANY OTHER ITEMS RELATED TO THE HERITAGE PARK / SKULL SITE.

There were none.

130/15-16. DATE OF NEXT MEETING.

Recommended: That the next meeting be scheduled for Thursday 23 July 2015 at 1.30 pm

There being no further business to transact, the meeting closed at 2.35 pm.

Signed: _____ Date: _____
(Chairman)

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Sara Stapleton

From: Robin Jones <Robin.Jones@GROUNDWORK.ORG.UK>
Sent: 09 July 2015 15:46
To: Sara Stapleton
Cc: Garnet Johnson
Subject: Swanscombe Heritage Park - HLF
Attachments: SHP - Realising the potentialv1.pdf

Importance: High

Dear Sara,

It was good to speak to you earlier today. Please find attached a new draft EoI for the HLF for you and Councillors to consider, taking account the feedback received from previous applications and your recent discussions with Garnet.

Please don't be put off by the applicant name of 'Lewes District Council', this simply a consequence of the HLF on-line system only allowing one identity per e-mail address, and I'm currently working on an application in their name! The new SHP application will, of course, be made in the name of the Town Council. Also please note that the draft is exactly 1,000 words long, so any additions/editing that you may wish to make before submission will need to take this into account. Having had the opportunity to have a look, do let me know if there are any changes that you would like me to make prior to circulation next week.

And, of course, we're more than happy to answer any questions that Councillors may have on the 23rd if that would be helpful.

Best Regards

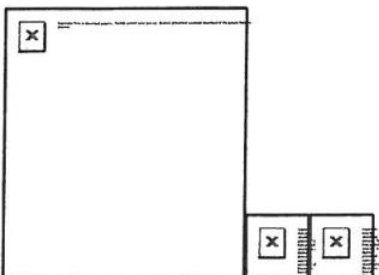
Robin

Robin Jones
Strategic Development Manager
Groundwork South

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Switchboard: 01322 384848

<http://www.south.groundwork.org.uk>



Think before you print!

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Charity Registration No. 293705

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Project Enquiry Form

Summary

What is the title of your project?

In no more than 15 words, please choose a title which you think best describes your project.

Swanscombe Heritage Park - Realising the potential

Reference number

HG-15-02363

Date received

09/07/2015

Section One - Your Organisation**1a Name and address of your organisation**

Name of your organisation Lewes District Council

Address line 1 Southover House
Address line 2 Southover Road
Address line 3

Town / city Lewes
County East Sussex
Postcode BN7 1AB

1b Details of main contact person

Name Robin Jones
Position

Is the address of the main contact person the same as the address in 1a?

Yes

Daytime phone number, including area code 01474 552509
Alternative phone number

Email address Robin.jones@groundwork.org.uk

1c Are you a not for profit organisation?

Yes

Please tell us the type of your organisation.

Town Council

1d Where did you hear about the Heritage Lottery Fund? Please pick from list or specify below.

Previous application to HLF

Section Two - The Heritage

2a What is the heritage that your project will focus on?

The central focus of the proposed project is Swanscombe Heritage Park, designated as a NNR and SSSI and internationally known primarily for its Palaeolithic archaeological heritage, but also for faunal remains and geological deposits. Excavations over many years revealed tens of thousands of flint tools from two different traditions, together with the fossilized bones of animals (including the cave bear) dating from circa 400,000 years ago. The most important discoveries at the site, however, are the skull fragments of an early form of Homo Sapiens excavated by Alvin T. Martin in the mid 1930's, one of only two locations in the UK where remains from the Palaeolithic period have so far been found.

The project will also encompass adjacent, linked sites through which the geological and industrial heritage to which the archaeology of Swanscombe Heritage Park relates can be appreciated, notably Craylands Gorge, and a robust and sustainable/long term management regime achieved.

Section Three - Your Project

3a Is the address of your project the same as the address of your organisation?

No

Enter the address of your project.

Address line 1	Swanscombe Leisure Centre
Address line 2	Craylands Lane
Address line 3	
Town / city	SWANSCOMBE
County	Kent
Postcode	DA10 0LP

3b Describe what your project will do.

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.

A previous application made to the HLF relating to the Swanscombe Heritage site (in 2009) did not meet with success, and the learning from that experience has been applied to this newly conceived project. Also, in the intervening years there has been a transformation in the local planning context which makes this initiative both timely and even more necessary. 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.

Outcomes for heritage:

First and foremost, a new conservation management regime is required, both to safeguard the scheduled sites and interpret them using more imaginative themes (eg how early man lived) and up-to-date techniques (eg use of digital technology and film). The Park Conservation Management and Audience Development Plans are now over 5 years old, and will be re-visited with site-owners Natural England during the development phase to inform the detailed design and siting of the new interpretation. The first phase of implementation envisages upgrading and replacement of the current (degraded) site information panels, improving accessibility for users with disabilities, and installing more robust measures to prevent damage currently being caused by illegal motorcycle use. We will also develop a plan to ensure public access to and interpretation of the geological and industrial history associated with Craylands Gorge (designated as a strategic 'green' footpath/cycle-route in development proposals for Ebbsfleet Garden City).

Specific proposals for second phase implementation include:

- 1) Construction of an imaginatively-designed and multi-purpose 'pavilion' overlooking the skull site to provide flexible space for interpretation (eg virtual safari, providing visitor services, on-site classroom, seasonal catering, ranger base and, potentially, office space for the Town Council.
- 2) Incorporation of a demonstration archeological dig area (outside of Barnfield Pit), through which visitors and educational groups can gain a 'hands-on' experience, in conjunction with KCC
- 3) Prehistoric animal sculptures for visitors to encounter in the Heritage Park, brought to life using with interactive technology (eg hand-held devices), in partnership with London Paramount.

Outcomes for people:

Although the reputation of its unique legacy of archaeology means that Swanscombe Heritage Park attracts many visitors from abroad, awareness of its significance locally and useage remains relatively low, in spite of continuous management by the Town Council and periodic improvements over the past 25 years or so. This is partially attributable to the current (low) level of visitor experience as described above, but also the negative perceptions of the local area.

A key aspect of our proposal is therefore to introduce a Park Ranger role to undertake both customer-facing and maintenance functions. Through training and personal development, these could act as 'stepping stones' to employment in London Paramount.

Outcomes for communities:

Swanscombe remains a significantly disadvantaged community; its wards are in the worst 20% in Kent, and a high deprivation score of 24.26 overall. And with the prospect of large scale development and the associated growth in population in close proximity, there is a real danger that the disparities will become even more apparent; our project could help provide a 'bridge' between old and new communities. We plan to achieve this by; expanding the opportunities for volunteering, including through the existing 'Friends' group.

The HLF project is designed to ensure that there is a long-term future for Swanscombe's unique heritage. As part of this the Town Council wish to explore options for long-term sustainable management in collaboration

with Groundwork, including the means by which income derived from providing visitor and educational resources can be re-invested into conservation of the heritage.

Section Four - Project Management

4a When do you expect your project to start and finish?

For the Swanscombe Heritage Park project to be achievable, given the 'window of opportunity' to influence and take advantage of the 'wider local planning context, the timing of the development and delivery phases are quite critical.

We anticipate commencing the project Development Phase by the end of 2015 and completed within 9 months. We then envisage the Delivery Phase to be undertaken within 3 years from Spring 2017.

Section Five - Project Costs

5a How much is your project likely to cost? If you know, tell us what the major costs are likely to be.

Development phase - £50,000 for professional fees associated with updating the Conservation Management Plan, including conservation specialists, and design/planning for the new works.

Delivery phase - £850,000, including:

- * Pavilion and new interpretation/educational resources - £600,000
- * Access and conservation works - £100,000
- * Recruitment, training and employment of site rangers for 3 years - £150,000

5b How much are you likely to ask for from us?

£650,000

Please use the button below if you would like to attach any documents, such as images, to your form.

Once we receive this form we aim to contact you within 10 working days.

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NOTES of the MEETING with NATURAL ENGLAND and MEMBERS OF THE HERITAGE PARK / SKULL SITE SUB-COMMITTEE held at THE COUNCIL OFFICES, THE GROVE, SWANSCOMBE, ON FRIDAY 17 JULY 2015 at 10.30 AM.

Present: Councillor Ms L C Howes
Councillor R J Lees
Councillor Mrs C Openshaw
Councillor B E Read
Sara Stapleton, Responsible Financial Officer
Rosemary Godfrey, Land Management Advisor, Natural England
Joanna Carter, Public Engagement Advisor, Natural England

The meeting had been arranged for Natural England to discuss with the town council its management responsibilities as contained within the lease.

Natural England went through each item, which was discussed in detail by both parties to ensure that the council's obligations were clearly understood. It became evident during the meeting that many of the council's responsibilities would be better dealt with once an active volunteer wardening scheme was in place.

Agreed Management Policy within the Lease

- 1 Items and 1 and 2 were general conditions in relation to how the land shall be managed for the purpose of protecting the geological, archaeological and biological interests of the site and the parties agreeing to meeting annually
- 3 Cultivations
The town council's responsibilities were understood.
- 4 Cutting of vegetation
The town council's responsibilities were understood and mowing was carried out when required.
- 5 Removal of Rubbish
The site was checked daily by the park staff with most rubbish being removed. With the new fencing in place the site no longer suffered from burnt out vehicles being dumped.
- 6 Tree and Scrub Maintenance
The new management plan will highlight when tree and scrub removal would be required and the town council needed to keep an eye out for nesting birds when tree and scrub removal was undertaken.
- 7 Pond Maintenance

Members advised Natural England that there was issues with the pond. It was agreed that Natural England would look into this and give guidance to the town council as to what could be done. The RFO confirmed previous improvements to the pond had not been successful (HLF bid in 2004) but that further improvements to the pond were being included in the HLF bid.

8 Protection against excavations

The town council needs to ensure that it stops children playing in the sand. This could be addressed by volunteer wardens being more active on site and stopping this activity when seen.

9 (Access road, fencing and paths), 10 (Storage of materials), 11 (Erection of structures), 12 (Removal of Biological, archaeological and geological specimens), and 13 (Use of vehicles) were self-explanatory and understood by the council.

Discussion took place as to how motorcycles gained access to the site through the kissing gates. It was suggested that if a metal bar was welded to the bottom of the gates it would stop motorcycles being pushed under the gate and accessing the site. In addition, the gate at the Gilbert Close/Childs Crescent needed to be looked at and it was suggested that a wheelchair/push chair kissing gate was not necessary at this location because of the difficulty of them using the steps and therefore did not need to provide this type of access.

14 Recreational activities

It was requested that the town council email Natural England with a list of the annual activities carried out by the Friends of the Heritage for approval. Natural England would include the approval in the management plan.

15 Memorial stones

The town council were responsible for maintaining the memorial stones in good order. It was noted one of the plaques was missing. The RFO advised that she had contacted Groundwork regarding a replacement and it was requested that the original artwork be obtained from Groundwork to be kept by the council.

16 Voluntary Wardening

A lot of discussion took place as to how to reinvigorate the Friends of the Heritage Park to help more with wardening on the site. It was agreed that this item should be discussed at the Heritage Park / Skull Site sub-committee in much greater detail because, as already stated, a lot of the responsibilities within the management plan would be dealt with by more active and visible wardening. Joanna agreed to send the RFO information about volunteer services and that consideration should be given to providing wardens with a badge so that they were clearly recognisable. It was also suggested the

Recreation, leisure and Amenities Committee discuss how more time could be found for the park staff to attend the site.

17 and 18 were again basic items that were clearly understood relating to the town council advising Natural England if it received any requests to dig on the site and that the town council's agents and employees be instructed to co-operate with the owner in all matters affecting the owners interests.

Action Items

Joanna Carter to send the RFO information on education.

Joanna Carter to speak to their external funding person to ascertain if there is any funding available for the site

The town council's responsibilities for site management will be included on every agenda of the sub-committee meetings.

The town council confirmed to Natural England that it was very confident that it could continue successfully with the management of the site on Natural England's behalf and how important the site was to the town council and to the area.

The meeting was very helpful for members and Natural England felt more confident with the town council being able to carry out its obligations going forwards.

The meeting closed at 12.00 noon.

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Public Notice

Fieldwork at Swanscombe Heritage Site

Swanscombe is famous across the globe for its evidence of early humans dating back to 400,000 years ago. Together with early stone tools and the remains of elephant and rhino, it is also one of only two sites in Britain to have human bones – the skull of an early Neanderthal.

Because of the importance of the site, it is being visited by a small group from the *Geologists' Association* and by two larger groups from the *European Society for Human Evolution*.

To show the geological remains at the site, a team will be cutting sections through the deposits both by hand and mechanical excavator. The work and field visits will take place on:

- **Thursday-Friday 3rd-4th September (9.00-17.30).** Sections cut by hand.
- **Sunday 6th September (1.00-15.00).** Field visit by Geologists' Association.
- **Wednesday 9th September (9.00-17.30).** Sections cut by mechanical excavator.
- **Thursday 10th September (9.00-17.30).** Sections cut by hand.
- **Sunday 13th September (8.00-17.00).** Field visit by the European Society for Human Evolution.
- **Monday 14th September (9.00-17.00).** Sections backfilled by mechanical excavator.

To ensure safety the areas will be fenced off, but hopefully this will cause a minimum of inconvenience.

Please feel free to ask the team about the work and the significance of the site.

For further information please contact Nick Ashton on nashton@britishmuseum.org or telephone 02023238093

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To: Sara Stapleton
Cc: Graham Blew; rosemary.godfrey@naturalengland.org.uk; Abel, Lee; O'reilly, Jason; Kang, Pirthipal; Emery, Richard
Subject: Deliberate outdoor fire setting - Swanscombe area

Hi Sara,

I have been given your name by Rosemary Godfrey of Natural England regarding the above. I understand from Graham Blew that you will be deputising in his absence and so would very much like to set up a meeting to discuss the best way forward to reduce the incidence and severity of deliberate outdoor fire setting in the area. The issues that I feel need to be addressed include:

- Establishing a coordinated approach amongst Partners in dealing with this issue
- How best to engage with youths who may be responsible for the fire setting
- What can be done to manage the site to reduce the risk of wild fires
- Harnessing the potential for 'community volunteers'
- Identifying what resources are required

Could you please give me a range of dates over the next couple of weeks that would be convenient to you to meet. Graham has kindly offered the Council chamber as a meeting place. If you require any further information at this time, please contact either myself or my colleague Richard Emery. In the meantime, I shall gather information on where and when the incidents have occurred.

Regards

Dave Read | Watch Manager | Kent Fire & Rescue Service | T: 01622 692121 x(6440) | 30 Dartford

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