

From: Susan Carey Cabinet Member for Environment
Barbara Cooper Corporate Director of Growth,
Environment and Transport

To: Environment and Transport Cabinet Committee 19th
January 2021

Subject: Heritage Conservation Service: Development of a Strategy
and medium-term plan

Classification: Unrestricted

Past Pathway of Paper: N/A

Future Pathway of Paper: N/A

Electoral Division: All

Summary: This paper updates Cabinet Committee on the development of a draft strategy and medium-term plan for the County Council's Heritage Conservation Service. The final draft strategy and medium-term plan will be presented to Environment and Transport Committee in March 2021, ahead of public consultation.

Recommendation(s):

The Cabinet Committee is asked to note and make recommendations to the Cabinet Member for Environment on the draft vision, strategic aims and objectives for the Heritage Conservation Strategy and associated medium-term plan.

1. Introduction and background

- 1.1 This paper introduces the draft Strategy and medium-term plan for the direction of the Heritage Conservation Service 2021-2026.
- 1.2 In October 2019 this cabinet committee offered comments to the Cabinet Member for Planning, Highways, Transport and Waste on the current priorities and strategic direction of the Heritage Conservation Service. The Cabinet Committee also agreed that a Member Working Group should help inform the drafting of the Heritage Conservation Strategy. This group which comprised members Matthew Balfour, Susan Carey, Tony Hills, Michael Payne, Alan Ridgers and Martin Whybrow as well as support from Lis Dyson, Heritage Conservation Manager, met on three occasions to agree the scope of the Strategy and discuss and comment on drafts.
- 1.3 This is the inaugural Strategy for the service and sets out a stretching yet realistic ambition for the next four years. The Strategy has been informed by a series of topic papers; Cost Recovery Archaeology and Development; Historic Environment Record; Metal Detecting; Windmills Strategy; and Archaeological Archives. These will be appended to the eventual draft and finalised Strategy following comment from the member working group.

1.4 The draft Strategy sets out a vision and four strategic aims to be achieved which are in turn supported by 20 objectives.

2. The County Council and Heritage Conservation

2.1 Kent, named after the Roman term for its Iron Age inhabitants the Cantiaci, has an extremely rich and varied historic environment. The county has featured prominently in the history of England and its close proximity to the continental mainland has resulted in it having a special place in our understanding of how England has related to Europe since prehistoric times. Heritage assets within the county range from the internationally important, such as the Swanscombe Skull site, Canterbury Cathedral World Heritage Site and Dover Castle, to undesignated milestones or historic lamp posts. All of these assets whether designated or not add character to our landscapes and towns and reveal the lived experiences of former residents of Kent.

2.2 Kent's growth agenda gives rise to major development pressure but also fantastic archaeological discoveries and opportunities to conserve outstanding historic buildings. Careful management of this often fragile and vulnerable resource is needed and opportunities for heritage-led regeneration and development-related benefits for heritage assets must be seized. The character of Kent's historic environment can contribute greatly to the development of Kent's sense of place and identity and underpin successful growth: it also forms an important resource for education, leisure, and tourism. KCC's Heritage Conservation service has a key strategic role in helping to safeguard, manage and make accessible this heritage for today's and future generations. The Service forms part of KCC's overall approach to cultural heritage which also includes the Archives service, Sevenoaks Museum and the management of heritage assets through other services such as Country Parks, KCC schools and Highways.

2.3 The current activities of the Service are to:

- Provide archaeological planning advice on over 2,000 applications per year to KCC, Medway Council, Ebbsfleet Development Corporation, Kent's Districts (except Canterbury) and others, including the setting or agreeing of specifications for archaeological work and the monitoring of their implementation.
- Manage and enhance the Kent Historic Environment Record (a computerised database with information on almost 90,000 heritage assets and features, with about 300-400 records added each year) as required in the National Planning Policy Framework.
- Develop historic environment policy particularly in relation to the implications of development.
- Promote the role of the historic environment in regeneration, particularly in the growth areas.
- Provide historic built environment planning advice to KCC.
- Provide advice on archaeological work in connection with KCC road schemes and other own development.
- Manage, maintain and safeguard KCC's eight historic windmills, in partnership with KCC Infrastructure and volunteer windmill groups, as owner of last resort.

- Manage the Portable Antiquities Scheme and assist with the Treasure process in Kent¹; over 1700 records were added and 57 Treasure cases dealt with in 2019.
- Promote access to Kent's heritage through projects such as Cobham Landscape Detectives, Shorne Wood HubCAP, Fifth Continent Landscape Partnership Scheme.
- Increase awareness of the historic environment by ensuring significant archaeological discoveries from development-led field work are exhibited and brought to the attention of local people where possible, seeking funding through Section 106 agreements.

3. Policy

- 3.1 The work of the Service, in providing historic environment planning advice and maintaining the Historic Environment Record, is carried out within the legislative framework of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 and the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. The Service operates under the National Planning Policy Framework, Environmental Impact Assessment regulations and the Valetta Convention. Its work in relation to the Treasure process is covered by the Treasure Act 1996.
- 3.2 The KCC windmills are Grade I, II* or II listed buildings and are covered by the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. Work carried out at the mills is covered by the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974.
- 3.3 The draft Strategy and medium-term plan will also support the County Council's 'Setting the Course' Interim Strategic Plan, approved by County Council on 10th December 2020, in particular the Financial, Economic, Partnership and Environmental challenges. The work of the service will contribute to the aim that 'it is essential that development is well-planned and well-supported to protect and enhance the unique identity of local areas and quality of life' and the objectives 'Work with partners to enable the necessary physical, social and cultural infrastructure to make Kent an attractive place to live, work and invest in' and 'Refresh the Kent Design Guide to promote high quality, sustainable development in Kent's communities that meets current and future needs'.

4. Draft Heritage Conservation Strategy and medium-term plan

- 4.1 The proposed Vision for KCC's Heritage Conservation Service Strategy is to:
Realise the substantial benefits and opportunities of Kent's rich heritage through its conservation, enhancement, and enjoyment.
- 4.2 The four proposed Strategic Aims are:
1. *Continue to improve the high quality and timely historic environment advice provided to KCC, local authorities and other bodies involved in growth and change based on accessible and up to date information and understanding.*

¹ Metal detecting has become a widely adopted hobby in England; it is covered by the legal requirements of the Treasure Act 1996 (<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1996/24/contents>) and also a voluntary recording scheme, the Portable Antiquities Scheme (<https://finds.org.uk/>).

2. *Ensure, working with new and existing partners, that KCC's historic assets are conserved, enhanced, enjoyed and valued by Kent's residents and visitors.*
3. *Increase awareness, knowledge and understanding of Kent's rich heritage and increase involvement in heritage activities amongst its local communities.*
4. *Work towards the service becoming financially self-sustaining.*

4.3 The twenty proposed Objectives to create the medium-term plan and deliver the Vision and Strategic Aims are set out below:

Objective 1. Continue to provide an archaeological advice service to Kent Local Planning Authorities based on Service Level Agreements and to developers and householders with cost recovery as appropriate.

Objective 2. Pursue cost recovery for archaeological and built historic environment advice to developers and for Historic Environment Record updating for major planning applications and Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project proposals, including establishing an online payment mechanism.

Objective 3. Explore and determine the potential for requiring archaeological contractors which undertake archaeological assessments on KCC projects to be Registered Archaeological Organisations.

Objective 4: Continue to maintain and enhance the Kent Historic Environment Record, to meet the requirements of the National Planning Policy Framework and underpin decision-making in planning and development management.

Objective 5: Explore developing a county level Kent Heritage Strategy to assist district authorities who could draw upon it as a framework for their own strategies and Local Plans as many issues and themes are commonly held.

Objective 6: Explore and determine an appropriate policy regarding metal detecting and 'by eye' searches undertaken on KCC owned land; this will include working with coastal landowners to consider the benefits of a permit system for metal detecting in coastal and riverine foreshore areas.

Objective 7: To protect heritage assets and to exercise its rights as landowner, KCC should retain ownership of all finds found on its property in perpetuity except under particular circumstances such as lost personal items.

Objective 8: Explore and determine an appropriate policy regarding magnet fishing on KCC owned land.

Objective 9: Develop and deliver a communication plan to support the Strategy and its Vision.

Objective 10: Continue with the existing management approach to KCC owned windmills so that:

- i) Mills capable of milling flour - Drapers Mill, Margate, and Cranbrook Mill - remain able to do so.
- ii) The weatherproofing programme will be continued with Stelling Minnis Mill as the next key priority within the timeframe of this Plan.
- iii) Static mills will be returned to visual completeness as soon as possible and made active wherever possible.

Objective 11: KCC will continue to work with the vital windmill volunteer groups to promote the mills and develop a secure future.

Objective 12: Alternative funding mechanisms for the windmills will be as a priority explored and documented, including setting up a charitable Trust to oversee management of the KCC windmills.

Objective 13: Work with other parts of KCC to create a single source most likely as a Geographical Information System layer on KCC's heritage assets and develop an approach to ensure appropriate awareness and management is in place for relevant KCC departments.

Objective 14: Continue to work with the KCC Highways officer working group to refine and finalise the Kent Highways Heritage protocol.

Objective 15: Continue to assess options for the display and long-term storage of archaeological archives and prepare the KCC held archives for storage at Deepstore or similar appropriate repository and work with partners to determine the feasibility of providing a store with controlled conditions in Kent.

Objective 16: Promote understanding and enjoyment of Kent's heritage using multiple media channels including digital media (the online Historic Environment Record, KCC website and social media), print media (publications and press releases) and through direct experience (community archaeology).

Objective 17: Seek more opportunities to undertake community archaeology projects in development-led archaeological work.

Objective 18: Prepare a short Intention Statement setting out wider engagement priorities for the Heritage Conservation group.

Objective 19: Develop and deliver within the timeframe of this Strategy a revised approach to the future direction, funding and delivery of community archaeology; this will include links with public health and well-being agendas and educational bodies.

Objective 20: Develop and deliver a clear project plan to systematically review and monitor progress towards financial sustainability, and identify opportunities explored.

- 4.4 The full draft Strategy will be brought back to ETCC in March 2021, subject to a space being available at the meeting. Subject to members' views public consultation will then take place. A draft implementation plan will also be drawn up by March 2021 and reported to ETCC.

5. Equality and Diversity Considerations

- 5.1 An Equality Impact Assessment for the draft Strategy and medium-term plan has informed the work to date and will be updated as the draft is revised.
- 5.2 Equality Impact Assessments for the objectives identified as 'continuing' existing work are already in place, and reviewed every three years, or at a time of significant change in approach.

6. Risk

- 6.1 There are inevitable risks associated with managing the historic windmills, and other designated heritage assets; if KCC does not uphold its statutory responsibility then a notice could be served, the district planning authority could commission the works and KCC would have to pay costs if proven that we have failed in our responsibilities.
- 6.2 If insufficient resource is available within the historic environment advice service then important heritage assets in Kent could be lost forever or not appropriately protected with potential impact on tourism, leisure and quality of life.

7. GDPR Considerations

- 7.1 The Strategy and the medium-term plan in themselves do not involve the handling of any personal data.

8. Financial Implications

- 8.1 The KCC Heritage Conservation Service in 20/21 has a revenue budget of just under £400,000 to deliver the activities described at 2.3.
- 8.2 The Service achieves income of approximately £192,000 in a typical year, which is vital, alongside grant income (varying from £50,000 to £100,000 plus annually), in supplementing the baseline budget and delivering the activities.
- 8.3 As identified at Objective 20 above, the intention of the draft strategy and medium-term plan is to develop and deliver a clear project plan to systematically review and monitor progress towards financial sustainability.
- 8.4 The service currently and additionally has a capital allocation of £740,000 for Windmills Weatherproofing for the period 20/21 – 22/23.

9. Conclusions

- 9.1 Historic England defines our heritage as “all that has been passed to us by previous generations. It is all around us. It is in the houses we live in, our places of work, the transport we use, our places of worship, our parks and gardens, the places we go to for our sport and social life, in the ground beneath our feet, in the shape of our landscape and in the placing and arrangement of our fields, villages, towns and cities. Heritage is also found in our moveable possessions, from our national treasures in our museums, to our own family heirlooms, and in the intangible such as our history, traditions, legends and language.”

9.2 The draft Strategy and medium-term plan have been designed to create a clear and measurable approach to how the County Council will protect, sustain and celebrate Kent's heritage over the next five-year period.

10. Recommendation(s)

Recommendation(s): The Cabinet Committee is asked to note and make recommendations to the Cabinet Member for Environment on the draft vision, strategic aims and objectives for the Heritage Conservation Strategy and associated medium-term plan.

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