

From: Susan Carey, Cabinet Member for Environment
Simon Jones, Corporate Director of Growth, Environment and Transport

To: Environment and Transport Cabinet Committee 17 March 2022

Subject: Heritage Conservation Strategy – revised following consultation

Key Decision: 22/00026

Classification: Unrestricted

Past Pathway of report: N/A

Future Pathway of report: N/A

Electoral Division: All

Summary: This report sets out a revised Heritage Conservation Strategy further to the consultation draft presented to the Environment and Transport Cabinet Committee in September 2021. The public consultation revealed high overall support for the Heritage Conservation Strategy with 94% in favour of the proposed vision. A new Strategic Aim 5, on the service's contribution to KCC's action to address the Climate Emergency, which brings the strategy in line with corporate policy, has been added. Other minor amendments have also been made in response to comments from the consultation. It is requested that the revised strategy should be adopted by the County Council.

Recommendation(s):

The Environment and Transport Cabinet Committee is asked to consider and endorse or make recommendations to the Cabinet for Environment to agree to adopt the revised Heritage Conservation Strategy as shown at Appendix A.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This report presents the Environment and Transport Cabinet Committee with a revised Heritage Conservation Strategy following an eight-week public consultation which closed on 13 December 2021. The draft Strategy follows a report to Cabinet Committee in January 2021 where a draft vision, strategic aims and objectives were all endorsed and a report to Cabinet committee in September 2021 which agreed the consultation draft of the strategy.
- 1.2 The revised Heritage Conservation Strategy which has had minor amendments following the consultation is included as part of the Background Documents (Section 7). The draft strategy was informed and reviewed by a Member Working Group.

2. Heritage Conservation Strategy

- 2.1 In October 2019, the Environment and Transport Cabinet Committee was presented with a report setting out the priorities and future direction of the Heritage Conservation Service at Kent County Council, with an opportunity for Members to make comments to the Cabinet Member on priorities and strategic direction. It was resolved that a Member Working Group be established to help inform the drafting of a Heritage Conservation Strategy.
- 2.2 The Member Working Group initially comprised Susan Carey, Matthew Balfour, Tony Hills, Michael Payne, Alan Ridgers and Martin Whybrow. The Working Group met on three occasions and agreed the scope and structure of the Heritage Conservation Strategy whilst commenting on its emerging content. The draft vision and strategic aims were presented to Cabinet Committee in January 2021 and endorsed. The Member Working Group later comprised Susan Carey, Alan Ridgers, Tony Hills, Neil Baker, Mike Baldock, Cameron Deart and Mike Dendor. The group discussed and agreed the consultation draft in August 2021.
- 2.3 The public consultation received 2.66k total visits, 1.15k downloads and 277 responses. There was high overall support for the Heritage Conservation Strategy with 94% in favour of the proposed vision and similarly high percentages in favour of most of the Strategic Aims and Objectives (see below **Extract from draft Consultation Report by Lake Consulting**).

Overall agreement for the proposed vision for Heritage Conservation is high with the vast majority of consultees agreeing (94%). Only 2% disagreed with the proposed vision.

Overall agreement with each of the strategic aims proposed is as follows:

- Strategic aim 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 (90%)
- Strategic aim 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 (93%)
- Strategic aim 3 – Increase awareness, knowledge and understanding of Kent's rich heritage and increase involvement in heritage activities amongst its local communities (92%)
- Strategic aim 4 – Work towards the service becoming financially self-sustaining (66%)

Overall agreement with each of the objectives proposed is as follows:

Archaeology and development

- Objective two – Explore and determine the potential for requiring archaeological contractors who undertake archaeological assessments on KCC projects to be Registered Archaeological Organisations (93%)

KCC-owned heritage assets

- Objective five – Work across KCC to coordinate information on heritage

assets and finalise the Kent Highways Heritage Protocol (89%)

Windmills

- Objective six - Follow a management approach to KCC-owned windmills, so that mills capable of milling flour remain able to do so (98%), the weatherproofing programme will be continued across the timeframe of this plan (98%), static mills will be returned to visual completeness subject to funding (94%) and static mills will be made active wherever possible (88%)
- Objective eight - Explore alternative funding mechanisms for the windmills, including setting up a Charitable Trust to oversee management (84%)

Archaeological archives

- Objective nine - Assess options for the display and long-term storage of archaeological archives and ensure the KCC-held archives are placed in an appropriate repository (94%)

Community archaeology

- Objective ten - Promote understanding and enjoyment of Kent's heritage using multiple media channels including digital media, print media and through direct experience (97%)
- Objective eleven - Develop and deliver a community engagement strategy and communication plan for the Heritage Conservation team (95%)

Metal detecting searching and chance discoveries

- Objective twelve – Agree and adopt a policy that metal detecting and 'by eye' searches will only be undertaken on KCC owned land as part of an approved project (63%)
- Objective thirteen – Agree and adopt a policy that KCC should retain ownership of all finds found on its properties in perpetuity unless special exemptions apply (65%)
- Objective fourteen – Agree and adopt a policy that magnet fishing will not be allowed on KCC owned land (56%)
- Objective fifteen – KCC will work with coastal landowners to consider the benefits of a permit system for metal detecting in coastal and riverine foreshore areas (63%)

Supporting the development of robust heritage strategies

- Objective sixteen – Explore developing a county level Kent Heritage Strategy to assist district authorities who could draw upon it as a framework for their own strategies as many issues and themes are commonly held (95%)

Benchmarking and resourcing

- Objective seventeen – Develop a cost recovery strategy for providing archaeological advice to developers for major planning applications and Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project proposal (94%)
- Objective eighteen – Develop a cost recovery strategy for the creation of Historic Environment Record records as a result of development related fieldwork (82%)
- Objective nineteen – Determine and secure a funded approach to built historic environment advice (81%).

- 2.4 The strategy remains in essence as presented to Cabinet Committee in September 2021, except for the following changes. A new Strategic Aim 5, on the service's contribution to KCC's action to address the Climate Emergency, which brings the strategy in line with corporate policy, has been added. Other minor amendments have also been made in response to comments during the consultation. The revised Heritage Conservation Strategy is included as part of the Background Documents. The strategy is now being designed ready for final public release.
- 2.5 It is proposed that the revised Heritage Conservation Strategy is adopted by the County Council and is designed and printed ready for public and stakeholder circulation during Spring 2022.

3. Financial Implications

- 3.1 The Kent County Council Heritage Conservation Service has a base revenue budget of £223,500 for the current 2021/22 financial year. It also has a capital allocation for windmill weatherproofing of £584,000 for 2021/22 - 2023/24.
- 3.2 The Service generates an income of approximately £192,000 in a typical year to deliver a wide range of activities relating to the historic environment.
- 3.3 One of the objectives (no. 20) supporting the strategic aims is to develop a strategy to systematically review and monitor progress towards greater financial sustainability.

4. Equalities implications

- 4.1 An Equality Impact Assessment has informed the preparation of the draft Strategy and is included as part of the Background Documents.

5. Conclusions

- 5.1 Kent has a rich and varied historic environment and the Heritage Conservation Strategy has been prepared to create a clear and measurable approach to how Kent County Council will protect, sustain, and celebrate this.
- 5.2 The Strategy has been prepared with the engagement of the Environment and Transport Cabinet Committee and support of the Member Working Group. The strategy has been subject to public consultation and has undergone minor revision following the consultation responses.

6. Recommendation(s)

Recommendation(s):

- 6.1 The Environment and Transport Cabinet Committee is asked to consider and endorse or make recommendations to the Cabinet for Environment to agree to adopt the revised Heritage Conservation Strategy as shown at Appendix A

7. Background Documents

- Appendix A: Proposed Record of Decision
- Appendix 1: Revised Heritage Conservation Strategy
- Heritage Conservation Strategy Consultation Report - <https://democracy.kent.gov.uk/documents/s109776/HeritageConservationStrategyConsultationReport.pdf>
- Heritage Conservation Strategy EqIA - <https://democracy.kent.gov.uk/documents/s109777/HeritageConservationStrategyEqIA.doc.pdf>

8. Contact details

Report Author:

Lis Dyson
Heritage Conservation Manager
03000 413364
lis.dyson@kent.gov.uk

Relevant Director:

Stephanie Holt-Castle
Director of Growth and Communities
03000 412064
stephanie.holt-castle@kent.gov.uk