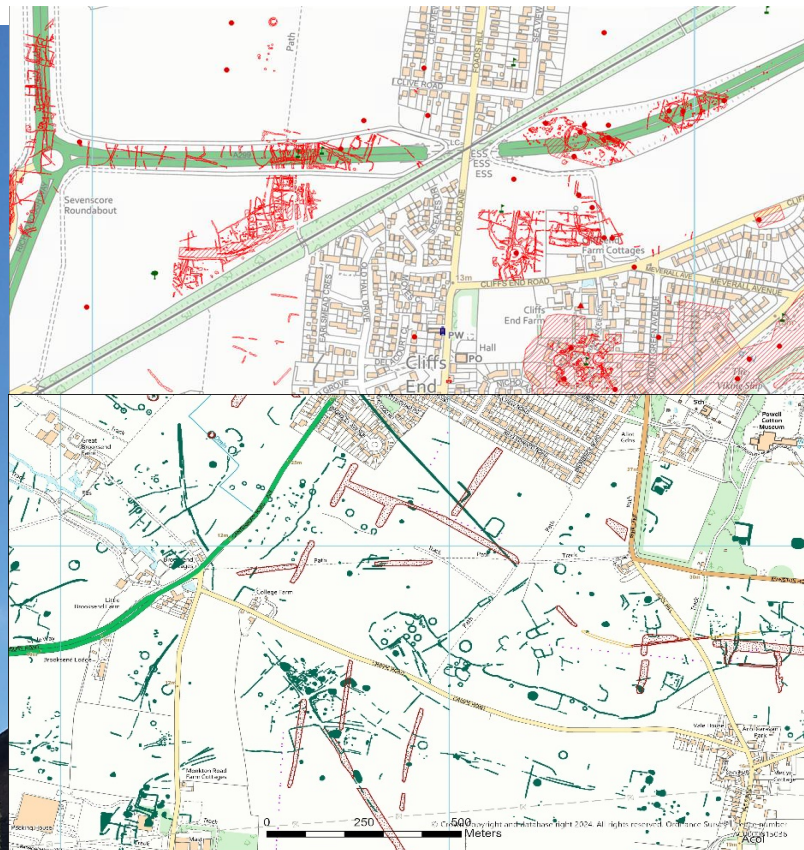


Kent Heritage Conservation Strategy (Revised 2025) DRAFT



kent.gov.uk/heritageconservationstrategy

Heritage Conservation Strategy

March 2022 (Revised 2025)

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Foreword

Kent's heritage is one of our county's greatest strengths. It shapes our identity, enriches our communities, and gives future generations a clear link to the stories that built this place we call home. Protecting it isn't just about preservation—it's about pride, participation, and keeping our shared history alive.

In my role as Cabinet Member for Environment, Coastal Regeneration & Special Projects, I'm committed to a practical, people-focused approach. That means supporting our dedicated heritage teams, who do exceptional work every day, and making sure they have the tools they need to continue delivering national-level expertise and care. Kent County Council has a unique responsibility to safeguard, manage and champion this heritage, and this strategy sets out how we will do that together.

But the future of Kent's heritage depends on more than organisational effort—it depends on partnership. Our volunteers, local groups, landowners, district councils, and residents play an essential role. I want to strengthen those relationships and make it easier for communities to get involved wherever it's helpful and meaningful.

Heritage is something to be enjoyed, not just safeguarded. Whether through local projects, community archaeology, digital resources, open days, or hands-on volunteering, I want more people to feel connected to the extraordinary history on their doorstep. When residents are involved, our heritage becomes not only better protected—but better understood and valued.

This strategy is about working together, being sensible with resources, and ensuring Kent's nationally important heritage remains a source of pride, learning and inspiration. I look forward to building that future with you.

1. Introduction

1.1 This strategy sets out a vision for the future direction of Kent County Council’s approach to heritage conservation as implemented by the Heritage Conservation Service. It presents the context within which KCC operates, our strategic aims and objectives for the service, and the means by which these will be delivered. Public consultation on the strategy was undertaken in autumn 2021 and the amended strategy was adopted by Kent County Council at the Environment and Transport Cabinet Committee in March 2022. A further public consultation was undertaken in winter 2023/24 on a proposed amendment to the County Council’s approach to its historic windmills. Revised objectives are set out below under Strategic Aim 2.



Figure 1 Canterbury World Heritage Site (Courtesy of Chapter of Canterbury Cathedral).
Photograph by David King

1.2 Our heritage can be defined 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.” (Historic England <https://historicengland.org.uk/advice/hpg/generalintro/heritage-conservation-defined/>). The aspect of heritage primarily dealt with by the County Council’s Heritage Conservation Service is the historic environment

which is defined in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) as “All aspects of the environment resulting from the interaction between people and places through time, including all surviving physical remains of past human activity, whether visible, buried or submerged, and landscaped and planted or managed flora”.

In order to manage our heritage effectively and pragmatically we need to understand its significance and agree policies to guide decision-making.

1.3 Kent, named after the Roman term for its Iron Age inhabitants “the Cantiaci”, has an extremely rich and varied heritage (also known as the historic environment). In such an intensively occupied county the physical environment is substantially the product of human activity, shaped by agriculture, industry, and settlement over the millennia, including reclaimed marshland, grazed downs, and managed woodland. Kent 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, which continues to the present day. Heritage assets within the county range from the internationally important, such as the Swanscombe Skull site (the oldest such remains found in Britain), Canterbury Cathedral and St Augustine’s Abbey World Heritage Site and Dover Castle (known as the ‘key to the kingdom’), 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 lives of former residents of Kent. For some periods of our past, before written records were routinely kept, and for people who are underrepresented in recorded history, material culture is the only means of understanding how people lived and changed the environment around them.

1.4 Natural erosion and ploughing and other agricultural processes can harm archaeological sites and historic landscapes, but conservation is possible through sensitive management, often delivered through environmental stewardship agreements. 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 to underpin successful growth, and 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 present and future generations.

World Heritage Site	1
Scheduled Monuments	360
Listed Buildings	17,349
Registered Park and Gardens	61
Conservation Areas	493
Historic Parks and Gardens	398
Historic Environment Record monuments	99,307

Table 1 Table showing designated and non-designated heritage assets in Kent.

1.5 KCC has a key role to play in the conservation of Kent's heritage but we are far from the only actor. Historic England is the government's statutory advisor on the historic environment; it is responsible for identifying and designating heritage assets of national significance and manages change at such sites. It also supports local partners with specialist advice and guidance. Local authorities are responsible for implementing planning law and policy. KCC's Heritage Conservation Service advises Kent local authorities on the impact of development proposals on Kent's heritage (primarily on archaeological and landscape matters). Local planning authorities also designate and manage Conservation Areas and develop heritage management policies and strategies in their Local Plans. Landowners and householders manage their own heritage assets in accordance with national legislation and national and local policies. A host of community groups support the conservation of Kent's heritage with projects and initiatives of their own.

1.6 Within this network of stakeholders and partners, KCC's main role is to manage heritage assets in our ownership, provide an advice service to other stakeholders (in particular local planning authorities), manage the Historic Environment Record (HER) - the main strategic information resource for Kent's historic environment and help the wider community access and enjoy Kent's heritage through a range of community initiatives.

Legislative and policy background

1.7 The Heritage Conservation Service operates within conventions, legislation and policy at international, national and local levels.

- The UK is a signatory of the 1992 Valletta Treaty (European Convention on the Protection of the Archaeological Heritage (Revised)), which aims to protect European archaeological heritage.

1. Introduction continued

- The work of the service is carried out within the general legislative framework of the UK. The main relevant legislation covering the team's historic environment advice and the management of KCC's own heritage assets is the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979, the Protection of Wrecks Act 1973 and the Protection of Military Remains Act 1986. Its work in relation to the Treasure process is covered by the Treasure Act 1996. The Levelling-up and Regeneration Act 2023 (Article 212) requires the County Council as relevant authority to maintain the Historic Environment Record for its area.
- Work carried out at the windmills is also covered by the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974.
- The team operates under the National Planning Policy Framework (updated 2025) and in particular chapter 16 'Conserving and enhancing the historic environment' and the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017.

Kent County Council's Environment Plan 2025 sets out the following goals which the Heritage Conservation Strategy will help deliver where appropriate.

- Goal 1: Deliver green energy and reduce carbon emissions.
- Goal 2: Adapt to our changing climate.
- Goal 3: Reduce flood risk and manage water resources effectively.
- Goal 4: Protect and improve the natural and built environment.
- Goal 5: Manage resources through a circular economy.
- Goal 6: Conserve and promote Kent's natural beauty and heritage.



Figure 2 Volunteers excavating Randall Manor medieval manor house within Shorne Woods Country Park.

Proposed Vision and Strategic Aims

1.8 The proposed Vision for Heritage Conservation is to:

Realise the substantial benefits and opportunities of Kent's rich heritage through its conservation, enhancement, and enjoyment by all.

1.9 Underpinning this are five proposed Strategic Aims:

Strategic Aim 1 - Continue to improve the high quality and timely historic environment advice, based on accessible and up to date information and understanding, provided to KCC, local authorities and other bodies involved in growth and change.

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.

Strategic Aim 3 - Increase awareness, knowledge and understanding of Kent's rich heritage and increase involvement in heritage activities amongst its local communities.

Strategic Aim 4 - Work towards the service becoming more financially self-sustaining.

Strategic Aim 5 - contribute to KCC's action to address climate change and adaptation.

1.10 In order to further the Strategic Aims, each is accompanied by Objectives. In several cases the objectives relate to more than one Aim, so they have been placed under one aim with cross references to the others where relevant.

2. Our Heritage Achievements

2.1 Achievements of the Heritage Conservation service include:

- Completion of the Dover Heritage Strategy (winner of RTPI South East award for Excellence in Planning for Built Heritage), used by DDC to help secure £4.27 million NLHF funding,
- Completion of the consultation draft of the Folkestone and Hythe Heritage Strategy,
- Dover Urban Archaeological Database and archaeological characterisation completed and highly praised as excellent by Historic England,
- An innovative Archaeological Notification Areas project, which will help developers and planners by providing information up front and digitally, notification area datasets now delivered to twelve Local Planning Authorities,
- Continuing to deliver archaeological advice service to planners and developers as construction continues at pace,
- Delivering community archaeology programmes in innovative ways and modelling good practice for local groups,
- Substantial capital works undertaken at KCC's historic windmills,
- Successful recent Historic England audit of the Historic Environment Record (HER).



Figure 3 Heritage Conservation officer monitoring Lower Thames Crossing fieldwork during the Covid lockdown 2021 (Oxford Archaeology).

3. Our Opportunities

3.1 The historic environment in Kent offers a great resource for sustaining and enhancing the quality of life in the county. Heritage can inspire the regeneration of an area, complementing and supporting economic development. This can help produce higher quality and more sustainable development that is successfully integrated into the life of the county. The historic environment can also play a key role in social regeneration, well-being and in Kent's arts and cultural scene.

3.2 Key opportunities offered by Kent's heritage include:

Creating a sense of place. Whether in an urban or rural environment, the historic environment creates a 'sense of place'. The buildings, open spaces, historic features and patterns of roads and lanes define the character of settlements. It is therefore important that any change is sensitive to this character, adding to and developing distinctiveness rather than diminishing it and creating uniformity or blandness. The historic environment can hold meanings and memories for a community that go beyond the architectural, archaeological or historical importance of designated assets.

Re-use of heritage assets. Re-using existing heritage assets (most commonly historic buildings) can provide an effective way to retain historic character while conserving building resources and achieving sustainability. Guidance (see 4.2 below) demonstrates that historic structures, settlements and landscapes can in fact be more resilient in the face of climate change, and more energy efficient than some modern structures and settlements. This has also been considered in the Historic England report 'There's no Place Like Old Homes: re-use and Recycle to Reduce Carbon' (Historic England 2019).

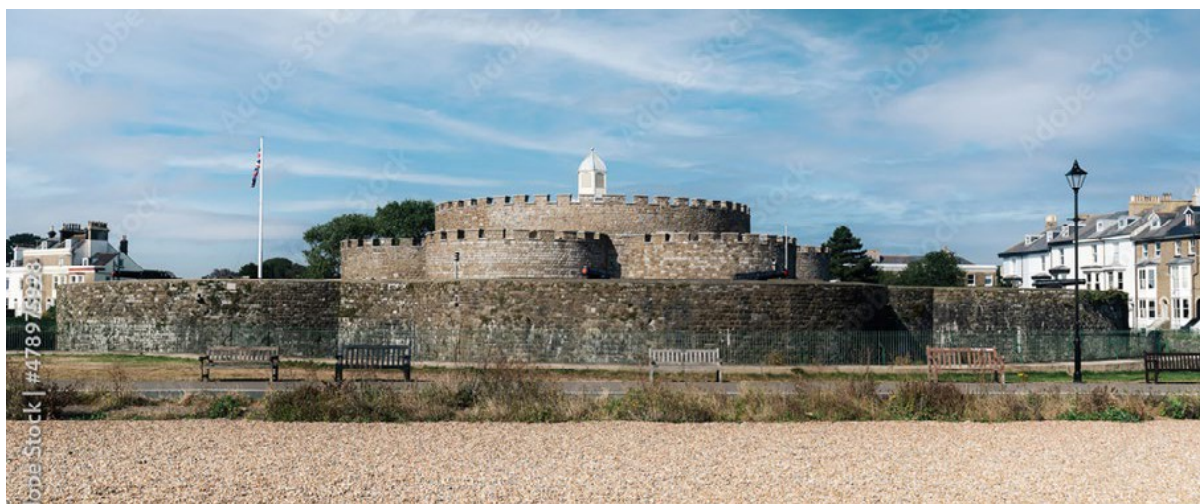


Figure 4 Deal castle is one of the finest Tudor artillery castles in England.

Attracting business and commercial activities. Heritage and a historic sense of place help to attract investment, businesses and commercial activity. Research quoted by Heritage Counts 2016 found that of 100 businesses surveyed one in four agreed that the historic environment is an important factor in deciding where to locate and was as important as road access. Research by the Heritage Lottery Fund in 2013 confirmed that innovative new businesses flourish in places that possess a good stock of historic distinctive buildings (https://www.heritagefund.org.uk/sites/default/files/media/research/new_ideas_old_buildings_2013.pdf). It also found that independent retail and leisure businesses seek to cluster in historic areas of towns and cities thereby adding to the distinctive sense of place and attracting more successful businesses. The HLF also found that businesses which occupy listed buildings generate £13,000 extra Gross Valued Added per business per year. Creative and cultural industries are particularly attracted to historic buildings because they are smaller, more flexible and cost-effective: they are 29% more likely to be found in a Listed Building than in a non-listed building (Heritage Counts 2016 and HLF 2013).

Adding value to new development. Heritage-led regeneration adds value to development projects. It is striking that in most towns it is the heritage-led developments that are among the most prestigious and financially valuable (Dover Heritage Strategy 2013).

In areas that had received investment in the historic environment, approximately one in five visitors in a survey of 1,000 stated they spent more in an area after investment in the historic environment than they did before. One in four businesses stated that the historic environment investment had directly led to an increase in business turnover (AMION and Locum Consulting 2010).

Durability of regeneration. Where new development is effectively integrated into existing settlement, by complementing existing character and materials, it is likely to prove more economically and socially durable. Retaining existing buildings among new build allows a varied street scene and can permit a wider range of occupiers; retaining historic features helps connect older people with the new community by providing reference points in space and memory.

Heritage contribution to the economy. In the year before the COVID-19 pandemic the heritage sector directly or indirectly supported more than 89,000 jobs in south-east England. Heritage employment grew almost twice as fast as the rest of the economy between 2011 and 2019. England's heritage sector generated a GVA greater than the security industry, defence industry, aerospace industry and the arts and culture industry in the UK (Source: Historic England).

The role of tourism in Kent's economy. The tourism industry is an important sector providing 67,000 jobs and contributing over £1.4 billion to the Kent economy (Kent County Council 2020).

Heritage tourism generates benefits in the local economy (Historic England 2016). A TNS study estimates that 32 per cent (£15.3bn) of the average annual spend from domestic and international tourism in the UK between 2011 and 2014 is attributable to activities broadly defined as heritage-related activities (TNS 2015).

Visiting heritage generates money for the local economy - for every £1 spent as part of a heritage visit, 32p is spent on site and the remaining 68p is spent in local businesses: restaurants, cafés, hotels and shops (HLF 2010).

Improved public health and well-being. The link between heritage and well-being is now well established (e.g. 'Wellbeing and the Historic Environment, Historic England 2018). There is presently an ongoing shift from an acute and hospital-centred, illness-based system to a person-centric, health-based system that will rely upon individual and community assets. As such, heritage can play an important role in the contribution of the arts to person-centred, place-based care through means such as arts-on-prescription activities, cultural venues and community programmes. The historic environment, archaeology and heritage form part of our experience of being human and can provide individual as well as collective opportunities to engage with arts and culture whilst having positive effects on our physical and mental health and wellbeing in the process.



Figure 5 Barrow group volunteers.

4. Our Challenges

4.1 Kent's heritage is vulnerable in a number of different ways. Some of these are a result of natural processes but most are due to human action or inaction. The vulnerability of an asset is not only related to direct impacts but also to actions that affect the setting of the asset.



Figure 6 Chillenden windmill, blown down in 2003, now re-built.

4.2 Key challenges facing Kent's historic environment include:

Natural Processes. Heritage assets can be highly vulnerable to coastal erosion as many were specifically located for their access to the sea e.g. sea defences, military sites or quays and 'hards' for landing boats. The vulnerability can be in the form of direct erosion of the monument or the burying of the monument by material deposition. Sea level change leading to inundation or salt level changes also threatens heritage assets as do changes in hydrology.

Climate change. The effect of humans on the environment can be traced over millennia but the unprecedented rate of recent change will inevitably impact on Kent's heritage with increased flash flooding, sea-level rise, rapid soaking and drying of waterlogged deposits, wind and lightning strikes impacting our fragile historic structures. Historic England has produced guidance ('Climate Change and the Historic Environment', 2008) that reviews the threats to the historic environment posed by climate change. More recent information can be found in 'Climate Change Adaptation Report' (Historic England, 2024). We are working with the University of Waterloo, Canada, to assess the impacts of climate change on Kent's heritage assets; further assessment will be undertaken as funding becomes available.

Rural activities. A range of rural activities have the potential to impact on heritage assets including ploughing (especially deep ploughing), machinery



Figure 7 Chillenden mill after restoration.

movement, changes in the local farming regime (e.g. a change from pasture to arable cultivation, removal of hedgerows or construction of new infrastructure). The increased leisure use of the countryside can also damage heritage sites, particularly when this involves increased vehicle access (e.g. mountain biking, motorbikes or off-road vehicles).

New infrastructure. The increasing population of Kent and the new development required to house it requires ever more support in the form of pipelines and sewers, roads, rail, power and water infrastructure. The impact of this on the historic environment will be assessed and mitigated and a balance sought between essential construction and conservation of important assets.

Development. The greatest impact on Kent's heritage arises from new development. KCC estimates that between 2019 and 2039 approximately 225,000 new dwellings will be built in Kent and Medway. In addition to this, commercial, leisure, minerals and waste and other development must be considered. Construction activities can directly affect buried archaeological remains through the excavation of new foundations, services, remodelling of land, removal of topsoil in advance of development, piling works and from the operation of plant. Permitted development rights have the further potential for unmonitored impacts on heritage assets.

Policy weaknesses and changes. Current approaches to protecting heritage concentrate on nationally important assets meaning that regionally or locally important assets can remain vulnerable. At the time of writing this strategy, planning reforms have been proposed that may leave Kent's heritage more vulnerable, due to a process of zoning land that may not have been assessed for its heritage potential. It is important that local people continue to be involved in decision-making and that a strong evidence base informs any zoning of land.

Crime. Heritage assets are vulnerable to a range of types of criminal activity including arson, theft by metal detecting (known as 'night-hawking'), vandalism and graffiti, trespass and anti-social activities.



Figure 8 Placed deposits of animal bones, including cattle skulls, in the ditch of the Ramsgate causewayed enclosure.

5. 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.

Archaeology and development

5.1 Through its Archaeology and Development team, Heritage Conservation provides archaeological advice services to all of Kent's Local Planning Authorities (LPAs) including Medway Council and Ebbsfleet Development Corporation, via Service Level Agreements (SLAs).

5.2 The Archaeology and Development team carries out about 3,500 appraisals each year. Most of these are for planning applications and many require ongoing archaeological support. In addition, the team provides heritage support to Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIPs) and 'Garden Town' developments, and on local plan allocations. Monitoring the standard of archaeological work on development sites can be a time-consuming element of the process.

Objective 1. Continue to provide an archaeological service to Kent's planning authorities, developers and householders [also Strategic Aim 3].

Objective 2. Explore and determine the potential for requiring archaeological contractors who undertake archaeological assessments or fieldwork on KCC development-related projects to be Registered Archaeological Organisations.

Historic built environment advice

5.3 As most districts have their own Conservation Officer covering built heritage, the Heritage Conservation Service provides advice on the historic built environment only to the County Council. The KCC Conservation Architect advises on key strategic infrastructure projects and county council determined applications including developments relating to schools to ensure that heritage assets are protected and enhanced where possible. This advice is most effective when given at an early stage in the design process.

Objective 3. Continue to provide a historic built environment advice service on County Council and strategic matters in Kent [also Strategic Aim 3].

The Kent Historic Environment Record

5.4 The Kent Historic Environment Record (HER) is a database of over 91,000 heritage assets and features in Kent linked to a GIS mapping system. It includes designated assets such as Listed Buildings and Scheduled Monuments as well as non-designated assets such as archaeological sites, non-listed historic buildings, parks, and gardens etc. It is used for development management, research, education, and tourism purposes. The HER (formerly known as the Sites and Monuments Record before historic buildings were added to the record) was formally adopted by KCC in 1995.

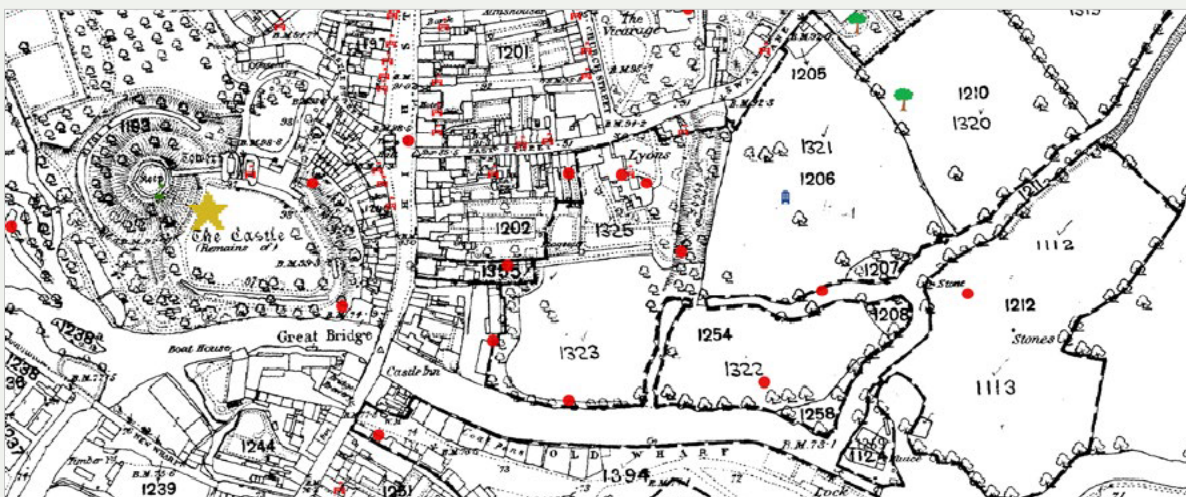
5.5 The HER is identified in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) as the prime source of heritage information. The Kent HER is the only HER for the whole county and is used by all local authorities, Medway Council and Ebbsfleet Development Corporation. The Levelling-up and Regeneration (LUR) Act 2023 (Article 212) requires Kent County Council as relevant authority to maintain the HER for its area. Guidance is expected shortly.

Objective 4: Continue to maintain and enhance the Kent HER, to meet the requirements of LUR Act 2023 and the NPPF and underpin decision-making in planning and development management [also Strategic Aim 2, Strategic Aim 3].

Case Study: The Kent Historic Environment Record (HER)

The Kent HER is a database of over 91,000 historic buildings, archaeological sites and discoveries and landscapes across Kent. It contains discoveries dating from the Palaeolithic period (up to 1m years ago) to the Cold War and is used by researchers, developers, community projects and the public to learn more about Kent's outstanding heritage. It is available to view online at www.kent.gov.uk/HER where it is accompanied by historic maps and aerial photographs as well as pages on different themes in Kent's past, some written by the HER volunteer team. During the COVID 2020 lockdown period, the website had 176,000 page views - its highest ever and another 103,000 via the Heritage Gateway.

Heritage maps



6. 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.

KCC-owned heritage assets

6.1 Kent County Council owns and is responsible for a large number of diverse heritage assets including historic school buildings, archaeological monuments, milestones, war memorials and historic street paving. These play a vital role in the character of Kent. Information about the important heritage assets which KCC owns is spread amongst several databases (HER, K2 and Highways service owned) and the assets are under day-to-day management of different parts of the County Council. Information on the location and significance of heritage assets is not always available to relevant KCC officers or contractors and it is possible for heritage assets to be accidentally damaged. We will work with other departments in KCC to coordinate information on heritage assets and increase awareness of this fragile resource.

6.2 The Kent Highways Heritage Protocol is a document jointly produced by KCC Heritage Conservation and Highways officers, the Kent Conservation Officers Group, and Kent Design. Originally adopted in 2001, it was updated in 2011 and is currently being revised. It looks beyond the statutory requirement to conserve individual assets to consider Heritage Sensitive Situations, defined as buildings, monuments, sites, places, areas or landscapes positively identified as having a degree of significance meriting consideration in planning decisions. It is thus a source of guidance for Kent's Highways officers, developers, and others engaged in designing and maintaining Kent's current and future highway assets.

Kent County Council's approach to managing the county's highway network is set out in its Highways Asset Management Plan (HAMP). This includes, at Action 1.17, Completing work with district conservation teams to refine and finalise the Kent Highways Heritage Protocol, to ensure that we strike the right balance between conservation, affordability, lifecycle cost and future maintainability considerations in highway maintenance. In addition, the recently introduced Technical Approval Process referenced in the HAMP applies the same principles to new and renewed highway assets.

Objective 5: Work across KCC to coordinate information on heritage assets and finalise the Kent Highways Heritage protocol.

Windmills

6.3 Kent County Council owns and is responsible for the preservation of eight historic windmills which are exceptional in terms of their high listing grades, their historic and regional significance, their architectural and technological excellence, and their mechanical completeness.

Location, Name	Type	Constructed	Designation	Date Listed	Acquired by KCC
Chillenden Mill	Post	1868 (rebuilt 2005)	Grade II*	11/10/1963	1958
Cranbrook, Union Mill	Smock	1814	Grade I	09/06/1952	1960
Herne Mill	Smock	Inscribed 1789	Grade I	29/09/1951	1984
Margate, Drapers Mill	Smock	1845	Grade II*	22/02/1973	1968
Meopham Mill	Smock	c1819	Grade II*	22/08/1952	1958
Stelling Minnis, Davison's Mill	Smock	1866	Grade I	29/12/1966	1970
West Kingsdown Mill	Smock	1805? Moved here 1880	Grade II	01/06/1967	1958
Wittersham, Stocks Mill	Post	Inscribed 1781	Grade II*	04/06/1952	1979

6.4 Kent County Council's approach to the management of the windmills it owns is set out below:

- To maintain in full working order those mills that are in the best condition.
- To make the mills weatherproof and watertight so that those which are incomplete can be returned to working order over the long term, as funds become available.
- To keep those that are visually complete in an intact condition for as long as possible.
- To ensure all the windmills and their sites are made safe for the visiting public, adjacent residents, passers-by, and the volunteer teams and members of staff who use them.

Case Study: Windmills conservation programme

The Kent Windmills Programme was developed in 2019 to weatherproof and safeguard the eight historic windmills owned by Kent County Council. Each windmill is managed by a locally based team of volunteers who ensure the buildings are accessible to visitors during the spring and summer months. In 2020, KCC's capital works programme funded a comprehensive scheme of repairs at West Kingsdown Mill which was featured on ITV Meridian News in March 2021. Repair works in progress include the construction of a new reefing stage at Meopham Mill, supported by a £25,000 grant from Historic England's Heritage at Risk Emergency Fund.

KCC's capital programme is funding major repairs at Cranbrook's Grade I listed Union Windmill (see image), involving the construction of a new 8-bladed fantail and four new sweeps. The aim is for Cranbrook Mill to be capable of milling flour by wind power again by the end of 2021.



6. Strategic Aim 2 continued

6.5 Five of the mills are ‘active’ in that their sweeps and fantails turn regularly, two are currently ‘static’ with no regularly working parts and one is being restored. The active mills are Union Mill, Cranbrook; Drapers Mill, Margate; Chillenden Mill; Stelling Minnis Mill and Meopham Mill. The static mills are Wittersham and West Kingsdown. A management approach of returning the mills to an active state where possible and stabilisation where not has been implemented very successfully. Meopham Mill was fully restored in 2025 and restoration of Heme Mill is underway. Management of the mills is only possible with the help of many volunteers in the windmill groups who assist with maintenance tasks and open the mills to the public.

6.6 In 2024, following a public consultation, the Cabinet member for Environment decided that KCC should divest itself of the windmills subject to ensuring that they have a sustainable future as community assets (Executive decision 24/000068). A fair and open process for divestment will be agreed; the method could potentially include freehold divestment, divestment through long lease or other appropriate means to achieve the executive decision.

Objective 6: KCC should seek to divest itself of the windmills it currently owns by a method that ensures that the windmills have a sustainable future in which they are appropriately cared for and maintained as community assets [also SA3].

Objective 7: *For any windmills remaining in KCC ownership and management, follow a management approach 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 undertaken as needed on a rolling cycle.*
- iii) *Static mills will be returned to visual completeness subject to funding.*
- iv) *Static mills will be made active wherever possible. [also Strategic Aim 3].*

Objective 8: KCC’s relationship with the windmill volunteer groups will be strengthened and the groups and other interested parties will be supported through the divestment process [also Strategic Aim 3].

Archaeological archives

6.7 Archaeological archives are produced during archaeological fieldwork. They consist of a small sample of the material that was recovered - the pottery, metalwork, stone, bone, environmental samples and so on - and are retained permanently to act as a resource for further research. The research may be carried out to check the conclusions of the original excavators or to research new aspects of archaeology that were not considered during the original project. They include important objects which could be displayed in museums

**6. Strategic Aim 2 continued
or galleries.**

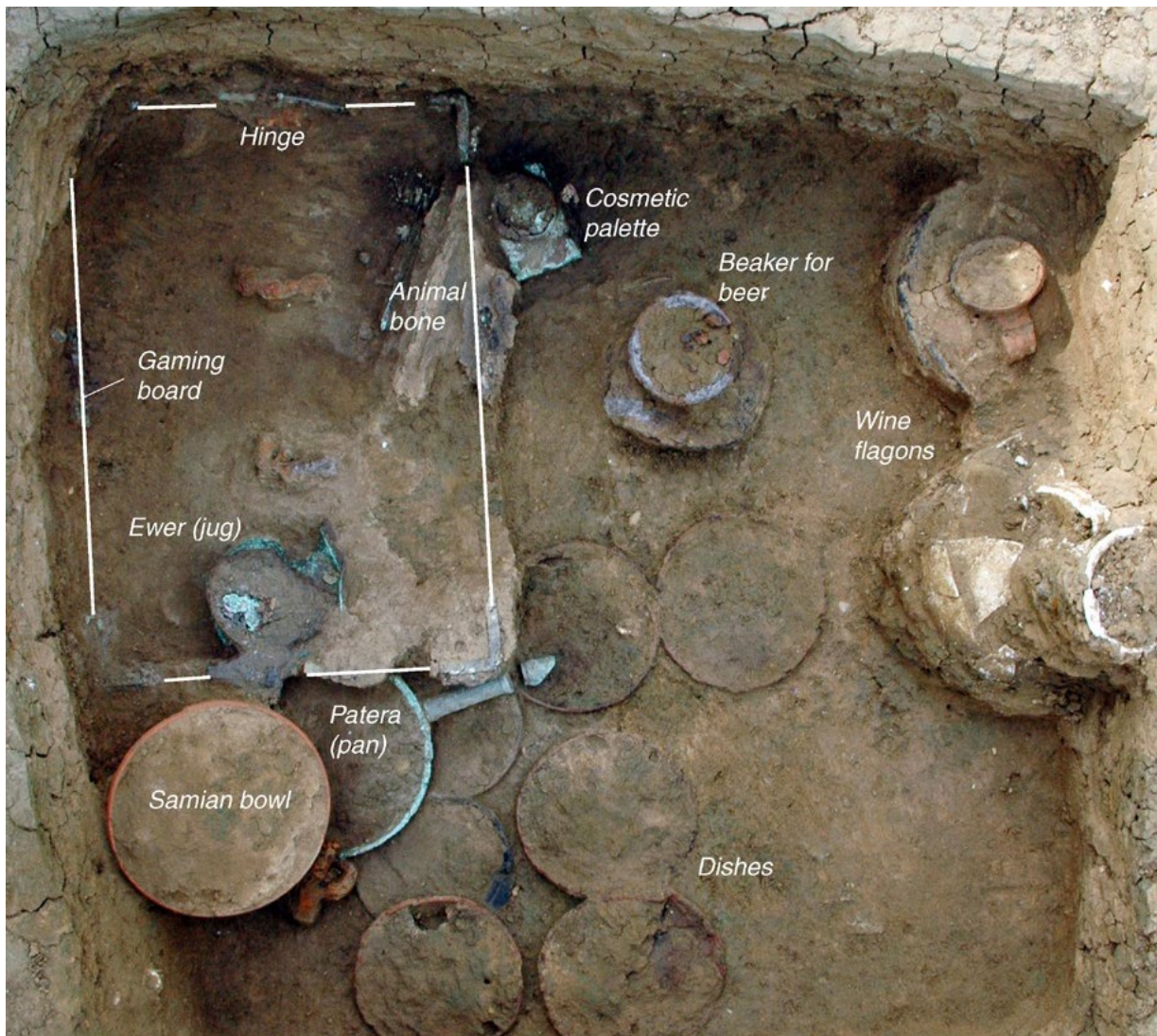


Figure 9 Archaeological archives: Roman vessels found during A2 widening (Courtesy of Oxford Archaeology).

6.8 In Kent, most archaeological archives will be generated by projects required as part of the development management process, but they will also include community excavations. Traditionally, archaeological archives are deposited in museums but in Kent almost all the museums are full and will no longer accept them. The archives are currently mostly retained by the original excavators.

6.9 KCC is the owner of more than 2,500 boxes of archive material deriving primarily from the High Speed 1 Channel Tunnel Rail Link project and has a direct responsibility to find a home for them. KCC is also responsible for the long-term deposition of archives from KCC road schemes and other development. KCC is keen to continue working with partners to develop a solution for all Kent's archives, as the retention and deposition of archaeological archives is regarded as national good practice and KCC also requires this in its archaeological specifications. As the main archaeological curator for Kent, KCC has a responsibility to help find a solution to the archives problem and improve access to information.

6.10 An assessment of archaeological archives has been undertaken - in 2020 this consists of approximately 23,000 boxes of material from Kent and Medway (based on a detailed 2015 assessment with a multiplier applied for time passed). Options for storage and display have been considered. The most cost-effective system (at time of writing) available for bulk archives is the Deepstore facility in Cheshire. However, conditions there are not currently suitable for specialist materials e.g. metalwork, textiles etc. so a separate facility would be needed for these materials. Discussions will be held with neighbouring authorities and Kent's museums and archaeological contractors to identify an approach to the specialist store. A project will be developed to make information on artefacts available online including a virtual gallery.

Objective 9: Assess options for the display and long-term storage of archaeological archives and ensure the KCC-held archives are placed in an appropriate repository [also SA3].



Figure 10 Anglo-Saxon brooch found at Saltwood Tunnel during archaeological excavations for HS1.

7. Strategic Aim 3

Increase awareness, knowledge and understanding of Kent's rich heritage and increase involvement in heritage activities amongst its local communities.

Community archaeology

7.1 Since 2006 the Heritage Conservation team has employed a community archaeologist usually through external funding. Highly successful Heritage Lottery Fund projects have been carried out at Shorne Woods Country Park (Shorne Heritage Project and Shorne HubCAP) and around Cobham (Cobham Landscape Detectives). The Community Archaeologist has been involved in a number of other projects across the county, some developed through the Heritage Conservation Service, and some developed by others with the service providing community archaeology expertise. These have included:

- Footsteps of Caesar Project - survey and excavation with the University of Leicester at Ebbsfleet (Thanet) and Worth. Focused on a site discovered on KCC's East Kent Access Road that is considered to connect with the invasion by Caesar.
- Command of the Heights - community excavation at Fort Amherst, Chatham for Medway Council.
- Rose Hill House - excavation of a 18th to 20th century house in Sittingbourne that involved direct participation of more than 300 primary school children from the adjacent school (as part of the Woodland Wildlife Hidden Histories project).
- Royal Military Canal - survey works to support advance work for a new cycle path with Ashford Borough Council.
- Boxley Warren Heritage project - running archaeology activities for the project for the Mid Kent Downs Countryside Partnership.
- Valley of Visions (Medway Valley), Darent Valley and Fifth Continent (Romney Marsh) - providing community archaeology support and activities for three landscape partnership schemes.
- Repton pond project at Cobham Hall - survey and excavation of a Repton pond feature at Cobham Hall, working on behalf of the Cobham Hall Heritage Trust.

7.2 There are enormous benefits from community archaeology for participants in terms of well-being and health but there are problems in securing sustainable funding to facilitate activities. It is also important to realise the public benefit of development-led archaeological work through improved information sharing and heritage interpretation, including local display of artefacts and public art. Similarly, the online HER, well-managed social media channels and publications allow a wide range of people to be aware of and contribute to knowledge of Kent's heritage.

Case Study: The 'Fifth Continent' Landscape Partnership Scheme Project

Since 2017 KCC has been providing community archaeology activities for the 'Fifth Continent' landscape partnership project, managed by the Kent Wildlife Trust and supported by the National Lottery Heritage Fund. Three projects are being carried out that involve working with volunteers - studying the original location of the port of Romney, researching the history of churches on the Marsh, and helping landowners to manage their heritage assets. Over 100 volunteers have taken part in the heritage activities which include excavation, surveys and research.



Objective 10: Promote understanding and enjoyment of Kent's heritage using multiple media channels including digital media (the online HER, KCC website and social media), print media (publications and press releases), with partners and through direct experience (community archaeology) [also Strategic Aim 2].

Objective 11: Develop and deliver a community engagement strategy and communication plan for the Heritage Conservation team [also Strategic Aim 2].



Figure 11 Shorne Woods Archaeology Group volunteers uncovering a section of the narrow gauge railway at the Country Park.

Metal detecting searching and chance discoveries

7.3 Since the 1990s, 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/>). The Portable Antiquities Scheme (PAS) is overseen by the British Museum and run by Finds Liaison Officers (FLOs), who are hosted mainly by county councils, or county museums where they exist. Funding for this service is provided by a grant from the British Museum. The service is discretionary in terms of recording finds on the PAS database but there is a statutory role, alongside the coroners' service, in relation to reporting finds of Treasure under the Treasure Act. Additionally, in recent years, two other collecting hobbies have gained popularity; 'mudlarking', where riverine foreshore or estuary areas are searched with or without detecting equipment, and magnet fishing where magnets are used to collect mostly iron objects from waterways.



Figure 12 Objects discovered in Kent (Elham Cross, Matilda of Cornhill seal matrix) and recorded by the KCC Finds Liaison Officer.

7.4 Such hobbies can foster physical health, engagement with heritage, and in some cases provide valuable archaeological information. However, they also provide challenges that must be considered. All the hobbies mentioned above risk inadvertently, and occasionally deliberately, breaching the requirements of the Treasure Act and also legal requirements for access to land, particularly where members of the public are not aware of restrictions. Many finds of historical interest can go unreported and are sometimes sold. There can also be significant safety concerns such as the obstruction of waterways by magnet fishing or the discovery of unexploded ordinance (UXO) in the pursuit of artefact recovery.

7.5 Extensive outreach by archaeologists has taken place over the past three decades to help mitigate some of the above, particularly in the fields of best practice and recording of objects. The most recent policy document, [Code of Practice for Responsible Metal Detecting in England and Wales](#), was published by the PAS in 2017.

7.6 For the reasons outlined above it is proposed that metal detecting will only be undertaken on KCC owned land as part of an archaeological investigation or to search for a specific lost object. KCC should retain ownership of all finds found on its property in perpetuity except in certain circumstances (e.g. recent loss of a personal possession) which will be set out on the KCC website.

Objective 12: 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 [also SA2].

Objective 13: Agree and adopt a policy that KCC should retain ownership of all finds found on its property in perpetuity unless special exemptions apply (e.g. loss of personal possession) [also SA2].

Objective 14: Agree and adopt a policy (to be discussed with river and coastal authorities) that magnet fishing will not be allowed on KCC owned land [also SA2].

Objective 15: KCC will work with coastal landowners to consider the benefits of a permit system for metal detecting in coastal and riverine foreshore areas.

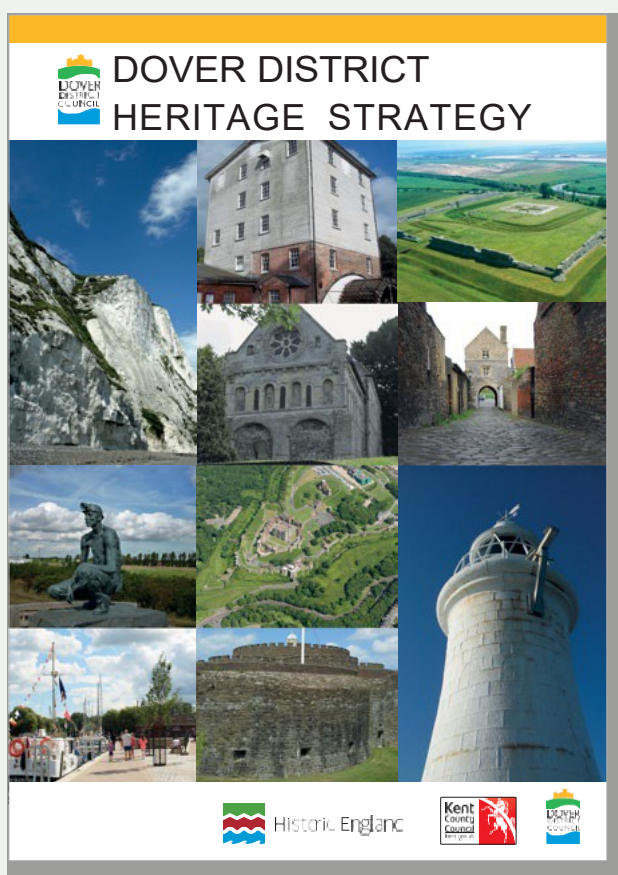
Supporting the development of robust heritage strategies

7.7 The NPPF guides Local Plans to set out a positive strategy for the conservation and enjoyment of the historic environment. The Heritage Conservation Service has worked with Dover District Council to produce the Dover District Heritage Strategy, which received a Royal Town Planning Institute South East award for planning excellence and is recognised by Dover District Council as having brought in millions of pounds in investment. A similar draft strategy has been prepared by KCC Heritage Conservation for Folkestone and Hythe District Council, and the service is contributing to other approaches to heritage strategies which are being followed by other local authorities such as Swale and Tunbridge Wells. Such strategies encourage the use of the historic environment in place-making and in seeking opportunities for public benefit and community value in development proposals. We will explore with partners whether preparation of a county-wide heritage strategy would bring benefits of scale and cost savings.

Objective 16: 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 [also SA1].

Case Study: Dover Heritage Strategy

In 2013 (updated in 2020) Dover District Council published the Dover Heritage Strategy, the result of a multi-year collaboration with KCC. The strategy was commissioned by Dover District Council and English Heritage to ensure that Dover's outstanding heritage plays its full part in life in the District in the future. It contains recommendations to ensure that decisions are taken based on a full understanding of the significance of Dover's heritage assets and to help shape decision-making. The strategy was awarded the RTPi South East award for Excellence in Planning for Built Heritage) and has been used by Dover District Council to help secure £4.27 million NLHF funding.



8. Strategic Aim 4

Work towards the service becoming more financially self-sustaining.

Benchmarking and resourcing

8.1 In 2019, KCC Heritage Conservation carried out a benchmarking survey with equivalent teams across the south-east of England. This concluded that:

- i) in comparison with other curatorial services KCC Heritage Conservation is comparatively under-resourced for both its development management team and its Historic Environment Record team and;
- ii) there is scope for increasing income generation, particularly by charging for some aspects of the development management service and for Priority Searches for HER information.

Objective 17. Develop a cost recovery strategy for providing archaeological advice to developers for major planning applications and NSIP proposals [also SA1].

Objective 18. Develop a cost recovery strategy for the creation of HER records as a result of development related fieldwork [also SA1, SA3].

Objective 19: Determine and secure a funded approach to built historic environment advice [also SA1, SA2].

Objective 20: Develop a strategy to systematically review and monitor progress towards greater financial sustainability [also SA1, SA2, SA3].

9. Strategic Aim 5

Contribute to KCC's action to address climate change and adaptation.

9.1 Adapting to climate change is a priority for Kent County Council. Kent County Council recognises that our changing climate will continue to affect the county's historic environment. While the Council is no longer operating under a formal climate emergency declaration, we remain committed to understanding and managing the risks posed by a changing climate. Our focus is on resilience and adaptation, ensuring that heritage assets can withstand and respond to future environmental challenges.

Objective 21: Work with partners to develop approaches that improve the resilience of heritage assets to climate-related impacts.

With partners and subject to funding, we will investigate the likely impacts of climate change on Kent's heritage assets. This includes gathering the best available evidence on climate projections, identifying and quantifying potential risks, and assessing the vulnerability of different asset types. We will prioritise actions based on the severity and timing of these impacts and develop strategies to adapt and manage change effectively. An initial assessment was completed this year in an innovative project by the University of Waterloo, Canada. Further assessment will be undertaken in due course.

Objective 22: Assess, with partners, the vulnerability of Kent's historic environment to climate change and create an adaptation framework to guide future conservation efforts.

10. Our objectives at a glance

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.

Objective 1. Continue to provide an archaeological service to Kent's planning authorities, developers and householders [also SA3].

Objective 2. Explore and determine the potential for requiring archaeological contractors who undertake archaeological assessments or fieldwork on KCC projects to be Registered Archaeological Organisations.

Objective 3. Continue to provide a historic built environment advice service on County Council and strategic matters in Kent [also SA3].

Objective 4: Continue to maintain and enhance the Kent HER, to meet the requirements of the LUR Act 2023 and NPPF and underpin decision-making in planning and development management [also SA2, SA3].

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.

Objective 5. Work across KCC to coordinate information on heritage assets and finalise the Kent Highways Heritage protocol.

Objective 6. KCC should seek to divest itself of the windmills it currently owns by a method that ensures that the windmills have a sustainable future in which they are appropriately cared for and maintained as community assets [also SA3].

Objective 7. *For any windmills remaining in KCC ownership and management, follow a management approach 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 undertaken as needed on a rolling cycle.

iii) Static mills will be returned to visual completeness subject to funding

iv) Static mills will be made active wherever possible [also SA3].

Objective 8. KCC's relationship with the windmill volunteer groups will be strengthened and the groups and other interested parties will be supported through the divestment process. [also SA3].

Objective 9. Assess options for the display and long-term storage of archaeological archives and ensure the KCC-held archives are placed in an appropriate repository [also SA3].

Strategic Aim 3

Increase awareness, knowledge and understanding of Kent's rich heritage and increase involvement in heritage activities amongst its local communities.

Objective 10. Promote understanding and enjoyment of Kent's heritage using multiple media channels including digital media (the online HER, KCC website and social media), print media (publications and press releases) and through direct experience (community archaeology) [also SA2].

Objective 11. Develop a community engagement strategy and communication plan for the Heritage Conservation team [also SA2].

Objective 12. 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 [also SA2].

Objective 13: Agree and adopt a policy that KCC should retain ownership of all finds found on its property in perpetuity unless special exemptions apply [also SA2].

Objective 14: Agree and adopt a policy (to be discussed with river and coastal authorities) that magnet fishing will not be allowed on KCC owned land [also SA2].

Objective 15: KCC will work with coastal landowners to consider the benefits of a permit system for metal detecting in coastal and riverine foreshore areas.

Objective 16: 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 [also SA1].

Strategic Aim 4

Work towards the service becoming more financially self-sustaining.

Objective 17. Develop a cost recovery strategy for providing archaeological advice to developers for major planning applications and NSIP proposals [also SA1].

Objective 18. Develop a cost recovery strategy for the creation of HER records as a result of development related fieldwork [also SA1, SA3].

Objective 19: Determine and secure a funded approach to built historic environment advice [also SA1, SA2].

Objective 20: Develop a strategy to systematically review and monitor progress towards greater financial sustainability [also SA1, SA2, SA3].

Strategic Aim 5

Contribute to KCC's action to address climate change and adaptation.

Objective 21. Work with partners to develop approaches that improve the resilience of heritage assets to climate-related impacts.

Objective 22. Assess, with partners, the vulnerability of Kent's historic environment to climate change and create an adaptation framework to

guide future conservation efforts.

11. How we will deliver this strategy – our medium-term plan

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.

What (objective)	Why (rationale)	By when (timescale)	What will success look like?
Objective 1. Continue to provide an archaeological service to Kent's planning authorities, developers and householders [also SA3].	Requirement of NPPF and other policy (see 1.7-1.9)	Ongoing	Targets met; heritage protected.
Objective 2. Explore and determine the potential for requiring archaeological contractors who undertake archaeological assessments or fieldwork on KCC projects to be Registered Archaeological Organisations.	Improve standards in commercial fieldwork and reduce time spent commenting on WSIs and reports.	Prepare report by December 2026.	Decision taken.
Objective 3. Continue to provide a historic built environment advice service on County Council and strategic matters in Kent [also SA3].	Requirement of NPPF and other policy (see 1.7-1.9)	Ongoing	Targets met; heritage protected.
Objective 4. Continue to maintain and enhance the Kent HER, to meet the requirements of the LUR Act 2023 and NPPF and underpin decision-making in planning and development management [also SA2, SA3].	Requirement of NPPF and other policy (see 1.7-1.9)	Ongoing	2025 HER Audit Action Plan implemented according to schedule. Ensure HER meets appropriate standard when LUR Act guidance published.

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.

What (objective)	Why (rationale)	By when (timescale)	What will success look like?
Objective 5. Work across KCC to coordinate information on heritage assets and finalise the Kent Highways Heritage protocol.	To conserve heritage assets in line with statutory requirements and good practice, and to provide guidance on developing designs and maintenance solutions which balance heritage conservation with cost and other relevant factors.	Draft proposal by 2026	Heritage assets conserved and managed effectively.
Objective 6. KCC should seek to divest itself of the windmills it currently owns by a method that ensures that the windmills have a sustainable future in which they are appropriately cared for and maintained as community assets [also SA3].	Reduce long-term maintenance and capital costs for KCC. Increase potential for funding from other sources. Meet listed building requirements and ensure community inclusion.	Divestment approach prepared by March 2026.	Divestment of the windmills is achieved where possible and the windmills are maintained in good active condition as community assets.
Objective 7: For any windmills remaining in KCC ownership and management, follow a management approach 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 undertaken as needed on a rolling cycle. iii) Static mills will be returned to visual completeness subject to funding iv) Static mills will be made active wherever possible [also SA3].	To conserve heritage assets in line with statutory requirements and good practice and manage them in most cost-effective way.	Ongoing	Heritage assets conserved and managed effectively.

Strategic Aim 2 continued

What (objective)	Why (rationale)	By when (timescale)	What will success look like?
Objective 8. KCC's relationship with the windmill volunteer groups will be strengthened and the groups and other interested parties will be supported through the divestment process. [also SA3].	Volunteer groups contribute to heritage asset management and community is involved.	Ongoing	Volunteer groups involved in day-to-day mill management and developing future approaches.
Objective 9. Assess options for the display and long-term storage of archaeological archives and ensure the KCC-held archives are placed in an appropriate repository [also SA3].	To conserve heritage and environmental assets for the benefit of Kent residents. Appropriate management of heritage assets in line with NPPF.	Catalogue HS1 archive by December 2026. Prepare project plan for deposition and where appropriate display of KCC held archaeological archives by March 2027. Agree plan for Kent wide approach to deposition and display of archaeological archives by 2027.	KCC held archaeological archives deposited in secure repository by 2028.
Objective 10. Promote understanding and enjoyment of Kent's heritage using multiple media channels including digital media (the online HER, KCC website and social media), print media (publications and press releases) and through direct experience (community archaeology) [also SA2].	Increase awareness and understanding of Kent's heritage and KCC's role in conserving it.	Continue to promote heritage through multiple media channels; see also Objective 11 on the following page.	Increased awareness of heritage and KCC's role.

Strategic Aim 3

Increase awareness, knowledge and understanding of Kent's rich heritage and increase involvement in heritage activities amongst its local communities.

What (objective)	Why (rationale)	By when (timescale)	What will success look like?
Objective 11. Develop a Community Engagement strategy and Communication Plan for the Heritage Conservation team [also SA2].	Increase awareness and understanding of Kent's heritage and KCC's role in conserving it.	Draft Community Engagement strategy and Communication Plan by December 2026	Communication strategy prepared and agreed.
Objective 12. 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 [also SA2].	Provide clarity for searchers and KCC officers.	Stakeholder consultation undertaken and policy agreed by December 2026.	Clarification of policy and policy acted upon.
Objective 13. Agree and adopt a policy that KCC should retain ownership of all finds found on its property in perpetuity unless special exemptions apply [also SA2].	To conserve heritage assets for the benefit of Kent residents.	To be included in consultation and policy for Objective 12.	Heritage assets conserved.
Objective 14. Agree and adopt a policy (to be discussed with river and coastal authorities) that magnet fishing will not be allowed on KCC owned land [also SA2].	Conservation of heritage assets and Health & Safety considerations.	To be included in policy for Objective 12.	Heritage assets are conserved and public safety maintained.
Objective 15. KCC will work with coastal landowners to consider the benefits of a permit system for metal detecting in coastal and riverine foreshore areas.	Provide clarity for searchers and KCC officers.	Report prepared by December 2026.	Public consultation undertaken and policy agreed.
Objective 16. 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 [also SA1].	Requirement of NPPF and other policy (see 1.7-1.9) To ensure a strategic approach to heritage conservation across the county.	Develop project outline & seek resources by December 2026.	Project outline prepared and decision taken as to whether to proceed.

Strategic Aim 4

Work towards the service becoming more financially self-sustaining.

What (objective)	Why (rationale)	By when (timescale)	What will success look like?
Objective 17. Develop a cost recovery strategy for providing archaeological advice to developers for major planning applications and NSIP proposals [also SA1].	To improve sustainability of service and provide stability in capacity to meet service.	Develop draft strategy and undertake stakeholder consultation by December 2026.	Heritage Conservation service is more financially sustainable and stability of capacity improved.
Objective 18. Develop a cost recovery strategy for the creation of HER records as a result of development related fieldwork [also SA1, SA3].	To improve sustainability of service and provide stability in capacity to meet service commitments.	Develop draft strategy and undertake stakeholder consultation by December 2026.	Heritage Conservation service is more sustainable and Historic Environment Record backlog is reduced.
Objective 19. Determine and secure a funded approach to built historic environment advice [also SA1, SA2].	To improve sustainability of service and provide stability in capacity to meet service commitments.	Develop draft strategy by December 2026.	Heritage Conservation service is more sustainable.
Objective 20. Develop a strategy to systematically review and monitor progress towards greater financial sustainability [also SA1, SA2, SA3].	To assess effectiveness of cost recovery strategy.	Review strategy by December 2027	Effectiveness of cost recovery strategy is assessed and improvements made as required.

Strategic Aim 5

Contribute to KCC's action to address climate change and adaptation.

What (objective)	Why (rationale)	By when (timescale)	What will success look like?
Objective 21. Work with partners to develop approaches that improve the resilience of heritage assets to climate-related impacts.	To help mitigate the effects of climate change.	Prepare draft strategy and action plan by 2027.	Strategy prepared actions agreed.
Objective 22. Assess, with partners, the vulnerability of Kent's historic environment to climate change and create an adaptation framework to guide future conservation efforts.	To provide information to help guide decision-making.	Prepare, subject to funding, draft assessment by 2027.	Assessment prepared.

kent.gov.uk/heritageconservationstrategy

