



Communities Select Committee

19 May 2014

Magna Carta 2015

Purpose of the report: to provide an update to the Communities Select Committee on recent and proposed developments of the Magna Carta 800th anniversary commemorations in Surrey. The Committee is asked for comment on the progress of the project.

Relevance: the aim of these recommendations is to celebrate our heritage, raise the profile of the area, increase economic growth and enhance existing facilities to encourage healthier lifestyles.

Background: the sealing of the Magna Carta in Runnymede is a major part of Surrey's heritage and cultural identity, and the 800th anniversary (15 June 2015) will be an occasion of national and international prominence and significance. The Runnymede Meadow site witnessed the sealing of the Magna Carta which established the Rule of Law and Human Rights and effectively challenged for the first time the divine right of Kings. The County Council is working with local, national and international partners to ensure that the 800th anniversary is celebrated and a lasting legacy is created by raising the profile of the area, attracting inward investment - for the benefit of residents, businesses and visitors.

INTRODUCTION:

- 1 In December 2012, in response to the local bid for Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) funding for a proposed visitor centre, SCC requested that officers develop a Masterplan for the site together with proposals for the Magna Carta 800th anniversary celebrations. In July 2013, Surrey County Council's Cabinet approved funding of £1 million towards a partnership project to celebrate the 800th anniversary of the sealing of the Magna Carta in Runnymede and to bring a lasting legacy to the area.
- 2 Surrey County Council has been working closely in a leadership role with key stakeholder organisations (Runnymede Borough Council, National Trust, Royal Holloway University of London (RHUL), Brunel University and the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead) to develop and implement these ambitious plans. At a national level, all partners are represented on the Magna Carta 800th Committee. This ensures coordination with national plans for celebrating the 800th anniversary.
- 3 Surrey County Council and the National Trust have jointly appointed a Project Manager, Geri Silverstone, whose principal role will be to oversee the delivery of the plans for 15 June 2015 and the anniversary weekend and be the key contact for all partners. Roles and responsibilities have been clearly defined, and the governance structure that involves the principal partners and stakeholders in the project has been set up.

ANALYSIS:

- 4 Surrey County Council is supporting this scheme because of the tremendous importance of Magna Carta in terms of heritage, education, economic development, tourism and civic pride in our county. Through the events in 2015 and the legacy of an enhanced visitor offer, the profile of the area will be improved both nationally and internationally which will benefit the economy of the area. This report covers:
- 5 The legacy – one of the key ambitions for the 2015 anniversary (at both local and national level) is to provide improved visitor facilities and interpretation arrangements at the historically important site in Runnymede with minimal impact on the natural environment.
- 6 Celebration events – creating an event programme that will raise the profile of the area, bring the community together to participate in a variety of cultural, healthy and educational pursuits, and provide an international celebration worthy of the occasion.

UPDATE ON THE PROPOSALS:

The Legacy

- 7 Runnymede and Ankerwycke offer sanctuary in an urbanised landscape, and it is this landscape which in many ways is the legacy of the Magna Carta. This project will better tell the stories of Runnymede and Magna Carta; improve the conservation of the historic landscape and the buildings within it; provide a more comprehensive and considered learning offer in conjunction with our partners; and encourage more people to come and spend time at this unique place. An option Masterplan was produced for the partnership in

summer 2013 and many elements of the project are based on its recommendations.

- 8 The vision for the legacy is based on a regional park concept to create a culturally branded destination and tourism identity for the Runnymede area - with the aim to increase economic benefit to the vicinity through increased visitor numbers and promote awareness of the national and international historic significance of the location – its heritage, countryside, wildlife, landscape conservation and bio-diversity of the area. This will be achieved by raising the profile of Runnymede and its environs. Historic Egham will, overtime – and as the destination marketing brand develops - be promoted as the “gateway” to “Magna Carta Country” – thereby generating an economic dynamic to support the growth/regeneration of the rural area and associated towns.
- 9 The area will embrace the site of the sealing of the Magna Carta, Runnymede Pleasure Ground (which has been agreed by the Pleasure Ground trustees), the ancient historic Meadows/NT Runnymede estate, Wraysbury, Ankerwycke, the Magna Carta and Kennedy memorials – as well as including the Commonwealth Air Forces Memorial and its adjacent woodland setting. The diverse habitats at Runnymede are rich in flora and fauna and represent a distinctive landscape area to be promoted for conservation and access. The Langham Pond area of the National Trust estate is a designated Site of Special Scientific Interest and therefore protected under legislation. Key to the concept would be the promotion of access to the wider adjacent countryside and landscape for leisure and recreation purposes – land-based on the southern stretch and water- based activities on the northern section of the park.
- 10 Additional funding for the project is being sought on behalf of the partnership through a Heritage Lottery Fund application. The bid will seek support for long term improvements to the Runnymede Meadow and Runnymede Pleasure Ground sites as well as creating a gateway to the area from the town of Egham. An initial application of £4,317,980 was submitted in April 2014, and if successful, a full bid for a 5 year legacy project will be submitted in 2015.
- 11 There will be increased visitor numbers, which will require greater safety for pedestrians crossing the A308 Windsor Road. There are plans for controlled pedestrian crossing points, traffic calming and speed reduction measures – these will be funded from the Highways departments existing budget and, along with road resurfacing – are due to be completed before June 2015. The Communities Select Committee will be kept fully informed of the traffic management recommendations, for which there will be a subsequent report.
- 12 The plan to improve the visitor offer includes:
 - a. Improving and enhancing visitor facilities by better utilising existing buildings such as toilets, cafes, and educational facilities.
 - b. Safe pedestrian access across the A308 Windsor Road.
 - c. Providing a lasting legacy of the sealing of the Magna Carta through an iconic commission in the landscape of a British memorial for Magna Carta. A number of possible locations have been identified in

the Landscape Masterplan – two are in the Meadows flood plain and the brief requires that any structure / installation in this location must address flooding issues – the National Trust, as landowner, will work directly with artists regarding this matter. A selection of artists have been shortlisted and will be submitting proposals based on the brief – for selection.

- d. Improved interpretation through digital smartphone technology which is being designed by Royal Holloway University, and will be ready for testing by the end of 2014.
- e. Creating the economic dynamic to support the growth and regeneration of Egham and surrounding areas which will inform the Egham and Royal Holloway University of London (RHUL) Masterplans. These Masterplans are in development and will create an additional inward investment into the area and provide a significant revitalisation/improvement to the town centre and local economy.
- f. Promoting awareness and understanding of the national and international historic significance of Runnymede and the surrounding area.
- g. Improving access to, movement around and understanding of the areas heritage, countryside, wildlife and biodiversity. This will include improvements to the Thames Path, walking and cycling trails around the area, and improved opportunities for boat trips along the river.
- h. Creating a new range of volunteering opportunities in the following areas: walking guides, rangers, visitor welcome, research, administration, operational support (tea room, exhibition space, education resource coordinator).
- i. Work with partners, particularly RHUL and Brunel University, to deliver a resource which can be used to deliver significant education programmes to a wide range of stakeholders, including school age children (KS3, KS4, KS5), university students and staff (undergraduate, postgraduate and research), and the wider public through local youth groups and initiatives such as the University of the Third Age.

Celebration Events

- 13 Awareness raising events in 2014 and early 2015 will increase interest in preparation for the major celebratory events on the weekend of the 800th anniversary and subsequent activities on the site during the summer months/school holidays. The events will range from high profile events attracting international attention, to community events involving celebrations with local residents.
- 14 The 15th June 2014 will be used as a 'one year to go' event, to take place on the Runnymede Meadows to raise awareness and increase the profile of the project.

- 15 A Magna Carta themed event will be delivered by Surrey Arts at the Royal Albert Hall on 12th May 2015, providing an opportunity to showcase a range of high quality local music and drama at an iconic venue.
- 16 The weekend of 13th and 14th June 2015 will be Eghams’s Magna Carta Day on Saturday, and an exciting new festival is being planned at the Royal Holloway University on Sunday, which it is hoped will become an annual occasion.
- 17 The partnership is working with the Houses of Parliament to ensure Runnymede is fully involved with all of their initiatives and national celebrations, such as ‘Liber-teas’ that will be enjoyed during the weekend; and a number of arts projects that they are currently developing.
- 18 Monday 15th June 2015, the 800th anniversary of the sealing of Magna Carta, it is anticipated that this occasion will be marked by the attendance of national and international dignitaries.
- 19 During the summer of 2015, projects will take place in Egham, to ensure that visitors continue to spend time in the town and as a gateway to access the Runnymede Meadows and also on the National Trust Meadows.

CONSULTATIONS:

- 20 Regular consultation has taken place with key stakeholders - see Annex A. Previous meetings attended by the partnership are listed in Table 1, and the forward plan of stakeholder engagements are listed in Table 2. Consulted sources are listed in Annex B, and a summary of the 2013 consultation results displayed in Annex C.

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT:

- 21 The views of the Communities Select Committee will be fully considered and inform the work of the Magna Carta Surrey Partnership.
- 22 The Communities Select Committee will be kept informed on the developments of the programme through periodic reports to the Committee, the Communities Select Committee Bulletin and the Magna Carta Surrey Partnership Newsletter (in conjunction with coordinated cross organisational communication).

Contact Officer:

Susie Kemp	Assistant Chief Executive Susie.Kemp@surreycc.gov.uk
Peter Milton	Head of Cultural Services Peter.Milton@surreycc.gov.uk

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