

## **CABINET MEMBER FOR COMMUNITY SERVICES AND THE 2012 GAMES**

### **RESPONSE TO PETITION CONCERNING A MAGNA CARTA VISITORS CENTRE**

#### **The Petition**

“Runnymede Borough Council wish to build a Visitor Centre at Runnymede Pleasure Grounds, the plans are for a large, unsympathetic design building on this open space.

We have support from CPRE (Campaign To Protect Rural England) as they also have serious concerns regarding the future of Runnymede Pleasure Grounds as an open space if this proposal was to go ahead; the principal matter being the detrimental effect the increased visitor numbers and traffic will have on the wider site and local infrastructure, including the wildlife habitat.

Runnymede Borough Council has been refused funding by the Heritage Lottery Funding and is therefore looking at a cost of approx. £5 million to finance this project. We believe this money could be better spent (eg on hospital facilities/public swimming pool/leisure centre).

Whilst we appreciate it is good to celebrate the 800th anniversary of the sealing of the Magna Carta in 2015, we would urge you to sign our petition NOT to support the project in its current form, but to scale back to perhaps a temporary structure (eg marquee etc.) in keeping with the land and spirit of the Magna Carta which does not irrevocably alter the landscape, the locale, and the quality of life for current residents.”

#### **The Response**

Thank you for sending your Magna Carta Visitor Centre petition to Surrey County Council. I can confirm that the Communities Select Committee will examine your concerns on the 14th November at 2pm and you are welcome to attend.

Surrey County Council’s Cabinet has agreed to contribute £5m to the development of a future Visitor Centre. The County Council decided to support a visitor centre for Runnymede because of the tremendous national importance of Magna Carta in terms of heritage education, economic development, tourism and great pride in our county. The County Council is seeking to ensure a state of the art facility within an impressive, sustainable, and architecturally distinguished landmark building that will tell the story of Magna to both local and international visitors. The Council’s ambition is that through planned events in 2015 and the Visitor Centre, the profile of Surrey will be enhanced both nationally and internationally which will benefit the wider area in both the short and longer term.

**Mrs Helyn Clack**

**Cabinet Member for Community Services and the 2012 Games**