

KENILWORTH TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of the Meeting of the

ENGLISH HERITAGE LIAISON GROUP

held in the Council Chamber, Jubilee House
on 22 June 2023, at 2.34pm

PRESENT: Councillor A G Chalmers (Chair, from EH.04).

Councillors: P J Jones, A J Kennedy, A J G Marsh, M L Stevens,
A M Summers.

M Bulford, L Gardner (English Heritage).

Town Clerk: Miss M S Field.

Deputy Town Clerk: Miss G Honey

EH.01 **INTRODUCTION**

All present introduced themselves.

EH.02 **SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS**

Councillors A J G Marsh for K Dickson and A M Summers for A M Dearing. L Gardner for S Elson (English Heritage)

EH.03 **ELECTION OF CHAIR**

It was proposed, seconded and:

RESOLVED that Councillor A G Chalmers be Chair of this Group for the Council year.

EH.04 **ELECTION OF VICE CHAIR**

It was proposed, seconded :

RESOLVED that Councillor M L Stevens be Vice Chair for the Council year.

EH.05 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Cllr J Kennedy confirmed his membership of English Heritage. Cllr A Chalmers confirmed his membership of Welsh Heritage.

EH.06 **APOLOGIES**

Councillors: K S Dickson, A M Dearing

EH.07 MINUTES

The minutes of the English Heritage (EH) Liaison Working Party Meeting held on 13 October 2022, which were approved by the Town Council on 1 December 2022 were NOTED.

MATTERS ARISING

EH.08 GENERAL EH UPDATES INCLUDING CHANGES TO STAFFING ARRANGEMENTS

M Bulford gave an overview regarding EH staffing. Scott Elson remains as interim site manager until January 2024 whilst Dean Chandler is on secondment. Visitor numbers for 2022/23 reached 117,000 which is a ten year record. Despite the cost of living crisis at the moment visitor numbers are doing well.

Events so far this year have been successful including Easter, May half term and the Coronation Event. M Bulford thanked Council staff and Members for helping to coordinate the Coronation event held. Cllr A Chalmers was keen to arrange a similar choral event and it was agreed a suitable time of year would be September as there are no other events at the Castle during this time. Cllr Chalmers will make contact with the schools and M Bulford will confirm available dates. Cllr Chalmers suggested a small grant may be requested from the Town Council in due course for token refreshments for the children.

Upcoming events included the ever popular joust in July and the Knights tournament in August. Fireworks would take place as usual in November and Christmas events were currently being planned. Cllr M Stevens enquired as to whether the Carols at the Castle event organised by Kenilworth Lions could go ahead on 16 December 2023. M Bulford will check this date for availability and advised contact should be made with Katherine McDonald at the Castle for the details.

M Bulford reported there has been a rise in antisocial behaviour at the Castle including low level graffiti and vandalism. The Castle routinely report all incidents and have been in touch with Kenilworth School as many of the children were in school uniform at the time. English Heritage are happy to visit the school and educate the children on local heritage, and they are working with Partners in the community to try and form a collective approach. This included the Safer Neighbourhood Team, Warwickshire Police.

These updates were NOTED.

EH.09 ESTATE GROUNDS MAINTENANCE

M Bulford reported on current and ongoing maintenance. Work to the cost of £150,000 has been completed on replacing the stairs in the main tower. These re-opened in May 2023. Work has also been completed on the marble fountain where all joints have been re-mortared. A large oak tree has also had to be removed from the site, due to disease.

Every 5 years the Castle complete a condition survey of site and this was completed last year. This identified high level masonry works for re-pointing which was completed last

year. Upcoming works include installation of secondary glazing on the Gatehouse, a small refurbishment to create an additional meeting space and re-vegetation works.

English Heritage has recently applied for a grant and have been awarded £250k to help improve pathways and accessibility around the site. They intend to resurface existing walkways and create new paths. Attention has also been given to the path surrounding the castle and the grant will contribute towards these repairs.

The work will require full scheduled monument consent and some planning permission and there is a 12 month deadline to spend the grant money from March. English Heritage are happy to host a walk around for Councillors and provide further information on the intended maintenance. They will also arrange drop in sessions for the public in order to inform and publicise the work being undertaken.

This update was NOTED.

EH.10 REVIEW OF CASTLE PASS SCHEME

The Town Clerk reported that no issues had arisen and the scheme was working very well.

Cllr Summers enquired on the possibility of replacing card passes, by digitalising the passes and perhaps having these available on a mobile device. M Bulford highlighted issues relating to GDPR and the sharing of data between the Town Council and the Castle. Difficulties would arise, they would need access to the Town Council data systems and a method of reading that data quickly on entry at the castle. This may be something to consider for the future.

This update was NOTED.

EH. 11 TOURISM IN KENILWORTH AND THE CASTLE

Cllr J Kennedy advised a meeting had not yet taken place of the Tourism Working Group. The Town Clerk confirmed it was not yet clear how this would move forward. M Bulford said this had been useful in the past and it would be good to see it continue.

This update was NOTED.

EH. 12 KENILWORTH CASTLE CONSERVATION MANAGEMENT PLAN

Matt Bulford reported the long-term masterplan was now approximately ten months into planning. They intended to conduct market research and community research on improving access between the Castle and the town. Once they were at a point when they have drawn up final plans, they will go out to consult and obtain views and opportunities for improvement.

One of the key parts of the management plan was to improve pathways and access and that is what the ongoing work above will do with the assistance of their recent grant.

Cllr J Kennedy asked what the identified constraints were at this stage. M Bulford explained they did not want to introduce new buildings within the curtain wall as space was limited on site, and there could be negative impacts on the setting of the monument. Cllr Marsh

enquired of the percentage of visitors who were residents and M Bulford confirmed this was approximately 5%.

This update was NOTED.

EH.13 WAYFINDING AND IMPROVING ACCESS TO AND FROM THE TOWN

Cllr J Kennedy reported that the first phase of installing the wayfinding signs was nearly complete. The Town Council had experienced difficulties in relation to planning permission and scheduled monument consent. Funding needs to be secured for the next phase and the Town Clerk confirmed the CIL funding was uncertain and we did not know when or how much we would receive in future payments.

Cllr Kennedy advised the monolith at the top of Abbey Fields was still awaiting scheduled monument consent and the Council hoped to have this next week. Cllr Kennedy enquired whether the Castle had given consideration to where we can put a monolith inside the Castle grounds. M Bulford advised this can be discussed in more detail during the planning for phase 2. He stated the Castle can assist if required as they make several scheduled monument applications and had a good relationship with Historic England.

A discussion took place on whether any feedback or consultation had taken place on the wayfinding signs following their installation. The Castle said they could potentially include a question on this subject in their regular surveys to establish if feedback could be obtained.

This update was NOTED.

NEW MATTERS

EH.14 BOXING DAY 2022

The Town Clerk reported that usual entertainment was planned for this year, however, ongoing discussions would take place with the Mayor to confirm this. M Bulford confirmed usual arrangements from the Castle's side with free access as usual between 10am and 12 noon.

It was unclear at this stage whether the duck race would be going ahead at 12 noon in Abbey Fields.

This update was NOTED.

EH. 15 PURCHASE OF CASTLE PAVILION

M Bulford confirmed that the Castle Pavilion had been purchased by English Heritage. This had been an area of interest for some time and may assist in improving pedestrian access to and from the Castle. The castle is committed to achieving this as per the Kenilworth Neighbourhood Plan.

M Bulford confirmed there were no firm plans for the land yet, however, the Town Council will be consulted when the masterplan was ready to move forward in the next month or so. He hoped to have an update for the next meeting if not before.

This update was NOTED.

EH. 16 BRAYES BUNGALOW

Cllr J Kennedy advised we had issued a new shorthold tenancy for the property and a longer term solution would be considered by the Town Council in due course.

This update was NOTED.

EH. 17 THE RE-WILDED TRIANGLE OF LAND

M Bulford advised that the re-wilding of the triangle parcel of land by the Visitors Centre at the Castle had begun. The Castle has also started opening their Brays car park at 5am for free parking until the Castle itself opened its doors at 10am.

This update was NOTED.

EH. 18 BRIEFING AT THE CASTLE FOR ALL KTC MEMBERS

M Bulford was happy to give a briefing to all Councillors at the Castle and show them around the site. New Councillors in particular expressed their interest and believed this would be useful for all.

EH.19 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the English Heritage Liaison Group is to be held in the Council Chamber at Jubilee House at 2:30pm on Thursday 16 November 2023.

The meeting concluded at 4.01 pm.

Signed

Dated

Distribution:

External: Mr M. Bulford, Mr S. Elson

Internal: A. Chalmers, K Dickson, A. Dearing, J. Kennedy, M. Stevens (*All by email*).