

KENILWORTH TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of the Meeting of the

ENGLISH HERITAGE LIAISON GROUP

held in the Council Chamber, Jubilee House
on 16 November 2023, at 2.30pm

PRESENT: Councillor A G Chalmers (Chair).

Councillors: A M Dearing, K Dickson, A J Kennedy.

M Bulford, S Elson (English Heritage).

Town Clerk: Miss M S Field.

Deputy Town Clerk: Miss G Honey

EH.20 **SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS**

None

EH.21 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Cllrs J Kennedy and A Dearing confirmed their membership of English Heritage. Cllr A Chalmers confirmed his membership of Welsh Heritage.

EH.22 **APOLOGIES**

Councillor M S Stevens

EH.23 **MINUTES**

The minutes of the English Heritage (EH) Liaison Working Party Meeting held on 22 June 2023, which were approved by the Town Council on 27 July 2023 were NOTED.

MATTERS ARISING

EH.24 **GENERAL EH UPDATES INCLUDING CHANGES TO STAFFING ARRANGEMENTS**

S Elson gave an overview regarding EH staffing. Scott Elson was pleased to confirm he was now the permanent site manager at Kenilworth. The team have also recruited a new Visitor Welcome Supervisor, Alex Barker, who joined them in September.

The Castle had experienced a successful summer with their Jousting and Knights Tournament events. Autumn has seen the annual fireworks display organised by the Roundtable and the Christmas Events were being finalised including the popular Carols at the Castle organised by Kenilworth Lions. The Castle welcome these community events, alongside the annual Two Castles Run organised by the Rotary Club and will continue to do all they can to offer their support.

The Castle are currently operating on their winter opening times with the exception of Christmas week. This will last until February half term 2024.

These updates were NOTED.

EH.25 ESTATE GROUNDS MAINTENANCE/FUNDING

M Bulford reported that the pathways project was proceeding very well. They were grateful to Kenilworth Town Council for supporting their planning application and were currently awaiting the outcome of this. So far very few objections had been received and they were hopeful this would be approved with no ongoing concerns.

The Castle have gone out to tender with contractors to carry out the work and they were hopeful of appointing a contractor shortly. A start date of January 2024 is planned with completion of the works by March 2024. The Castle do have funding in place following donations from various community groups and grants, however, the tenders received have been higher than expected. This means they are unable to complete all planned pathways, however, they believe they will be able to include approximately 80% of those in the first phase and the remainder as soon as possible thereafter.

Further funding ideas were briefly discussed and Cllr J Kennedy suggested the HS2 Community Grant. M Bulford advised he believed this was under consideration.

Cllr K Dickson said the Town Council were currently considering accessibility within the town, and the Castle's improvements for pathways fits very nicely with an overall review.

M Bulford advised all documents were on the planning portal for viewing and minor amendments had been made since the Councillors were given an overview earlier this year. Following the outcome of the public consultation and advice from Historic England, they had changed the material used on the external pathways of the Castle, however, this was felt to be more in keeping with the rural setting.

M Bulford said a few more changes were being made within the gatehouse and a meeting space was being created which could hold 12-14 people. They were also pushing forward with secondary glazing on the gatehouse to enhance their carbon reduction programme.

This update was NOTED.

EH.26 KENILWORTH CASTLE CONSERVATION MANAGEMENT PLAN

M Bulford reported that the key elements of this involved improved accessibility and building on carbon reduction opportunities. The ongoing work with their Masterplan had been paused during the summer season, however, in August they had reached out to the Warwickshire Wildlife Trust to learn how to better manage their landscape for biodiversity improvements. They were also interested in any outreach activities with WWT which could also tie in nicely with the Town Council's Naturewatch week in May.

EH were bringing wildflower meadows to their sites over a ten-year programme and Kenilworth would be a focus in approximately 2-3 years. M Bulford said they would consider whether they can involve the community or schools in such a project and the appropriate advice had been obtained via EH and WWT.

Cllr A Chalmers asked if any trees could be considered for planting in the grounds. M Bulford said this would involve scheduled monument consent and involvement from Historic England. It was something they had considered before but it was a difficult task to take forward due to the grounds.

EH.27 WAYFINDING AND IMPROVING ACCESS TO AND FROM THE TOWN

M Bulford confirmed this was an agreed aspiration. As previously advised the Castle had acquired some new land, however, no progress had yet been made on this.

Cllr J Kennedy reported that phase 1 of the Town Council's wayfinding project was complete and phase 2 was being explored, including a monolith being installed inside the Castle grounds to direct people towards the town centre, and it would be useful to agree a location, as early as possible.

M Bulford noted this had been discussed previously and a central location was favoured. He advised the Senior Properties Curator would be at the Castle on Monday 20 November 2023 and could give advice on a suitable location. It was agreed Cllrs J Kennedy and A Dearing would visit the Castle on Monday at 11:30am to explore this issue further.

This update was NOTED.

NEW MATTERS

EH.28 BOXING DAY ARRANGEMENTS

The Town Clerk reported that the usual entertainment was planned for this year. M Bulford confirmed usual arrangements from the Castle's side with free access as usual between 10am and 12 noon. Locations for the entertainers were discussed and confirmed. The Castle would be selling refreshments as usual and the Duck Race organised by Kenilworth Lions was confirmed to take place from 12 noon at the Ford /Abbey Fields.

Kenilworth Town Council will provide a risk assessment for the event.

This update was NOTED.

EH. 29 OPPORTUNITIES FOR HOSTING OTHER EVENTS

Cllr A Chalmers was keen to bring forward a second choir day involving local schools. M Bulford said the Castle would be happy to host this on a weekend that no other events occurred. Cllr Chalmers suggested this could be tied with D Day anniversary due to be discussed below.

EH. 30 80th ANNIVERSARY OF D DAY

The Town Clerk explained that an initiative had been launched for every County to light 80 beacons to commemorate the 80th anniversary of D Day on 6 June 2024. The Finance & General Services Committee were looking into this and were hopeful that the Castle would like to be involved.

M Bulford said the Castle would be happy to support this in principle. A suitable location may be on top of the Strong Tower, subject to further consideration and risk assessments regarding the use of an open flame.

Cllr Chalmers suggested incorporating a family day organised on the closest weekend, potentially to involve the school choirs. The Castle were happy to discuss this and a suitable time. Everyone was mindful the Two Castles Run took place on 9 June 2023 so the weekend prior to the anniversary is likely to be more suitable.

Further consideration will be given by the FG&S Committee as a starting point.

This update was NOTED.

EH. 31 BLUE PLAQUES FOR KENILWORTH

The Town Clerk reported that a revision to the Blue Plaque scheme was being rolled out to extend this as a National scheme rather than being limited to London. M Bulford agreed to make enquiries with the relevant team in EH who currently administer the scheme.

The item was currently under consideration by the FG&S Committee, and an option may be to initiate the town's own scheme.

This update was NOTED.

EH. 32 ABBEY FIELDS HERITAGE PARK

Cllr A Chalmers raised the issue of how the ruins in Abbey Fields could be protected should the Swimming Pool not go ahead. However, Cllr J Kennedy confirmed the outcome of the WDC Full Council meeting the previous evening which authorised funding for the Swimming Pool to continue.

That being said, Cllr Kennedy said that WDC were keen to make the very most of the ruins and to digitally reinterpret these. There were also several independent parties who hold relevant expertise who it may be useful to discuss further with. The Castle were happy to stay connected on this from a historical relevance perspective.

Cllr A Chalmers queried whether further excavations in Abbey Fields could be undertaken to discover what lies beneath. M Bulford indicated that Historic England would be best placed to advise and consider this proposal. Involvement with Warwick University and the History and Archaeological Society would also be useful if this were to be pursued.

This update was NOTED.

EH. 33 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 25 April 2024.

The meeting concluded at 3:49pm.

Signed

Dated