



**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF
THE PETITIONS COMMITTEE**

**THURSDAY 21 JANUARY 2010
CONFERENCE ROOMS 1 & 2, JOHN MUIR HOUSE, HADDINGTON**

Committee Members Present:

Councillor Berry
Councillor L Broun-Lindsay
Councillor S MacKinnon
Councillor W Innes
Provost S Richardson (Convener)

Council Officials Present:

Mr J Lamond, Head of Governance and Performance Management
Mr T Shearer, Head of Community Wellbeing
Mr I Glen, Policy and Project Manager
Ms S Smith, Economic Development Manager
Ms J Mackay, Media Manager

Petitioner(s) Present:

Mr H Coutts
Ms K Cunningham
Mr G Bryn-Jones
Dr G Prestoungrange (Lead Petitioner)

Clerk:

Ms J Totney

Apologies:

None

Declarations of Interest:

None

**1 PETITION PRESENTED TO THE COMMITTEE FOR CONSIDERATION
– TO SUPPORT THE BETTER CONSERVATION, INTERPRETATION
AND PRESENTATION OF THE BATTLE OF PRESTONPANS, 1745.**

A report was submitted by the Chief Executive presenting the following petition to the Committee for consideration:

ELC/Pet/09/03 We the undersigned, petition East Lothian Council to support the better conservation, interpretation and presentation of the Battle of Prestonpans, 1745.

The Provost opened the meeting and invited everyone present to introduce themselves. The Head of Governance and Performance Management advised that he was representing the Chief Executive.

Dr Prestoungrange addressed the committee and provided background information on the creation of the Battle of Prestonpans Heritage Trust and the funding that had been secured over recent years to support the aims of the Trust. He then outlined the educational and community initiatives with which the Trust are presently involved and highlighted his reasons for bringing this petition before the committee. After speaking to each of the points in the petition in detail, he summarised that he hoped that a more co-ordinated approach could be achieved between the Trust and East Lothian Council and that East Lothian Council would support the requests with regard to a Visitor Centre, signage, general maintenance, and the preservation of the Battle Bing. He particularly requested that any planning applications and development frameworks on the Battle site would be considered sensitively, especially in relation to the new development being proposed at Blindwells and the redevelopment of Cockenzie Power Station by Scottish Power.

In concluding, Mr Bryn- Jones delivered an informative visual presentation and pointed out key locations including the Battle site and the vantage point at the Battle Bing, which gives uninterrupted views across the Battle site. He informed Members that the Battle Bing, at Medowmill, would therefore be the preferred location for a visitor centre. He also pointed out the route of the Waggonway, Scotland's first railway, stating that the Trust hoped that this would be improved from a muddy track into a cycling and walking track. With regard to Cockenzie Power Station, he advised that Scottish Power owned the section of land that is regarded as the Battle site but that some smaller sections could be in private ownership.

In response to questions from Councillor Berry and the Provost, Mr Bryn-Jones advised that the Battle Bing is of great importance, as the Trust does not wish to build on the actual Battle site. He added that the Trust's aspirations include the reinstatement of a bridge over the Railway and better signage at the foot of the Battle Bing. Dr Prestoungrange stressed to the committee that it is hoped that the Battle Bing can be leased from the Council for a nominal fee in order that the Trust can manage the area and seek planning permission to develop it in a way that would increase public awareness. He advised Members that this site offered many advantages including its location close to the A1 and the availability of semi derelict ground that could be developed for car parking and interpretation boards.

The Head of Community Wellbeing sought clarification as to the preferred site for the visitor centre to which Dr Prestoungrange advised that while the Meadowmill site would be the first choice, it was accepted that revenue opportunities could be lost if people did not then visit nearby locations and communities. Dr Prestoungrange suggested that the Battle Bing could be used as a promotional and viewing site with the living history Visitor Centre build elsewhere, such as the Prestongrange Mining Museum. He stressed that the Trust hoped that the Battle Bing with its view of the Battle site would be a key feature regardless of where the Visitor Centre would be located.

Councillor Innes concurred that the Battle of Prestonpans was an important part of local history with national significance and commented that other local historical events should also be promoted and suggested that the proposed Visitor Centre should not be restricted solely to the Battle of Prestonpans. He commented that the Prestongrange Mining Museum would be his preferred location for a Visitor Centre and advised that he supported the restoration of the interpretation boards at the Battle Bing. However, he asked Members to bear in mind that the Administration are planning to expand the Sports Centre at Meadowmill and that this will have an impact on the use of the ground in area. He advised, that with the exception of the Visitor Centre, he hoped that the Council would be able to support the other aspects of the petition.

Mr Coutts commented that a well signposted and promoted visitor centre had the potential to attract people to the Prestonpans area due to its close proximity to Edinburgh, adding that it was important for the Trust to work closely with East Lothian Council and possible *Enjoy Leisure*.

With regard to the location for the visitor centre, Dr Prestoungrange advised that a feasibility study had been carried out on both Meadowmill and the Prestongrange Mining Museum and that the latter was considered to have more potential for attracting visitors as it could be developed to include Miramax cinema facilities could also serve as a community theatre venue in the evenings. He stated that one of the most important considerations is that the centre would require to be self-sustaining and attract repeat visitors. However, both he and Mr Bryn-Jones made it absolutely clear that the Battle Bing must be a feature of any future development, even if a visitor centre is located elsewhere.

The Trust Members and Elected Members debated the ownership and potential future plans for the land in the vicinity of the Battle site, and the impact that these could have on the Trust's aspirations. The Provost commented that Members were debating the matter without having heard the inputs from Council Officers and invited the Policy and Project Manager to comment on the likely future use of the land in this area.

The Policy and Project Manager responded to points 5 and 6 of the petition and commented on the land that is in the ownership of Scottish Power. He advised that he predicted no difficulty in ensuring that the historical significance of the Riggonhead Defile is recognised as part of the Blindwells Development Framework, that street naming could be considered and that advice would be taken from the Council archaeologists on the best way to work with Developers. Turning to the plans for Cockenzie Power Station and the potential impact on the WaggonWay, he advised that one of the Principal Planners in his team had spent considerable time exploring ways to substantially improve the Waggonway and that Council Officials are

engaging with Scottish Power to with regard to a development options public study which could be of benefit to the Trust.

Sederunt: Ms K Cunningham left the meeting.

The Economic Development Manager advised that her remit focused on attracting visitors and tourists to the area and that she was interested in the plans for a visitor centre at either Meadowmill or at the site of the Prestongrange Mining Museum. She commented that she welcomed any new initiative that would attract additional visitors to the area, but stressed that financial limitations would need to be borne in mind. With regard to the petition, she confirmed that the Council could facilitate the erection of signage and interpretation boards; could point the Trust in the direction of sources of funding and would maximise opportunities to promote the Trust now and in the future.

The Head of Community Wellbeing commented that it is important to support initiatives that promote culture but cautioned that challenges would always come from the financial considerations, adding that it was disappointing that the Prestongrange Mining Museum had not yet been developed. However, he fully supported a closer working relationship with Members of the Trust and requested that the further development of the Sports Centre at Meadowmill be borne in mind when working together. The Head of Governance and Performance Measurement advised that while a single point of contact had not yet been identified from within the Council, he concurred with the suggestion of working more closely with the Trust.

Dr Prestoungrange requested that progress meetings be held every four months over for the next year. He advised that meetings would take place soon with Historic Scotland and suspected that the site of the Prestongrange Mining Museum would be the preferred location for any Visitor Centre but that it was important that plans turned into actions. He informed Members that he would like to start discussions with the Council as soon as possible after the Petition's Committee.

The Provost commented that although the Council could assist with some of the practicalities, the financial considerations would require to be prioritised. She suggested that the Trust might involve volunteers to progress towards their overall goals.

The Head of Governance and Performance Management summarised that a substantial amount of detail had been discussed and that the Head of Community Wellbeing should be tasked with preparing an initial response to the petitioners with a further report to Council before the summer recess addressing as many points as possible in the petition. The Head of Community Wellbeing confirmed that he agreed with the approach.

In closing the meeting, the Provost thanked all Members of the Trust for their clear and informative explanation of their overall objectives.

Decision

The Petitions Committee agreed:

- i. that they had received a detailed and informative presentation

- ii. that the points raised would be taken forward under the direction of Mr T Shearer, Head of Community Wellbeing, who would contact the petitioners directly to progress matters
- iii. that a report would be presented to a meeting of East Lothian Council before the Summer 2010 recess, addressing as many points as possible in the petition.

Signed

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Provost Sheena Richardson
Convener of the Petitions Committee