

29 September 2020

Andrew Stewart

(Project Manager)

Development

**ClimatEvolution: initial consultation**

Dear Andrew,

The *Battle of Prestonpans (1745) Heritage Trust* is a registered charity with a long record of working to understand, interpret and promote the heritage of the Battle of Prestonpans, and to protect and enhance the battlefield itself. We therefore welcome the opportunity to respond to the draft vision outlined in the ClimatEvolution consultation documents. We are also grateful for your time in talking us through the status of the vision and the processes into which it fits. In line with our obligations, our comments relate solely to the potential impacts and opportunities of the proposals in relation to Prestonpans Battlefield and its associated heritage.

The Trust is pleased to see that the importance of the Battle of Prestonpans has been recognised within the Vision and the associated Draft Strategic Environmental Assessment. As a landscape of national significance, designated by the Inventory of Historic Battlefields, both ourselves and our partner organisation the Scottish Battlefields Trust consider this battlefield to be a site which requires a sensitive approach to landscape change. As supported by the Historic Environment Policy for Scotland and the Managing Change guidance for designated battlefields, there is an expectation that improvement and enhancement is the priority result of any significant change, and any unavoidable degradation of the historic landscape suitably mitigated. We are therefore pleased to see that this is accepted in the appendix to the draft SEA, and an acceptance throughout the Vision that Prestonpans Battlefield should play a positive role in enhancing and sustaining a sense of place.

We do however have some concerns that an understanding of the extent of the battlefield is not fully demonstrated. The Inventory boundary which delineates the legally designated area is included on a map of site constraints, but does not appear to be reflected elsewhere. On some graphics, for example, the battlefield area is identified solely with the small area of the Waggonway Fields in the western part of the battlefield site, despite the inclusion of an indicative arrows marking the Jacobite army’s move into Seton Fields further east. It is perhaps for this reason that these archaeologically and historically significant fields have been identified as the possible location of a large-scale water park. Archaeological survey undertaken on our behalf in 2009 by Glasgow University demonstrated beyond reasonable doubt that this is the area in which the Jacobite army made its famous battle-winning charge: the evidence of the resulting exchange of fire is clear in the archaeological report, as is the fact that the survey was not comprehensive and that the fields almost certainly retain important archaeological evidence. The landscape in this part of the battlefield is also critical to our understanding of the terrain, and it is our great fortune that it has been preserved as open agricultural land whilst other parts of the battlefield have been more exposed to development and infrastructure impacts. Given the significance of the Seton Fields area, across which five thousand men fought in one of Scottish history’s most famous episodes, the Trust would certainly hope that the waterpark proposals (which would completely and irrevocably change the historic landscape) could be sited elsewhere.

We note also the proposal to reopen a number of old watercourses. One of these, running parallel to the East Coast Mainline on its north side, would reflect the presence of the drainage ditches which influenced the movement of troops during the two days of the armies’ presence in 1745. This therefore has some interpretative potential as well as the environment advantages explained. However where new courses were being created within the battlefield area there would be a necessity for thorough prior archaeological assessment. This is particularly the case in the area west of the railways spur (known to us as Thorntree Fields), which is a sensitive archaeological area on account of the potential for undiscovered human remains. Our concerns in this part of the battlefield also therefore extend to the possible location of a geothermal generation unit or other developments in this area. We engaged extensively with previous development proposals for the open-ground areas of Thorntree Fields to press for more appropriate alternative siting nearby, and we would again look to press the case for the need for sensitivity in this area.

Prestonpans Battlefield encompasses, as well as the landscape itself, a number of important associated heritage assets. These range from listed historic structures such as Preston Tower, Tranent churchyard and Bankton House, to a series of stone monuments and memorials. There are also numerous interpretation points, the viewpoint pyramid, and of course the historic 1722 Waggonway. The Trust recognises in the draft Vision an important opportunity to improve interconnections between these assets, for the benefit of both residents and visitors. The battlefield trails and tours which we currently run would be considerably improved, for example, by east-west access paths between Thorntree Fields and Waggonway Fields, which can then connect to the existing path across Seton Fields, or a safe crossing over the B1361 for cyclists and pedestrians using the Waggonway route. Connectivity between Meadowmill and Blindwells, connecting to the railways station footpath which also links to the Colonel Gardiner Monument and Bankton Doocot mini-museum would also be beneficial. The Trust therefore welcomes the importance in the Vision given to connectivity and trail routes, which fit with our longstanding view that the battlefield has a role to play as a green lung embracing open spaces, biodiversity, health and wellbeing, and cultural heritage. There are also parts of the battlefield within council ownership which are showing signs of neglect and misuse, including wooded areas around the railspur, and on the north side of the viewpoint pyramid. These too could be enhanced and given fresh value as habitats or community spaces as the whole area receives renewed attention and care.

We also welcome the Vision’s recognition of our ambitions to establish a world-class historical exhibition centre to interpret the battle and house its now famous community tapestry. This has long been our goal and we believe it provides an opportunity to provide the new communities at Blindwells with an authentic and recognisable sense of place which connects them to the neighbouring settlements both culturally and physically. The role such a centre would play as a focus for visitor inflow makes it a significant asset in the wider planning, and we are pleased therefore to see this potential being incorporated into the council’s thinking. We do however wish to move this project, already well advanced in many respects, forwards at a faster rate than is suggested in the Vision. Rather than a medium term (10-20 year) target, the Trust is seeking a 2027 completion date for the facility. This is clearly an ambitious goal and we will be continuing our full engagement with the council as we move forward, but such an attraction must necessarily be integrated into the detail planning of the Blindwells townscape at the earliest stage and must therefore continue apace with the town’s development around which we have agreed a Memorandum of Understanding with Hargreaves. This might well help to work as a stimulus for some of the related elements of the overall vision.

In summary, the *Battle of Prestonpans (1745) Heritage Trust* welcomes the opportunity to engage with the council and its project team on the ClimatEvolution vision. In Prestonpans Battlefield our communities possess an internationally recognised historical and cultural asset, with latent potential for supporting increased tourism activity as access and interpretation continues to improve. The large and international following of our present 275th anniversary programme goes some way to demonstrating that potential. The Trust is confident that within this draft Vision there is considerable scope for enhancing both the accessibility and connectivity of parts of the battlefield, and improving the state of the ground and its resulting value to both the community and visitors.

There are also however areas of concern for the Trust which we have identified above, where there is potential for some of the Vision’s proposals to negatively impact the battlefield as an historic landscape, as a nationally important and designated archaeological site, and as a field of human conflict requiring a sensitive management approach. We clearly understand and appreciate however that the Vision is in draft form and that few of its elements are set, which provides opportunity for these concerns to be properly taken into account.

For many years the Trust has been researching the battlefield and our detailed understanding of it is constantly improving, as is the reach of our events and activities programming. We wish therefore to work constructively with the council, sharing our understanding, to ensure the best outcomes for the battlefield, and we believe that those outcomes would be to the benefit of the overall strategic ambition which we support. We therefore look forward to engaging with you further as the Vision develops.