

Environmental Services and Climate Change Committee	
Meeting Date	8 July 2026
Report Title	Barton's Point Coastal Park - Future Management
EMT Lead	Emma Wiggins, Director of Regeneration and Neighbourhoods
Head of Service	Martyn Cassell, Head of Environment and Leisure
Lead Officer	Steven Gale, Greenspaces Officer
Classification	Open
Recommendations	1. That the Bartons Point Working Group recommendations 1-8 contained in section 2.6 of the report be agreed. 2. That Officers progress the EOI's as recommended by the Working Group 1-2 contained in section 2.6 of the report.

1 Purpose of Report and Executive Summary

- 1.1 This report provides the recommendations for proposed future management of Barton's Point Coastal Park following the Environmental Services and Climate Change Committee's resolution to instigate a Member Working Group to steer Officers to further consider future management options for the park in light of the recent ecological survey.
- 1.2 The report summarises the work of the Member Working Group, its considerations and ultimately the recommendations for this Committee to consider.

2 Background, Context and Proposals

- 2.1 Following Member ambitions to explore opportunities to improve the offering at Barton's Point Coastal Park and generate more commercial income, the Council sought Expressions of Interest (EOI) to manage the various elements of the site in 2022. The EOI generated interest and a preferred operator was selected, but a key risk to these plans was the need for planning permission and especially the ecology and biodiversity on the site and the need to mitigate any concerns raised.
- 2.2 Subsequently a specialist company, Bakewell were instructed, undertook the necessary work and produced a report detailing the sensitivity and importance of the site and producing key recommendations. This presented a substantial challenge for any significant site development and as a result withdrawal of the preferred EOI bidder and the need to further consider options for future

management direction. Economy and Property Committee at its meeting on 8 October 2025, referred the issue to the Environmental Services & Climate Change Committee with a request that they be updated on property related matters.

2.3 Environmental Services & Climate Change Committee agreed at its meeting on 12 November 2025 (minute no.458(1)11/25) to instigate a Member working group and following agreement on the individual Member participation, the cross political working group met on three occasions, 21 January, 20 February and 27 March 2026. Terms of reference were agreed at the first meeting along with appointment of Chair and Vice Chair and the second and third meetings of the group were held on site at Barton's Point Coastal Park.

2.4 In addition to the setting up of the Working Group the Environmental Services and Climate Change Committee also requested (minute nos. 458(2&3)/11/25) that the Working Group consider removing the mains drainage project from the capital programme and to write to key users informing them of the ecology report. Officers wrote to all stakeholders and provided a copy of the ecology report for information.

2.5 The Working Group focused on the following key topics to make its recommendations:

- Interim café offering – arrangements for the coming season until late October 2026, opening hours, quality of offer.
- Grounds maintenance and ecology report recommendations – potential and cost for increasing biodiversity and a site Ranger presence, management plan, desire for “Friends” or community group activity, desire and ambition for Green Flag Award status.
- Lake management – current and future usage type and levels (Sea Cadets/concession/public), potential and options for sensitive area protection and signage.
- Other site users – impacts on other site users, their current lease/licence agreements, better coordination of activity and development.
- Drainage project – updated estimates/costs of £218,000 capital and £6,350 per annum estimated revenue running costs, importance of site infrastructure, options for other improvements, potential for other external funding.
- Events – appropriateness and type of events and site activities, evaluation of disturbance, community focus.
- Future management options – Options for focus with ecology or leisure offering, habitat bank and biodiversity credits, understanding of Property Team EOI process, Member desire for community focus.

2.6 The Working Group made the following recommendations:

1. Concession - that the new concession at Barton's Point adopt a clear strategic aspiration to operate with strong community values, embedding community engagement and participation at the centre of its service model potentially looking

at an operator who is a CIC, VCS or the Parish Council. The concession should contribute positively to the social value of the site by facilitating programmes, events, and activities that strengthen local connections and promote inclusive use of the area, while at least maintaining the budgeted rental income of £5,010.

2. Education - a second EOI should be advertised for the use of site for outdoor learning. This should seek to include collaboration with local organisations, schools, CIC's, VCS's and community partners to create meaningful learning opportunities that support wellbeing, environmental awareness, and lifelong learning objectives. The group further recommends that the Greenspaces Ranger has oversight of the park to help encourage education.

3. Grounds Maintenance - that the Greenspace Team should:

- Aim to achieve green flag status on site within two years.
- Continues to manage the site as per the current contract specification making minor adjusts to improve ecology where resource allows.
- Explore the viability of re-opening the northern part of the park, where the former dirt bike track was located.

4. Lake Management and Usage - that current usage remains the same i.e. no power boat usage except for safety boat. New signage should be installed close to the lake entrances that highlights the ecological importance of the southern lake edge. The group further recommends that buoys are installed to show a visual barrier from the lake edge.

5. Other Site Users – to notify other site users of the ecological importance of the site and to start annual stakeholder meetings to strengthen communication.

6. Events – to continue to allow events such as fairs, circus etc. but to ensure they are planned around site ecology and that they undertake full and appropriate event planning in association with the Safety Advisory Group.

7. Drainage Project – that existing capital funding of £51,640 should be retained for the drainage project. Other sources of funding should be sought to complete the project, such as through other external organisations or seeking further capital funding. Achieving grant funding for this type of project will be challenging. Members could decide to request that further SBC capital funding be debated amongst other capital requests as part of the budget setting process. Progress in gathering the required funding should be reviewed after 18 months.

8. Long Term Management - that the site remains under SBC ownership “with a local voice i.e. parish council” and that the Greenspace Team continues to manage the site with an awareness and management plan in place to preserve the ecology and habitat. Two new EOI's are advertised for the site, a café offering and a separate outdoor education operator and that consideration is given to allocating time and resource for the Greenspaces Ranger to attend site in order to support the establishment of a Friends of /community group

- 2.7 It is proposed the Working Group will have one further meeting to update the Members on outcomes and progress.

3 Recommendations

- 3.1 That the Bartons Point Working Group Recommendations 1-8 contained in the report at section 2.6 be agreed.
- 3.2 That Officers progress the EOI's as recommended by the Working Group 1-2 contained in section 2.6 of the report.

4 Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

- 4.1 The Bartons Point Working Group considered several issues and options for each of the focus areas using information and evidence provided by Officers from various Council teams, external organisations and stakeholders. There is clear desire for an improved "offer" at the site and an overwhelming need to balance between the ecological benefits and community activity.
- 4.2 The current café concession is a temporary measure until 23 October 2026, so "do nothing" is not an option to meet Council financial standing orders. Overly ambitious commercial ideas contain significant risk in planning terms as evidenced by the previously failed EOI and preferred operator.

5 Consultation Undertaken or Proposed

- 5.1 The Working Group met site stakeholders at its meeting on 27 March 2026.
- 5.2 Officers consulted with Natural England and Bird Wise in order to provide ecological and potential disturbance information to Council Members.

6 Implications

Issue	Implications
Corporate Plan	With the change in direction from maximising income from the asset to ecology and potentially leisure, this moves from Economy to Environment theme of the Plan.
Financial, Resource and Property	It is proposed that two EOI's or lots be advertised to secure a long-term café and lake management concession and education operator for the site. This should be undertaken at the earliest opportunity to try to ensure that any new operator can open at the start of the season Easter 2027. Through this continued proposed commercial and leisure/education activity, it is believed that the current revenue

	assumed rental income of £5,010 and overall site income level of £7,750 should at least be maintained. The cost of a new management plan, improved lake signage and buoyage at an estimated cost of £4,000 can be covered by the existing revenue budget over the next two financial years. Recommendation for greater oversight of the site through redeployment of Greenspaces Ranger hours, following the proposed transfer of Oare Gunpowder Works Country Park to Faversham Town Council. Recommendation that the current Capital allocation for £51,640, committed to the drainage project be retained and that further funding of up to £167,000 be sought to complete the project. Research and estimates indicate that the implications of running costs on the revenue budget would be lower at £6,350 to the £11,500 currently experienced for cesspit emptying. Progress should be reviewed after 18 months.
Legal, Statutory and Procurement	Any future EOI's and subsequent agreements would need to follow the Council's financial standing orders and Property Asset Strategy.
Crime and Disorder	The facilities on site suffer a level of anti-social behaviour given its remote nature, but potential increased oversight and improved commercial and community "ownership" would increase natural surveillance.
Environment and Climate/Ecological Emergency	The site is a sensitive and valuable ecological resource. Potential for additional future habitat and biodiversity credits to offset of carbon emissions are still being explored with the Planning Team and the Adonis Blue feasibility work.
Health and Wellbeing	The provision of high quality, local open spaces and parklands is vital to supporting community health and well-being. A further developed habitat bank would also assist in air quality and wider health and well-being.
Safeguarding of Children, Young People and Vulnerable Adults	Not applicable.
Risk Management and Health and Safety	There are continued financial and operational risk within options being recommended. The site is currently managed by the Council and inspected on a regular basis.

Equality and Diversity	No decisions in this report are thought to negatively impact any of the protected characteristics.
Privacy and Data Protection	No implications.
Local Government Reorganisation	No current known implications.

7 Appendices

- 7.1 The following documents are to be published with this report and form part of the report:
None.

8 Background Papers

None.