

Royal Borough of Windsor & Maidenhead

Report to Windsor Town Forum (04.02.13)

Magna Carta - 800th Anniversary of Sealing – 15th June 2015

Background to Celebrations

Although Magna Carta was sealed in the Parish of Wraysbury (then including Runnymede) in the Diocese of Lincoln (now Oxford) no one knows exactly where and the Thames has changed course many times. Probably it was sealed in a clearing in the woodlands adjacent to Ankerwyke Priory area with its (then only 2,000 years old) Yew Tree but it could have been sealed on what is now Runnymede Meadow. It is known that King John came backwards and forwards four times but not from where.

However the whole world (outside Wraysbury) believes it was sealed at Runnymede and there is no point in disputing this belief, not least because Ankerwyke is unsuitable for major celebrations due to its inaccessibility, its mud and its woodland.

Accordingly the RBWM and Wraysbury are co-operating with Runnymede in its national celebrations while Wraysbury is also organising its own village based events.

For our purposes the Magna Carta Celebration organisations fall into five Categories:

1. International – basically Australia, New Zealand and Canada plus the American Bar Association. The US Constitution looks to Magna Carta
2. The National 800th Anniversary Committee. The patron is the Queen and the Chairman is Sir Robert Worcester and this committee coordinates national activities with particular emphasis on Runnymede/Ankerwyke and the 5 Charter Towns.
3. Runnymede Borough Council Stakeholders Committee. This is fairly local to Runnymede with local stakeholders, but also including the Colonel in charge of legal affairs for the US Air Force in Europe, representatives of the National Trust, Brunel University, Royal Holloway College, Cllrs John Lenton and Colin Rayner of RBWM and Cllr Margaret Lenton of Wraysbury Parish Council.
4. RBWM.
5. Wraysbury Parish Council

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International & National Activities

These are being organised by the national steering group. An outline of some of the proposed activities is included in the attached appendices.

Runnymede Borough Council

Runnymede BC has an extensive programme of activities to take place on Runnymede Meadow. The original proposal by the National Trust to build a temporary bridge across the Thames to Ankerwyke has foundered as the National Trust does not have the £1m +funds immediately available.

The proposed new Visitor Centre on Runnymede Meadow, also originally a National Trust Project, is now unlikely to proceed in its original concept. The Leader of Surrey CC made a public announcement on the 26th October at the 800 committee meeting at the London Guildhall of £5m approved by Surrey Cabinet earlier that week. The commitment was then called in by the Surrey O & S Panel demanding a guarantee that the Centre would generate the income predicted by the Surrey Leader. The attached copy email announces that Surrey CC has now withdrawn its offer

There was a campaign in Surrey rousing doubts that Magna Carta was sealed at Runnymede and claiming that it was a RBWM matter as it was sealed in Wraysbury. (The Wraysbury Parish then included Runnymede)

In a series of Press and Radio interviews Cllr Lenton explained that no one knew for certain on which side of the river it was actually sealed and the Vice Chairman of Wraysbury Parish Council (Margaret Lenton) provided a very detailed historical background

The matter has not yet been finally resolved as the American Bar Association may provide a financial contribution to some form of new memorial would probably do so via the National 800 Committee.

Wraysbury Events

- An Embroidery is in process of being made to illustrate the scene when King John sealed the Charter plus the armorial bearings of the barons. This will be hung in St Andrew's Church, Wraysbury.
- One of the village historians is in the process of writing a pamphlet about the village in the time of Magna Carta.

Events to be held in the lead up to the anniversary:

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- A very successful event was held to celebrate 900 years of St Andrew's Church on the evening of 11th November 2012. It's history was put into a national context.
- On 7th March 2013 Judge Zoe Smith from Reading Crown Court is to give a speech on Magna Carta and the Law at the Guildhall in Windsor on the importance of Magna Carta and the Law. Each parish councillor will be given two tickets. In addition Schools will be invited.
- Visitors will come from Walkern in Herts. In July 2013
- In October 2013 Adam Afriye MP will give a speech on Magna Carta at Churchmead School (date to be established)

Schools

- The Government are to revise the National Curriculum Guidelines to include Magna Carta and its importance at Primary and Secondary Level.
- Schools have asked for a nominated Magna Carta day possibly Wednesday 10th June 2015.
- A Conference is to arranged for secondary schools at St George's House, Windsor Castle in March 2015 sponsored by the Fishmongers Company.
- They have requested a box of relevant material for the schools to draw upon at Primary and Secondary level
- The schools group will meet twice a year until 2014 until the National Curriculum is clearer and schools need to establish their staffing and plans from September 2014
- Churchmead will produce a bookmark to celebrate Magna Carta
- Wraysbury school and Churchmead would like a stall at the Medieval Fair in 2015

Planned Events for 2015 in Wraysbury

- Saturday 6th June 2015 – Archery Contest at Ankerwycke
- Thursday 11th June 2015 – Evening of readings etc. at the Village Hall
- Saturday 13th June – Medieval fair along the village streets.
- Sunday 14th June – Songs of Praise and bells rung
- Flower Festival
- Each village organisation is being asked to incorporate Magna Carta into their planning for 2015.
- Schools will mount displays and the village will be decorated.

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There is a plan for a Magna Carta Country Park in association with the Colne Valley Park. The Wraysbury lakes may or may not be included depending on the present registered Community Bid under the localism legislation.

RBWM Involvement

Possible activities to support the anniversary include:

- A temporary display of medieval history focussing on the sealing in the Windsor & Royal Borough Museum community case
- Joint activity with Egham Museum and other museums to highlight the anniversary funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund grant received by Egham
- A joint bid with Surrey County Libraries for funding from Arts Council England Strategic Touring Fund to create significant piece of art (in a format yet to be determined) as the centrepiece of a travelling exhibition to highlight the anniversary and the contribution of Magna Carta in libraries and community venues in both Council's areas
- Potential capital contribution to the Surrey CC/RBC visitor centre subject to further discussion and agreement.

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Tourism

1. The anniversary gives an opportunity for Windsor to develop further its Tourist trade we have already moved from Windsor Castle as our only main attraction to adding Legoland. The proximity of Runnymede gives us an additional attraction and a potential reason for visitors to stay overnight and spend money on restaurants and shops rather than just have a day trip. Although it is acknowledge that the weekend stay market is extremely competitive in the current economic climate
2. It is not yet clear what is happening concerning a public bus route to Runnymede. It could be added to or be additional to the existing group tours route
3. The matter has been briefly discussed with the Windsor festival but detailed discussions have yet to take place.
4. Support is available for promotion of the events in Wraysbury and on the Pleasure Grounds through the Borough's Visitor Management Service.

Cllr Lenton, Ward Member for Wraysbury & Horton

Mark Taylor, Head of Libraries, Arts & Heritage

11th December 2012

Revised 25th January 2013

From: Anne Murrell [anne.murrell@surreycc.gov.uk] on behalf of Susie Kemp [susie.kemp@surreycc.gov.uk]
Sent: 14 January 2013 15:47
To: john-lenton@btconnect.com
Subject: Magna Carta

Dear Cllr Lenton

I am writing to you as a key stakeholder in the Magna Carta plans for 2015 and to inform you of Surrey County Council's current position.

Surrey is completely committed to the Magna Carta celebrations in 2015 and recognises its importance as the cornerstone of modern democracy. We recognise also its importance in the heritage of Great Britain and our own county and are committed in our desires to commemorate the 800th anniversary of this great event.

We have thoroughly examined the proposals for the visitor centre and evaluated how best the County Council could contribute to recognising this important site for future generations. It became apparent that the business case for the centre needs further development and there was insufficient time to raise the residual funds and build the centre in the limited time available. In light of this research and recent government settlements, the County Council is of the view that there are other equally valid ways of supporting the Magna Carta which is both impactful and encourages visitors to the area thereby improving the local economy.

Surrey County Council remains committed to investing resources into the area and will explore alternative cost effective options with Runnymede Borough Council, the National Trust and yourselves over the next few weeks.

Yours sincerely

Susie Kemp
Assistant Chief Executive
Surrey County Council

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