**Under embargo until 00.01am on Tuesday 15 November 2022**

**People urged to write to their MP and make a noise to enable the vision for Swanscombe Peninsula to become a reality**

A vision for a nature haven where critically endangered Distinguished Jumping Spiders and rare Man Orchids can flourish has been unveiled by the Save Swanscombe Peninsula community group.

The vision for Swanscombe Peninsula was created following a community survey about how they would like to see it used in the future and showcases the potential of this nationally important site to be a community asset. It revealed overwhelmingly the desire for a well cared for Swanscombe Peninsula, managed as a nature reserve for both its impressive wildlife and the people who live here.

Hundreds of people completed the survey, putting forward their views on how the site could look in the future. 87% of survey respondents identified it as either ‘very important’ or ‘somewhat important’ to their physical or mental wellbeing.

Following the survey, a vision for Swanscombe Peninsula was created showing increased signage, picnic tables, nature trails, and improved management for wildlife. The changes would help more people to reap the benefits of being closer to nature where they can see rare flowers, hear the iconic Nightingale and may catch a glimpse of the secretive Water Vole.

As world leaders discuss their commitments to tackle the climate crisis at COP 27, in Swanscombe, the community group are demonstrating how protecting this tranquil green space will play a role in nature’s recovery. After all, Swanscombe Peninsula is a prime example of nature’s resilience, with wildlife thriving in the rich mosaic of habitats that have developed there thanks to its complex industrial past.

The vision has been released at a time where conservation organisations are rallying the government, demanding that they revisit potentially damaging changes in environmental law. Weakened planning and environmental regulations could see sites like Swanscombe Peninsula lost in the name of growth.

Following the launch of the vision, the Save Swanscombe Peninsula group are asking people residing in Gravesham and Dartford to write to their MP and Council Leader and ask them to support the group’s vision for the site and secure its future.

**Donna Zimmer of the Save Swanscombe Peninsula group said**: “Swanscombe is a Site of Special Scientific Interest. It is home to 2,000 species of invertebrates and 82 species of breeding birds and is a much-needed tranquil green space in an urban setting.

“People in Dartford and Gravesham who would like to see this idea become reality should write to their MP and ask them to support the vision, you can download a template letter on our website. It is our chance to have a nature reserve on our doorstep that brings people closer to nature. Those who want to help us protect the site but live outside the area can show their support through social media, and help us make a noise so we can save Swanscombe Peninsula - because if nature thrives, we do too.”

Although based on a community survey, it has been designed with the help of Buglife, CPRE Kent (The Countryside Charity), Kent Wildlife Trust and the RSPB and draws on the experience of members of the Save Swanscombe Peninsula Group.

**Local Councillor for Dartford North East and Save Swanscombe Peninsula Group member, Laura Edie** said: “There has never been a more critically important time to defend nature and safeguard our future by protecting sites like Swanscombe Peninsula.

“Growth should not be at the cost of our health; we need to ensure that these precious green spaces remain so we can adapt to the challenges we face as a result of the climate and biodiversity crises. So please support the vision for Swanscombe, it is a culmination of the views and wishes of the people who work, live and visit the area and we hope it will be a step to securing the future of this nature haven.”

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**Notes to editors:**

Known as Swanscombe Marshes, this urban wilderness is home to thousands of invertebrate species, including over 200 species of conservation concern. This outstanding assemblage is of national importance, ranking with our best invertebrate brownfield sites. It is one of just two places in the UK for the Critically Endangered Distinguished jumping spider (Attulus distinguendus), among the host of rare bees, beetles, moths and other invertebrates recorded there.

The Swanscombe Peninsula has a complicated history, with the coastal grazing marsh and grassland habitats subject to landfill and the dumping of cement waste. It also plays host to water treatment works, the HS1 railway and jetties – it even has the UK’s tallest electricity pylon! But despite this, the mixture of natural coastal features and human interference has created a brownfield of the highest quality for wildlife, as well as a valued community space for walking, bird watching, angling and escaping the hustle and bustle of North Kent.

Thanks to its outstanding wildlife and following a concerted campaign by Buglife, CPRE Kent, Kent Wildlife Trust and RSPB, it was made a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) last year. SSSIs like the Swanscombe Peninsula are the backbone of the UK’s protected sites network; they include our best habitats and are essential to protecting wildlife and supporting healthy ecosystems. For local people in Swanscombe, Greenhithe and Northfleet, the Swanscombe Peninsula is also a much-loved green lung and open space.

The recently published [State of Nature in Kent Report](https://kentnature.org.uk/state-of-nature/) concluded that the county suffers double the air pollution levels recommended by the World Health Organisation whilst 79% of Kent’s rivers and lakes do not meet the standards of the Water Framework Directive. Swanscombe is a tranquil green space, providing a place to escape and breathe in an increasingly congested area.