



Grosse Île and
the Irish Memorial
National Historic Site

Grosse Île and the Irish Memorial National Historic Site of Canada Management Plan

Public consultation report, July 2017



Introduction

The Grosse Île and the Irish Memorial National Historic Site management plan is under development. On this occasion, the Parks Canada Agency gives the public and the stakeholders from the community the opportunity to offer their views on the approach and objectives proposed for the site over the next ten years. This public consultation was held from May 29th to July 2nd, 2017 (5 weeks).

This document describes the conduct of this consultation and presents a summary of the views expressed by citizens, stakeholders from the community and the regional representatives consulted.

Objectives

The consultation had two objectives:

- Create awareness of the approach and the objectives in terms of management that are proposed for the draft of the management plan.
- Collect the viewpoints and comments of the public and partners in order to allow Parks Canada to improve and adjust the proposed management plan.

Consultation Process

The national historic site planning team developed a "public consultation bulletin" covering the following points:

- the historic significance of the site;
- the operation of the site;
- the main achievements since the entry into force of the 2001 management plan;
- the main issues;
- the management approach proposed for the next ten years, including the key strategies and the objectives established;
- the vision for the site.

This document, published in French and English, was put on line on the historic site website. The public was invited to become familiar with it and to provide comments and suggestions by filling out a survey available on line until July 2nd, 2017. To do so, an online comment form was made available during the consultation period.

The promotion of this consultation was also carried out on the Grosse Île and the Irish Memorial National Historic Site Facebook account on June 1st, 15th and 29th, 2017. It reached 7,579 individuals, got 157 "likes" and generated 27 shares and 12 comments.

Advertisements were also placed in the local newspapers (Journal L'Oie Blanche, Journal de Lévis, Peuple de Lévis, Chronicle Telegraph, regional weekly newspapers of the Transcontinental group).

A link to the online consultation was added on the following website: <http://www1.canada.ca/consultationdescanadiens/>

On June 6th, 2017, personalized e-mails, in which mention was made of the possibility of organizing one-on-one meetings, were also sent to elected officials as well as to regional and international partners (see list enclosed). A reminder e-mail sent on June 27th, 2017 invited stakeholders to provide their comments.

The following organizations requested a meeting with Parks Canada or submitted their comments by e-mail or communicated by phone: Tourisme Chaudière-Appalaches, Croisière AML and Croisière Lachance, Strokestown Park and Famine Museum, Ancient Order of Hibernians of Montreal, MRC de Montmagny and the constituency of Montmagny-L'Islet-Kamouraska-Rivière-du-Loup.

Summary of the Main Comments Received During Consultations

Conservation and Maintenance of Cultural Resources

On a number of occasions it was noted that Parks Canada has done and continues to do an excellent job of conserving historical buildings of national importance. It is considered that the heritage character of the site has been preserved.

However, some of the comments suggest that Parks Canada does not adequately emphasize the importance of restoring buildings that have not yet been restored and that have a heritage, historic and tourism interest. The conservation of buildings of national historic significance in a stable condition does not appear to be sufficient in the view of a number of individuals.

Energy Supply

Parks Canada's concern about the need to consider a source of energy supply other than oil seems to be shared. Besides, for many people, it would be relevant to establish an energy supply system that is more appropriate and ecological, such as wind or tidal energy.

It was also mentioned that Parks Canada must be more concerned about waste management and implement the principles of sustainable development more forcefully.

Visitor Experience

The interpretation work, carried out mainly by Parks Canada staff, is now recognized and valued. In fact, the concern about the phenomenon of "*disneyisation*" is no longer relevant and the work of the Agency is recognized, whereas the original concept of development had raised major questions during the first Pan-Canadian public consultations conducted in 1992 and 1993. It was also stated that personalized contacts remain a priority, in particular by organizing meetings with Parks Canada staff. This aspect is a characteristic feature of the offer.

The development corresponds to the scale of the site and its importance. However, the fact of continuing to offer the most diverse experiences possible was stressed. Some expressed a desire to introduce other themes associated with the history of the site, but not related to the reasons for the designation (military period and Agriculture Canada period). Maintenance of investments for the development and activities of the site is essential in the eyes of many. In fact, it was suggested that access to genealogical resources and databases be allowed in order to facilitate on-site research. In addition, for some individuals, genealogical research should be defined as a top-level motivator for visiting the site and better understanding the heritage of Grosse Île.

Some individuals consider that the national historic site visit time is too short relative to the admission price (including the time and the price of transport).

The importance of having, at the administrative level, one foot on the ground in Montmagny and a reception point, or even an interpretation centre at Berthier-sur-Mer in the summer season was stressed. A number of individuals also think that social networks are of great importance for encouraging the sharing of the site's history.

Access to the Historic Site

The issue concerning access by boat to Grosse Île creates a concern about the impression of a monopoly which was raised due to the presence of a single carrier. It seems desirable that Parks Canada facilitate discussions to ensure the long-term accessibility of the island from Berthier-sur-Mer.

In everyone's opinion, it is important to ensure the stability of recurrent funding for the dredging of the navigation channel that allows access to the island. Some stressed the importance of working in synergy with the Agency in order to improve this access, while others suggested that Parks Canada's team be equipped with a boat.

In addition, the higher and higher entry costs (pricing and transport fees) are a concern.

It was also suggested to enhance knowledge of the historic site among regional decision-makers, both in the political and entrepreneurial worlds, as well as with partners, including those in the tourism industry, in order to encourage support, mainly with respect to access to the site.

Partnership

A number of individuals want to maintain partnerships initiated with Parks Canada, or even improve these collaborative agreements so that the site becomes a beacon destination at both the national and international levels. Moreover, the Irish National Famine Museum in Strokestown, Ireland, wishes to enhance participation in common events and activities in addition to contributing to a joint promotion.

Promotion

The Grosse Île and the Irish Memorial National Historic Site remains a jewel to be discovered, and not only for the local population. It is important to talk about this site, to disseminate its history and not neglect the promotional initiatives and partnerships that are associated with it. It is proposed to enhance the promotion of the site in order to increase the number of visits in the months of September and October.

Making a larger number of people familiar with the site was a desire expressed on several occasions, as well as the importance of making it an absolute must-see place for anyone visiting Quebec City. It is hoped that the region is promoted as a tourist destination and that Grosse Île consolidates its position as a traffic builder for the tourism sector of *Montmagny and the Islands*.

It seems that Grosse Île remains unknown to the public, particularly in metropolitan Montreal. However, the national historic site is perceived as a distinctive product, a unique treasure, both for the region as well as for the country as a whole.

Vision

Respondents support the proposed vision, although this is seen as a continuation of the original management plan.

It is suggested that this site not be limited to the stimulation of local pride, but that it also create a sense of attachment and belonging at the local, national and international level.

Conclusion

The consultation exercise has proven to be positive and it will allow Parks Canada to improve its approach with regard to the management of the national historic site as well as its work with stakeholders. Overall, participants in the consultations were in favour of this approach and supported the management objectives proposed by Parks Canada.

The management plan will be approved by the end of 2017.

Finally, Parks Canada would like to thank all the participants who took part in the consultation exercise for submitting their ideas and their vision for the future of this national historic site.