
Danger averted

PLANS to dredge Goodwin Sands in Kent have been abandoned by the Port of Dover. The initial plan would have seen the shifting sands near Deal dredged for landfill for the Dover Western Docks development. Campaigners have been opposing the plans since they were announced in 2016, warning that the sand mining had the potential to disturb war graves in the area, as well as causing damage to wildlife and the surrounding coastline.

'We are obviously delighted that the Port of Dover has decided not to extract sand from the Goodwins,' said Goodwin Sands SOS campaign co-ordinator Joanna Thomson. 'This is the right decision for the Port, the local community and the Goodwin Sands, sending a strong message that cost-neutral alternatives can be found and that development does not always have to be at the expense of our environment.'

Since 2016, the SOS campaign has fought to have the plans halted, but, in 2019, a judicial review brought by the group was lost. However, the group



claims that its research identified several flaws in the data used to grant the licence required for dredging, which was granted in 2018. That licence will expire on December 31, but the Dover Harbour Board has announced that it will not apply for an extension and that members are confident that they can source the required materials for the Dover Western Docks development from elsewhere.

'This is a win for us all,' said Port of Dover Authority CEO Doug Bannister. 'It enables us to move forward with confidence in developing land for new local-employment opportunities...

Goodwin Sands in Kent are safe from dredging after the Port of Dover took campaigners' concerns for the local area into account

and helps unify our community by removing an issue that has, in places, divided opinion.'

The Goodwin Sands SOS campaign was backed by local Conservative MP Natalie Elphicke, who said: 'I remain fully behind the Port and its excellent ambitions for development, but I have also held concerns about the proposed dredging of the Goodwin Sands. I am delighted that the Port of Dover has listened to those who held concerns... and that it has been active in finding a way forward that works [for] jobs and investment, as well as respecting and preserving the special environment.'

Alamy; Keith Waldegrave / Goodwin Sands Conservation Trust; John Coodal; Hanne Siebers, National Trust Images