

Council makes cash offer to offload country park

After three-and-a-half years of talks, agreement is close

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The future of Clare Country Park is close to being resolved after council bosses made a cash offer this week to relinquish ownership.

If accepted by the town council and the park's trustees, the area would finally transfer into their control after three-and-a-half years of talks with Suffolk County Council.

A lump-sum offer as part of the handover of the 38-acre site, which includes the ruins of Clare Castle, was made to the town council on Tuesday morning.

A county council spokes-

man said: "There are a few details to clarify before the town council considers the proposal and decides how to consult the people of Clare.

"It will then be up to the people of Clare and the town council whether or not to consider the offer.

"We believe the offer is a good one and is comparable to the approach taken at country parks throughout Suffolk."

There has been mounting criticism regarding how long the process has taken.

"We haven't agreed terms yet after all this time," said town councillor Keith Haisman.

"The county council did

not take a normal approach and the information given to us didn't include the liability placed on taking over the park.

"We need to be careful – we have to look at the long-term risks."

Mr Haisman said it would take several weeks for a decision to be made on the offer.

He said he wanted to see the transfer take place "but on the right terms".

"It is not going to go on for another year," he said.

Mr Haisman warned that the site was not in a good state. "Buildings have been boarded up and the visitor centre is not in a fit state to use," he added.

**"We need to be careful and look at long-term risks."
Keith Haisman**

'Treatment has been unfair'

NOT FAIR

Mr Haisman has claimed that Clare has suffered "unequal treatment" from Suffolk County Council over the transfer of country parks.

BRANDON RETAINED

He is unhappy that the council has decided to continue running Brandon Country Park, saying: "Brandon has 4.7 full-time staff and is being run at a deficit."

CASE-BY-CASE PROCESS

"You cannot draw analogies between Brandon and Clare," said a spokesman for Suffolk County Council.

"This was a case-by-case process."



RIGHT TERMS: Town councillor Keith Haisman at the country park.