



# CLARE TOWN COUNCIL

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**Thursday, 26 March 2015**

## **PRESS RELEASE FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

### **Clare Castle Country Park transfers to Clare Town Council**

After over 4 years of discussions and negotiations between Suffolk County Council (SCC) and Clare Town Council a deal has been finalised and the ownership of the Park transferred into local ownership.

While the Town Council will hold the freehold to the Park, day-to-day management has been passed to the Clare Castle Country Park Trust, a charitable trust which will manage the whole Park including the Scheduled Ancient Monument, the green spaces, the buildings, the playground and the car park.

At the heart of the discussions has always been the size of the dowry, which SCC would pay to the Town Council for them to take on the renovations to the Grade II listed station buildings and start on the much-needed upgrade to maintenance of the 33 acre Park. The final sum agreed is £321,500 which will allow the building renovation works to get underway in May. Plans are also already on course to submit a bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund for a seven-figure sum which will bring significant improvements to the Park in the years to come.

Clare Town Council Chairman, Paul Bishop, said "After 4 years of negotiations I believe that we have achieved the very best possible deal for Clare. At times it seemed like we were in a David and Goliath struggle but we had an excellent negotiating team and full support from all Councillors to achieve this tremendous outcome for our parishioners. The upside of having taken so long to conclude a deal is that we know just about everything there is to know about the Park and this puts the Trustees in a great position to make the Park a fabulous destination for local families and visitors to Clare. Clare is a key service centre and local control of the Country Park will help to protect the unique nature of the town by encouraging tourism and business and keep Clare's place in the list as one of the best places to live in the UK."

A County Council spokesperson said: "We are pleased to support the people of Clare in taking on this wonderful community asset. The County Council believes it has made a significant and fair financial contribution which supports the Town Council in its future management of the park. We look forward to seeing the development of the park and wish the Town Council and the community every success for the future."

The Clare Castle Country Park Trust is managed by a board of trustees, all committed local residents, and chaired by Geoffrey Bray, who said “We are delighted that the transfer of the Park to Clare has now been successfully concluded. Without changing the park’s peaceful and tranquil nature we plan to make it a far more interesting attraction for the town. The Trust that will run the Park places great importance on working co-operatively with individuals, schools, organisations and businesses in Clare, in order to make the Town an even better place to live in, work in, or visit”

The first major event to be held in the Park will be the celebration of Clare’s involvement in Magna Carta when events will begin with a Heritage Walk from Clare to Castle Hedingham on 25 April and culminate in a procession for school children through Clare followed by a medieval fair in the Country Park on 13 June. Further details at [www.magnacartafestival.org](http://www.magnacartafestival.org)

**For further information on the transfer of the Park contact Keith Haisman on 07990 612157, and for information on Clare Castle Country Park go to [www.clarecastlecountrypark.co.uk](http://www.clarecastlecountrypark.co.uk)**