

## CLARE CASTLE COUNTRY PARK – WHAT IS HAPPENING?

Clare Town Council circulated a 'Clare Castle Country Park update' on 30<sup>th</sup> April. In that document the Town Council stated they had agreed a team of 'trustees-elect' who would become trustees and be responsible for the management of the Park from the date of the transfer of the ownership. These 'trustees elect' are John Knight, Peter Phillips (Clare Town Councillor nominee), Margaret Godwin (Clare Town Councillor nominee), Keith Mison, and me (Geoffrey Bray – Chairman-elect). Derek Blake and Keith Haisman will be trustees initially, while the ownership is transferred and the building works undertaken. They will both step down when those matters are completed.

Keith Haisman and Derek Blake are the prime movers in handling the legalities of the transfer from Suffolk County Council and the setting up of the charity that will manage the Park. I am working with the other 'trustees-elect' on the plans we are making for running the Park so that when the transfer is completed we are not starting from scratch.

We thought it would be useful therefore if we circulated to all Clare households what we are doing. (If there are people outside Clare who should get a copy please let me know their names and addresses). Although my colleagues have approved what is included here it reflects very much my own priorities and has been written by me, hence the fact my name appears at the end, so if you have any questions or concerns please contact me.

At the Clare Town Council Annual Meeting on 8<sup>th</sup> May I had the opportunity to set out a number of points. These were as follows

**Frustrations!** Those of us who have agreed to become the initial Trustees of the Park are as frustrated as anyone, probably more so, at the time it is taking for the transfer of ownership from Suffolk CC to take place. However, as potential Trustees we have to assume this eventually will happen. (As at 15<sup>th</sup> June progress is not as fast as we would like, but is being made in critical areas, and lawyers working on the legal aspects of the transfer).

### Aspirations

It is not the intention to change the basic nature of the Park and we want to preserve it in perpetuity, in substantially its existing form, for the benefit of all those who use it. We want it to continue to be part of the Suffolk countryside, a haven for the flora and fauna that are native to the area, and a place where people can enjoy themselves in a peaceful and tranquil environment.

### Plans

We have broken down the activities that need to be covered under a number of headings, with one 'trustee elect' having the responsibility for each area. There will inevitably be some overlaps and one of my roles, as 'Chairman-elect', will be to ensure everything runs as smoothly as possible. The plans we are currently developing are to ensure that all aspects of the Park are managed well both from the start, and in the future. The headings, with the name of the 'trustees-elect' for each area, are currently as follows

Geoffrey Bray	Derek Blake (interim)	Margaret Godwin	Peter Phillips	John Knight	Keith Mison
External relations	History and education	Events - fund-raising	Fund-raising - grants	Buildings – maintenance and lettings	Green spaces
Communications		Events – non fund-raising	Railway heritage	Car park	Green space volunteers
Friends group			Health and Safety	Playground	Toilets
Finance and Legal				Fund-raising – sponsors etc	

Steve Kimminau, John Russell and Robin Stone are already working with us on some of the plans and Derek has involved others in a preliminary meeting on the plans for 'History & Education'; this we plan to be based in the booking hall end of the house previously occupied by John Laws.

### **'Friends'**

We will be establishing a 'Friends of Clare Castle Country Park' group, under the umbrella of the Trustees, and have started some work on what this might look like. Pete Phillips and Steve Kimminau are starting to think about how the 'Friends' might appear on Facebook.

We want to involve as many people in the Park as possible. As you may realise from the wide variety of activities listed above there can be a part for anyone who is willing to help. I have a strong belief that voluntary organisations are most successful if those involved not only do the things they enjoy doing, but also only do those things they can fit comfortably into their own lives. So whether you have a bit of time each week, each month or perhaps a few hours maybe once a year, or can just help us financially, there will be something everyone can do. (Most grants require 'matched funding' so we will need to raise money ourselves even if we get grants to enhance the Park). Last year the Town Council asked who might be willing to help and over 80 people responded positively. Our aim will be to try and involve considerably more than that number and we will be contacting people individually when the legal aspects of the transfer are further advanced (hopefully in the not too distant future) to find out what they might be willing to do. If you, or anyone you know, would like to tell us now the area(s) in which you would like to help, please contact me, or one of my fellow 'trustees-elect'.

### **Logo**

We will need a logo for the Park when it is owned by Clare. (I hope you agree this newsletter would look better if it had something more inspiring at the top). Since we will be dealing with a wide variety of people and organisations we think it is important that our logo should look really good. Consequently, when we have some ideas on what it might look like, and what it should contain, we might ask a professional designer (hopefully at no, or minimal, cost) to put them into a coherent and acceptable 'finished product'. However, we would welcome thoughts and ideas, as well as suggested sketches, from anyone as soon as possible. Please send them to me. (My contact details are at the foot of this document).

### **'Posterity'**

We have a great opportunity to build on all the work that so many people have done over the years to make the Park what it is today. Few of us have the opportunity of leaving a significant and permanent mark on the world, but I do believe all of us can do so by making Clare Castle Country Park a shining beacon of what a country park can be like. In the eighteenth century Lancelot Brown, better known as 'Capability' Brown, made an impact on the landscaping around large country houses that has already lasted between two and three hundred years. Let's try and create an equally long-lasting impact with Clare Castle Country Park – without, I hasten to add, messing about with the landscaping.

Geoffrey Bray. June 2013

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