

Clare Castle Country Park (January 2014)

New Cut. I believe we now have a solution that will satisfy everyone (but maybe that's a dangerous thing to say!). It will mean that, except on the few days each year when there are exceptional flood conditions, the water in the New Cut will be kept at the levels it used to be.

The basic solution is for sheet piling to be driven into the water-course that leads to the Knight's mill race some 10 yards from the sluice gates. This will prevent large flows of water rushing through the mill race and causing more erosion. The top of this 'dam' will be at the same height as the top of the sluice gates so the water level in the New Cut cannot be reduced by the new structure. There will be no cost to the community of this solution.

Planning and other regulatory approvals have to be obtained. However while this is a frustrating delay I do not see it as a problem. Consequently while every effort will be made to finish the work before June we should assume mid-summer will be the completion date.

Transfer of the Park from Suffolk County Council. We have now received the detailed maintenance schedules, and associated costs, for running all elements of the Park in the next three years. These schedules are being audited by Bidwells, on behalf of the Town Council (at no cost to the Town Council or the future Trust). These schedules set out some substantial 'catch-up' work that arises from the neglect of critical maintenance work in the past, and are significant. Whilst we believe we can generate the funds to maintain the Park at a high standard in the future, we cannot take on the responsibility for the running of the Park until we know that the funding of that 'catch-up' work is assured.

Renovation of the buildings. Concertus, the design and property consultants, continue to do excellent work and are making good progress. They will be in a position to go out to tender shortly, and if the transfer of the Park goes ahead, the renovation of the buildings should be completed during the summer.

Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) project. This project, for which the Town Council has already received the grant of £10,000, has two main objectives:

1. consider what the Park might look like in 25-50 years, and what the focus should be now,
2. develop the understanding of the Trustees-elect, and others who have been working closely on the draft plans, so they will be better able to protect and 'manage' the Park.

On 3rd December six specialists (with extensive experience of environmental and heritage projects, museums, 'visitor experiences' and 'learning, and activity planning') spent a day in Clare. Derek Blake and I were with them for the day and we made notes of their ideas, practical suggestions and observations. They subsequently produced a summary of their core thinking which is proving to be invaluable. On 17th January the Trustees-elect will be attending a workshop when we will discuss how we can make best use of their ideas.

Logo. We have now received two excellent proposals for a logo for the Park. At the next meeting of the Trustees-elect on 21st January we will be deciding how we can get feedback from those with an interest in the Park that will help us to decide which one to select.

Geoffrey Bray – 13th January 2014.

22 Nethergate Street, Clare. CO10 8NP.

Email: gandgbray@btinternet.com Telephone: 01787 277731