



FRIENDS of CASTLE GREEN

NEWSLETTER

Celebration - Education - Recreation
A Park for People!

Words from The Chair

Parish Plans have been around for a while. They are usually documents developed through community led consultations about how people wish to see their parish develop and what services they would like their parish council to be providing. They are certainly not like the long term forward plans that are developed by the higher unitary or district authorities, which are all about strategic development of housing and large scale infrastructure. A parish plan is more about benches, dog poo bins and dealing with common everyday problems. More often than not, the plans include a lot about what a community can do for itself with only a small input from the parish council itself.

So when Hereford City Council recently announced that it had decided to undertake the development of a community plan it should not have raised eyebrows, but in truth it did, right across the country. Partly because Hereford City Council has not been known to be the most proactive of councils in the past, but mostly because a parish plan has never been done on this scale before. Hereford City was one of the early tranche of relatively large city councils that was turned into a parish when the unitary authority, Herefordshire Council, was created. With nearly 65,000 inhabitants, it was the second largest Parish Council in England until last year – and no one has ever done a parish plan as big as this before.

It is a great opportunity for the city to get round a table on a local community level and tell the parish what they like about where they live, what they don't like and how the parish can help them improve things. The process has already started and it has been agreed that there will be seven parish plan steering groups, roughly based around the ward boundaries, but taking account of where some identifiable communities cross those boundaries such as St James & Bartonsham, half of which is in Central ward and the other in Tupsley.

The Friends of Castle Green committee has had a really good discussion about the parish plan and we would really like to encourage all Friends to get involved with their local steering group. Experience of developing parish plans elsewhere tells us that the process is as valuable as the resulting plan. It shouldn't be a lot of work or even a lot of meetings. All sorts of events can be run to promote discussion about the local area you live in and the community you are part of. Some stimulating training sessions are usually put on about the different roles that are needed in the steering group and the ways in which you can develop a community approach to defining answers to problems that are experienced in your daily lives.

What's great is that if it is done well, a parish plan can open all sorts of doors (usually small ones) to pockets of funding to actually make things happen on the ground. It will form a large part of the future work programme of the city council focussing community development work for the city as a whole.

Contact the city council and sign up to get involved with your local steering group; get to grips with planning for your local area and your city as a whole. Don't forget to include the Castle Green in your discussions. You don't have to be in the steering group that covers Central Ward to do it either. The

Castle Green is the city centre park for everyone – very beautiful and hugely historic. Think about what the space really means to you and how it could be improved. We would like to see the city council start to hold more community events in the park for the whole city. Get your steering group to pledge support for the project that will develop the canoe and training centre building on Castle green into a community led social enterprise. Mention that the pathways could all do with a re-vamp and the benches an upgrade. But most of all get the Castle Green recognised in the Parish Plan for what it is - a fantastic community park for the whole city.

You can contact the City Council by telephoning 01432 260454 or via www.herefordcity.net. *Mark Hubbard*



Hereford City Coat of Arms
"Reward for Faithfulness Unconquered"

Committee Members

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Riverbank Project Update

Spring is in the air for the Riverbank Project with bulbs sprouting below the Ivy cover and buds getting ready to burst. Due to our weekly work party and the volunteer days, the bank has been tamed. The riverbank itself, we think, is looking great.

The Blackthorn which was our main problem is under control. The other shrub layer plants, Hawthorn, Willow, and Field Maple are being managed through coppicing. Two low level Willow pollards have been left to provide a variety of habitats for nesting birds.

As ever we owe a debt to all those that came to the volunteer days last year. The volunteer days have been well attended by people from across the city, who have come with bags of enthusiasm. The amount of work they have done shows how positive it is to involve the wider community. We are organising another volunteer day for the first May Bank Holiday, this time to paint the railings along the high path around the green.

At the beginning of winter two trees were removed from the riverbank. A Silver Birch was taken down because it was dying and a Robinia was removed as it is a non-native species. There are Holly, Ash, Yew, Field Maple and Elm saplings growing that will be selectively allowed to establish themselves. No flowers have been planted, but the bank is covered with bulbs, and the opening of the seed bank to the sunshine should bring a colourful spring.

We are currently applying for funding to continue the project for the next year. Funding for the seating areas will also be applied for once Scheduled Ancient Monument permission has been gained. Amey (Herefordshire) are kindly assisting with this by carrying out the engineering plans at no charge.

A big thank you to Hereford Action for Mammals who have agreed to fund the purchase of bat boxes for the Riverbank and the Castle Green. These boxes will be purchased from Widemarsh Workshop and Dave Smith from Dave Smith Tree Surgery has kindly offered to install them.

The Christmas Fayre

I was rather uncertain about the Christmas Fayre this time, having made the decision to have no marquee. It could have been a very damp day indeed! My nerves were not helped by the rain pouring down at 5.30am as the stalls were being erected. Amazingly, by 8am as stallholders and helpers started to arrive, the rain abated and the sky became an almost convincing blue.

At the previous year's Christmas Fayre we had the marquees as usual, but so many people came, we did not have enough space, and with the cost of the hired marquee being so high, in spite of a busy day, we made a financial loss. So the decision to do things differently this time was both practical and economic. And it worked!

Throughout the day, I received positive comments about the spaciousness of having outside stalls with wide walkways. Customers could linger without being pushed along by the crowds. Our in-house cafe was once again a great success with hot soup and some fairly potent mulled wine being ever popular. Bandemonium and the Jack Hammer Blues Band kindly braved the cold (musicians can't wear gloves whilst performing!) to entertain us and Wild Play, from Herefordshire Nature Trust, provided creative mess-making for small people.

Last, but by no means least, we made about a £500 profit on the day, which will help towards this year's events. So thank you to all who came and shared the day and a special big thank you to all our volunteer helpers. *Rebecca Saunders*

As ever our thanks go to English Heritage, Amey (Herefordshire), Herefordshire Council and Hereford City Council for their support. Finally, the running of this project is only possible due to the continued support of John Pitts at Mi Enterprise and Mark and Georgina at the Friends of Castle Green. Thanks. *Matt Hatter (Co-ordinator of the Riverbank Project)*

(ps if you know whose lost lots of plastic bags with dog poo in, we've found them all over the riverbank.)

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Monday May 3rd 10am-4.30pm – come & help paint the railings on the Castle Green. We'll need about 50 people to get it done in a day. Big barbecue lunch provided free of charge, bring a small paint brush and wear grubby old clothes!

Saturday 3rd July 10am-9pm – the Castle Green Summer Fayre. All day event with market stalls, music, bouncy castles, kids stuff and much more.

Thursday 15th July 6pm-10pm – The Friends of Castle Green AGM followed by a barbecue. Held in the garden of Castle Cliffe with tours of the Castle Green Training Centre with a brief account of its history, by local historian, David Whitehead. Fabulous free food - please bring a bottle!

Details of all our events can be found on our website:
www.friendsofcastlegreen.org