

**Minutes of the meeting of the Clare Town Council
Environment Committee
held in Clare Old School Community Centre at 7.00pm
on Wednesday 5th July 2017**

Present: Cllrs. P Bishop, G Mallows, L Perceval-Maxwell,
Lay member Mrs O Smith
Mr K Mison - Cemetery Management Officer, Maureen Smith – RFO
Derek Blake representing *Walkers are Welcome*

1 To receive apologies for absence

Claire Ebeling – Clerk, Cllr P Gryce, Mr T Pickerin, Lay member

2 To receive declarations of members' interests and consider requests for dispensation
None.

Section of the meeting open to the public:

3 Public Participation

None.

End of public section of the meeting

4 To approve the minutes of the last meeting held on 7th June 2017.

Approved unanimously.

5 To receive an update on actions from the meeting

The RFO reported on behalf of the Clerk.

Item 5 – complete

Item 6 – Still to action

Item 8 – The Clerk has requested that a decision be made this evening regarding the grit bin in Pashlers alley. The decision to leave it as it is was unanimous.

Item 10 – Keith Mison to meet with the parishioner

Item 13 (i)– Awaiting estimate

(ii) – Still to action

Clerk

Cllr Perceval-Maxwell and Olive Smith reported a successful “pop-up” on Market Hill regarding dog fouling and plan another in the entrance to the Country Park in September. The Clerk to seek the permission of the Park Trustees.

Clerk

6 To review progress on the schedule of maintenance for Town Council assets

See attachment to the minutes.

Cllr Perceval-Maxwell reminded the committee that the Tree Survey and Health check on headstones is imminent.

7 To receive an update on Walkers are Welcome

The Committee welcomed Derek Blake who circulated an extensive application form for Walkers are Welcome status (attached). He is hopeful that provisional status may be achieved by November and that full status will be granted within a year bringing visitors to the town and boosting tourism. The Town’s Business Association has already signed up to it. He pointed out that in order to gain and maintain full status the steering group must meet the following criteria:

- (1) Demonstration of popular local support for the concept. This could be demonstrated, for example, by signatures of support from local residents (already achieved)
- (2) Formal endorsement of application for Walkers are Welcome status by local council.
- (3) Action to ensure that footpaths and facilities for walkers are maintained in good condition.
- (4) Adequate marketing of Walkers are Welcome status.
- (5) Encouragement of walking using public transport
- (6) Demonstration of mechanisms in place to maintain Walkers are welcome status.

The committee discussed all of the above and Cllr Perceval-Maxwell read the following statement provided by Cllr. Gryce, which summarises the Town Council's commitment to meeting item 3 of the above criteria:

Since April 2017, Clare Town Council has taken over the contract for the cutting of designated footpaths within the parish, following numerous complaints of Suffolk County Council's contractor. Our own contractor will carry out three cuts a year rather than the two specified. Bark chippings have been spread at several locations.

The current contract is for two years; in line with a policy to increase tourism in the area, it is likely that this approach will be sustained.

The contract is limited to specific footpaths that SCC has been historically responsible for; SCC will not allow footpaths to be added.

It is the intention of the Council to deploy our own contractor along other footpaths if they become blocked by excessive undergrowth, or if surfaces become unstable. Reports are made to SCC if blockages are found that are the responsibility of the landowner: fallen trees, overgrown hedges, broken stiles or bridges.

The Stour Valley Volunteers have widened and re-routed (to its original position) a particularly bad stretch on the Stour Valley Path; further work will be carried out to provide a better surface by a local contractor.

With the co-operation of a local landowner, a permissive way has been created and mapped linking various footpaths; the paths were frequently used by walkers but without permission. [David Byford, routes behind the Nuttery.] The Walks Group will be installing a foot bridge on one of these paths, with materials provided by the landowner.

A footpath, not on the scheduled list, is now being cut voluntarily by an adjoining landowner after our suggestion. [Path beside the golf course to the bridge over the Stour]

Clare Castle Country Park Trust is actively exploring the building of a footbridge to extend one footpath across the river Stour to join another, where a bridge once stood, to create a new circular path.

Cllr Perceval-Maxwell proposed that the Committee confirm the Town Council's support of the Walkers are Welcome project. Agreed unanimously.

The committee thanked Mr Blake for attending the meeting and asked that he keeps them updated on progress.

8 To receive a report from the Cemetery Management Officer/Administrator

The problem with the oversized/out of line grave has been addressed and it will mean only one headstone will need to be moved slightly to bring the row in line. Mr Mison suggested that Paintins are asked to move the headstone and bear the cost as the initial mistake was made by their stand-in gravedigger.

Mr Mison was happy to report that owls are nesting in the nesting boxes in the back field.

Mr Mison advised the Committee that Dedham Vale and Stour Valley Trusts are offering their services for free if there is anything we think they could help with.

9 To receive a correspondence report from the Clerk

Nothing to report

10 To receive agenda items for next meeting

To receive a report from the Cemetery Management Officer

To receive a correspondence report from the Clerk

To review progress on the schedule of maintenance for Town Council asset

To consider the headstone health check

11 To confirm the date of the next meeting as Wednesday 2nd August 2017 at 7pm.
Confirmed.

Meeting closed at 7.50pm

Attachment to Minutes, Item 7, Walkers Are Welcome

Application for full Walkers are Welcome status

Please complete the following form, and send it electronically to secretary@walkersarewelcome.org.uk

The signed hard copy application form and any additional material should be sent to the Walkers are Welcome Treasurer, Geoff Kitt, c/o Glendorch, Sidmount Avenue, Moffat, DG10 9BS

Date of Provisional Membership and amount: **November 2016 £40.00**

1. **Name of town/village:** *Clare, Suffolk*
2. **Population:** *2,000*
3. **Name of the organisation coordinating the WaW initiative (steering group etc):** *Clare Walks Group*
4. **Please list the people working on your WaW steering group and their position held, plus a few words on what area of interest they represent and if they are walkers: Please supply a copy of your governing document.**
- 5.

<i>Carl Benson</i>	<i>Trustee, Clare Combined Charities Local Business Owner; walker</i>
<i>Sharon Benson</i>	<i>Business Manager, SVET Ltd*; walker CCCP** Trustee</i>
<i>Derek Blake (Chairman)</i>	<i>CCCP Trustee and AH Museum Trustee Retired Senior Official, Bank of England; walker</i>
<i>Geoffrey Bray</i>	<i>Chairman, CCCP Trust; AH Museum Trustee; walker</i>
<i>Keith Brown</i>	<i>Chairman, Sudbury Ramblers Retired company director; walker</i>
<i>Phil Gryce</i>	<i>Chairman, Visit Clare Town Councillor; walker</i>
<i>Chris Hawkins</i>	<i>Surveyor (Savills); runner and walker</i>
<i>Trevor Pickerin</i>	<i>local business owner; runner and walker</i>
<i>Malcolm Smith</i>	<i>Retired local business owner; walker</i>
<i>Richard Smith</i>	<i>Chairman, AH Museum & Historical Society CCCP Trustee Emeritus Professor, Historical Geography and Demography, Cambridge University; walker</i>
<i>Steve Willson</i>	<i>Local Business Owner; walker</i>

**The Educational Trust that runs the primary and secondary schools in Clare*

***Clare Castle Country Park Trust, a volunteer run charity*

6. **Please give the names of two people who will be WaW contacts.**
a) *Derek Blake* b) *Sharon Benson*
7. **Address:** *Oak Lodge, 10 Hermitage Meadow, Clare, Suffolk, CO10 8QQ*
8. **Phone:** *01787 277335*
9. **Email:** *derek.blake76@gmail.com*

10. Website address: www.clarewalks.co.uk

*Please indicate briefly below how you believe you have met the six criteria.
(If you wish, you can send your answers on a separate sheet of paper.)*

11. How have you demonstrated popular local support for becoming a WaW community?

Clare Walks Group was formed in spring 2016 initially to produce a series of circular walks leaflets for the Country Park following a successful bid to Suffolk Community Foundation. Following the decision by the Town Council in November 2016 to apply for Walkers are Welcome status the Group assumed responsibility for the application.

Formal endorsement from Clare Business Association was received following a presentation to their meeting on 13 March 2017. A Walkers are Welcome presentation was made by Derek Blake and Claire Parker, Green Access Manager, Suffolk County Council, at the Annual Town Meeting on 10 May. Clare Walks Group manned a stall at Clare's "Party in the Park" on 1 July 2017 which majored on Walkers are Welcome.

During the period March to July 2017 236 signatures were obtained in support of our application. All but 15 of these came from Clare or the immediately surrounding area.

The drive towards Walkers are Welcome status has been a continuing theme for the Walks Group, with updates delivered during our programme of monthly led walks, and during the Suffolk Walking Festival in May when we led a successful "Cavendish Circular Walk" for 51 people and hosted a lunch for Day 3 of the "Stour Valley Path Challenge Walk".

12. How have you demonstrated that there is official endorsement from your local council for WaW status?

Clare Town Council formally endorsed the application for provisional Walkers are Welcome status at its November 2016 meeting, setting a target of achieving full status within a year. Our Borough and County Councillors, Alaric Pugh and Mary Evans, have been very supportive of our application and have taken a keen interest in all our walks development work. We made contact with the Green Access Team in Suffolk County Council in December 2016 and Claire Parker and Ellie Tudor have provided excellent support and advice throughout the period since then.

In addition to the business community, we have received endorsement from the primary and secondary schools in Clare, and from the Country Park, Ancient House Museum and Community Association.

13. What will you do to ensure that your community adequately markets its status as a WaW town/village?

All Clare businesses eg shops, restaurants, pubs, cafes, B&Bs will be encouraged to display the Walkers are Welcome logo prominently on their premises.

The Town's website, and all future Town literature, will include the logo and reference to Walkers are Welcome. Our website (www.clarewalks.co.uk) will feature an article about Walkers are Welcome and our journey to accreditation.

Future and replacement Town signs and maps will incorporate the logo.

All 6 of our downloadable circular walks leaflets (plus summary leaflet) will incorporate the Walkers are Welcome logo, as will all future print runs. These leaflets are readily available on 3 local websites, and the Discover Suffolk website.

All our future offers of walks within the Suffolk Walking Festival will draw attention to the Town's Walkers are Welcome status.

The Town launched the "Visit Clare" DMO in June. The Walks Group have full representation on this organization and the walks offer, and Walkers are Welcome status, will be a key plank of Clare's tourism offer in all the publicity and marketing effort of the new DMO.

We shall continue to supply press releases to the local and regional press about our walks activity and to seek articles in appropriate regional and national magazines. All of these will make reference to Clare's status as a Walkers are Welcome Town

14. What have you done, and what will you do in future, to ensure that facilities for walkers are available locally and are maintained in good condition?

All footpaths in the Parish of Clare are walked by the Group twice a year to check for problems, and appropriate remedial action taken.

The Town has taken responsibility back from Suffolk County Council for the maintenance regime for key footpaths in and near the centre of Clare. These are managed under contract, and cut twice a year.

The Group maintains a detailed map of all the paths in the Parish, together with distance and other relevant information.

We have engaged the services of the “Stour Valley Volunteers” (Dedham Vale and Stour Valley AONB) who spent a day in Clare on 9 March 2017 clearing the “Harp Lane” path on the Stour Valley Path. This was the footpath in Clare needing the most attention and thanks to their significant efforts it is now in a much more serviceable state. They also work on paths etc in our Country Park, and we have booked them for a further “Harp Lane” day this winter.

We report to Suffolk County Council any issues with paths that fall outside our remit. For instance, there is an issue with hard core spoil being dumped across a small area of path at Hermitage Farm. We are seeking either to get the path re-instated or the footpath signs moved.

As part of the Country Park’s Heritage Lottery application, which is currently in the development stage, we are seeking to introduce a new “Railway Walk” circular walk from and to the Park, as well as improved walking trails for all, including those with restricted mobility.

We are also in discussion with One Life Suffolk about introducing a set of Health Walks under the Stepping Out banner, centred on the Park and the Town.

We have recently established a partnership with Nordic Walking East Anglia who now provide 4 group lessons each week in Clare, as well as the opportunity for private lessons.

15. How are you promoting usage of public transport?

Clare is served by two bus routes on a Monday to Saturday basis. One links Sudbury with Haverhill via Long Melford, Cavendish and Clare, whilst the other links Clare with Bury St Edmunds. There are connecting buses to Cambridge in Haverhill.

Sudbury is linked to London and Colchester via a branch line to Marks Tey which links with the mainline service. Our walks leaflets and websites currently contain details of the bus numbers, bus operators and their websites. We are in the process of adding the bus timetables to our website, as well as the telephone numbers of taxi firms in Clare, Sudbury and Haverhill.

16. How do you intend to ensure that your community maintains its interest in WaW status in the longer term? How will you contribute to the growth of the WaW Towns Network?

For us, Walkers are Welcome status will represent the outward recognition of the work that we have, and will continue to, put in to the development of walking within and around Clare.

We currently have a five year strategic plan.

Year 1 was about creating the 6 circular walks plus summary leaflet and establishing a regime of monthly walks. Year 2, the current year, is about developing the links with other agencies eg Suffolk County Council, Walking Festival, One Life Suffolk, Sudbury Ramblers and Nordic Walking East Anglia, and achieving Walkers are Welcome status.

Years 3 to 5 will be about developing further circular and other walks eg a Stour Valley Benefice Walk, A Bury St Edmunds/Clare/Castle Hedingham Magna Carta Challenge Walk and walking tours of Clare’s heritage assets. Also, securing a comprehensive offer of walks that will appeal to people with restricted mobility or other impairments, inactive people, casual and more serious walkers, and those who like an occasional real challenge. This will necessitate growing a group of volunteer walk leaders who are prepared to take on the various roles that this diverse offer will necessitate. We believe that this is achievable, but we need to grow our offer at a sensible pace over a five year period.

We would like to further our involvement in, and the cause of, Walkers are Welcome, by participating in a Suffolk Affiliate Network. We believe that we have much to learn from the experiences of others, and that we can make the WaW offer in Suffolk stronger by the sharing of experiences, resources and effort. Suffolk has come to WaW

*only recently, but a number of Towns in addition to Shotley are now involved and we would all benefit from the setting up of a hub of like-minded organisations and individuals.
We would be happy to host events in Clare once our “1865 Railway Goods Shed” has been refurbished as part of our current HLF project.*

Please also answer these two questions:

17. Please summarise in a paragraph what makes your community special for walkers:

Clare is beautifully situated in the Upper Stour Valley in Suffolk. The rolling sparsely-populated countryside and arable farmland provide outstanding opportunities for walkers, with wonderful views of the river valley and of wide Suffolk skies. Recent Walking Festival participants have described the area as a real “hidden gem”. There is an extensive network of footpaths, which include both the Bury to Clare and Stour Valley long distance paths. There are also downloadable and hard copy leaflets for 6 circular walks from and to Clare, as well as the waymarked ‘Magna Carta Walk’ between Clare and Castle Hedingham that was created for the 800th Anniversary of Magna Carta in 2015. There is a wealth of natural and built heritage on display, from beautiful churches to examples of outstanding medieval and later architecture. The flora and fauna of the area reflect the fact that this is an unspoiled and peaceful corner of England.

17 Please advise us of any proposed WaW launch or other forthcoming events linked to your application for WaW status.

We intend to hold a launch event in when we shall offer two taster walks prior to an informal lunch in Clare Park Centre in our Country Park.

IMPORTANT: YOU SHOULD NOT PROMOTE OR MARKET YOUR LAUNCH UNTIL YOU HAVE BEEN AWARDED WaW STATUS. REMEMBER THAT THE COMMITTEE MEETS ONCE A MONTH – IT MAY THEREFORE BE AT LEAST A MONTH BEFORE YOU HEAR BACK FROM US.

18 For website purposes, we will require a high resolution photograph, website and contact details together with 90 words describing your town (please focus on walkers) that you would like entered when accredited.

The countryside around Clare is a walker’s paradise. Clare is the smallest town in Suffolk. It nestles in the Upper Stour Valley, surrounded by rolling countryside and criss-crossed by footpaths that just say “put your walking boots on”. There are wonderful views across the river valley, and Suffolk’s famous wide skies are ever present. From strolls through Clare Castle Country Park, and around the medieval Town itself, to our six circular walks, Magna Carta Walk, and the Stour Valley and Bury to Clare long-distance paths there is something here for everyone.

Name of Mentor:..... Have they endorsed your application:

This form should be signed by the named contact and by the Chair or Secretary of the coordinating organisation

Signature of named contact:

Second signature:

Name:
Position:
Date: