

Enhancement of the Grounds of Hopton Castle

Collaboration between the Parish Council & Hopton Castle Preservation Trust

Objective: To make the grounds of the Castle a more attractive and effective local amenity both for visitors and local people.

Background: The Castle is a Grade 1 listed building and along with the grounds is a Scheduled Ancient monument. As a result, it is necessary for the Trust to consult with Historic England about any project which impacts on the fabric of the Castle or has the potential to impact on the archaeology of the site and if required work with them in agreeing an acceptable plan and obtaining necessary permissions

1. Improvements to appearance and general tidying of the basic grounds of the Castle.

It was concluded that the clearing of fallen trees and the work on nettle and thistle reduction, which are part of the ongoing plans of the Trust, was worthy of support

Time frame Spring	Spring/Summer 2021
Scheduled Monument Consent Required	No
Archaeological Survey Required	No

2. Replacement of lost trees.

It was agreed that plans to replace the lost trees was again worthy of support and desirable but would involve a number of stages. Given that more detail on each stage was required the following actions were agreed. Whilst it was acknowledged that this project was essentially the remit of the Trust it was felt that broader community involvement through individual tree sponsorship and volunteer activity was worthy of further consideration once details of the plans were known.

Phases:

- a) Obtaining of Scheduled Monument Consent.
(**Peter:** to liaise with Historic England)
- b) Decision on how to utilise the trees stumps and root balls.
(**Duncan & Jane:** to explore converting stumps to children's climbing frame)
(**Ted:** to clarify feasibility of planking residual trunks for fund raising)
- c) Sourcing of replacement trees.
(**Ted:** to explore costings)

Time frame Spring	Summer 2021 to 2022
Scheduled Monument Consent Required	Yes
Archaeological Survey Required	No

3. Enhance disabled access to the Castle Grounds

After consideration of the feedback from Historic England it was felt that this project would involve substantial costs, particularly the need for design studies and archaeological surveys. It was therefore suggested that this project should not be further considered as a collaborative project at the present time.

4. Stop Fishpond draining and landscape around.

After consideration of the feedback from Historic England it was accepted that the option to reline the pond would involve major expense, including design work and archaeological surveys. However, it was noted that the temporary dam constructed by Ted and Chris had proved effective in refilling the pond. It was felt that a more permanent dam/sluice could be introduced without disturbance of the ground and could result in the pond remaining fuller in the future.

5. Create a History trail around the Castle Grounds.

This proposal was recognized as worthwhile but felt to be an issue primarily for the Trust. However, it was suggested that it could be broadened to include wildlife, plants, trees and wildlife.

6. Shropshire Hills ANOB Conservation Grant

Ted reported that he had identified an ANOB conservation grant as a potentially valuable source of funds to support the planting of wildflowers on the Castle motte and for replacement trees. This was felt to be an excellent suggestion as although the grants provided matching funding the Parish and Trust contributions could be in the form of volunteer time. To broaden the appeal and become a collaborative project it was suggested that the application should be extended to include re-wilding the verges in and around the Village. As there was insufficient time to consult widely before initial expressions of interest were submitted it was agreed, that subject to agreement from the Chair of the Parish Council, to submit two applications of interest, in respect to re-wilding the verges with wildflowers and for tree planting in the Castle grounds.

7. Litter picking

Ted noted that there was currently a lot of litter in the verges and hedges in and around the village. It was proposed that a modest investment by the Parish in high visibility vests and litter pickers would enable this issue could be addressed by volunteers.

Briefing for Parish Web Site

Following a briefing by the Trust, on feedback from Historic England on the proposals highlighted at the recent Parish meeting, the group has concluded that the proposals to reline the pond and introduce a disabled walkway were not appropriate for joint collaboration. This view was based on the costs, timescales and need for archaeological surveys. In respect to the other proposals whilst acknowledging that they fell within the remit of the Trust it was felt that there was scope for collaboration through community action days and individual sponsorships.

The group considered the possibility of applying for a Shropshire Hills ANOB Conservation Grant, in respect to sowing wildflowers and tree planting. It is recommended that by broadening the scope of wildflower planting to include some verges in and around the village then there was merit in a joint application, between the Trust and the Parish Council. A particular positive of such a grant is that contributions from the Council and Trust could be volunteer time and the grant could fund other costs. However, as the deadline was approaching it is proposed to submit an application of interest and then should we be invited to submit a full application a broader discussion within Council and Trust could take place.

Gill Allen, Duncan & Jane Price, Peter Marquis and Ted Laidlar Feb 2021