

Clare awarded 'Most Active Town in Suffolk'!

It was a night to remember for community representatives from Clare on the 6th November when they were presented with the award for the 'Most Active Town in Suffolk'. The awards were organised by Suffolk County Council and Suffolk Association of Local Councils with the presentation taking place at the Blackbourne Community Centre, Elmswell. The purpose of the awards, which are now in their fifth year, is to recognise and celebrate communities in Suffolk that are going the extra mile to encourage their residents to be active.

Clare's representatives at the awards presentation were:
Geoffrey Bray, Chair of Clare Castle Country Park Trustees
Sarah Bevan, organiser of Clare Parkrun
Peter & Val Phillips: Clare Walkers and Health Walk leaders
Davina Neale, Clare Town Council

Other award winners were:
Hintlesham and Chattisham: most active small village (population less than 1000)
Brantham: most active large village (population greater than 1000).
Sudbury was 'highly commended' in the most active town category.

The awards were presented by Cllr James Reeder, Suffolk County Council's cabinet member for health who said, "Without doubt, town and parish councils are a major provider of physical activity, facilities and opportunities. Whether providing playgrounds, sports halls, open space, football pitches, allotments, walking routes, fitness classes or special events, the scope and variety of provision is large and varied". Also in attendance was Jo Churchill, MP for St Edmundsbury who commended the winners for their achievements.

Whilst Clare might be Suffolk's smallest town, it punches above its weight when providing opportunities for its local community to be active. The judges were impressed with the range of health and well-being activities that take place in the town particularly in the way it offers opportunities for those who wouldn't naturally engage in physical activities.

Much of the green space maintenance in the Clare Castle Country Park is now undertaken by volunteers and the Park hosts a Park Run, Bowls Club, 'Boot Camp', health walks, and Nordic walking classes. A year ago, new play equipment was installed for children, doubling the size of the Country Park play area. The Park is also implementing a major Heritage Lottery Fund project that includes further family and community-oriented activities.



Local management of the Park spawned a Walks Group that created 6 circular walks from the Park, introduced a monthly walks programme, participated in the Suffolk Walking Festival and gained 'Walkers are Welcome' accreditation for the town last October.

Extra-curricular activities for children and young people abound in the town's two schools and the secondary school, Stour Valley Community School, opened its swimming pool to the local community this summer with uptake in the hundreds.

In addition, Clare Playing Fields Association provides sporting facilities, particularly soccer, with 2 adult and 4 junior teams, as well as hosting yoga classes, pilates and HIIT Fitness classes. Clare Golf Club enhanced its facilities in 2017 and is attracting new players of all ages to its attractive 9-

hole course. The 1st Clare Scout Group has over 70 young people aged 6-16 who engage in a range of indoor and outdoor activities at weekly meetings.

Clare also boasts weekly badminton and yoga classes. The Baptist Church runs a Friday Club providing table tennis and other games. CLASP, Clare's welfare charity, offers outings in the Park and elsewhere, and monthly seated exercises, to its 30 elderly and disabled members.

Paul Bishop, Chairman of the Town Council, said "I am delighted that Clare has received this award which is a tribute to the hard work of so many people across the town in providing such an amazing range of things for people to do."

Clare Walkers' Chairman and Park Trustee Derek Blake, who co-ordinated the town's bid, said "There is so much going on in the town that the biggest challenge was how to capture it all within the 500 word allowance!"