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Newsletter

CALDICOT CASTLE AND COUNTY PARK

JANUARY 2024

Dear Stakeholders and Community Members,

I hope this message finds you well. We are thrilled to share some exciting updates and developments from Caldicot Castle and Country Park, where we aim to keep providing you with a unique and enriching experience for our community.

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Upcoming Events

Many of our events are now becoming annual fixtures, securing the long-term prosperity of the castle, and providing events for local people that they can look forward to.

As well as last year's events already booked in, we hope to secure two music events, one in June and one in September – names to be released soon so please watch our social media pages for information shortly!

In July next year, we will also be hosting a joint event with Caldicot Town Council to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the town! This will be part of a yearlong calendar of events that the town Council are planning. More details coming soon!



Renovation and Restoration Progress

Our ongoing efforts to preserve and enhance Caldicot Castle are making significant strides. The restoration project is not only preserving the historical charm of the castle but also ensuring a sustainable and vibrant future for generations to come.

The Castle walls continue to be restored by Treasure and Son, a building and construction company that specialises in restoring listed buildings such as the castle. This year they completed the 4th phase of the castle walls and will begin work on the 5th phase in March next year.

This year's Events and activities

This year the castle has hosted a fantastic range of events and activities, tailored to all ages and interests. Some events this year included 'Adventure Cinema' who provided an open-air cinema experience; Shakespeare on the Castle lawn offering an open-air theatre production; two one day car shows and of course the annual visit of 'Dubs at the Castle' festival which goes down a treat. From 'Street Food Circus' for the foodies, to Noel Gallagher's High Flying Birds rocking the Country Park, we hope we have offered something for everyone.

We also did our first Halloween event since the Covid pandemic – 300 happy children joined our arts and crafts session, and followed the spooky Pumpkin trail!

Regarding activities, the castle has an additional new opportunity. At the beginning of the summer, we purchased a range of family Mountain Bikes using Shared Prosperity Funding. People can hire the bikes from the Castle when it is open, using them to explore the Country park.

We will be operating our family bicycle hire next season, and if we can secure more funding, intend to better our fleet with a disabled friendly rickshaw!



Historical Guided tours were very popular this year, and were highly successful with the majority being fully booked. It is with thanks to our dedicated volunteers we are able to offer this experience.

In addition, we ran our 'Little Explorers' bug hunt and nature trail for the second year, guided by our Rangers or our enthusiastic volunteers. We provide the children's equipment, back packs, outfits and even a waterproof for a wet day.

This Christmas we have Santa's Grotto at the castle, a chance for local children to come and visit Father Christmas. Now fully booked for this year, we intend on this becoming an annual event.

To further spread the Christmas cheer, we are opening the Castle to the public for the two weekends in December that we are hosting Santa's Grotto. There will be a Christmas market within the Castle walls on the first weekend, and we will be selling Mince pies and Mulled wine from our tearoom for both!

Environmental Sustainability

Committed to environmental responsibility, we are implementing eco-friendly practices within the park. From waste reduction initiatives to promoting biodiversity, we aim to create a greener and more sustainable environment for all.

Our tea room only uses plastic free take away cups, and we use locally sourced products, for an example our fresh milk comes from Raglan Dairy.

In April 2024, the law will change in Wales regarding the way that waste / recycling will be collected. We have already contacted next years events, to ensure they make any changes necessary to be compliant with the new law.



Community Engagement Initiatives

Your feedback is invaluable to us. We are actively engaging with the community to gather insights, suggestions, and ideas. Your input plays a crucial role in shaping the future of Caldicot Castle and Country Park.

This summer we engaged with the public by conducting a visitor survey, the results of which shed a very positive light on the Castle. Some of the key insights were:

- **87%** rated the experience at least 'very good' with 28 believing it to have been 'Excellent'. No visitors surveyed rated the experience negatively.
- **77%** say they would be 'certain' to recommend CC&CP to their friends and relatives – no-one surveyed would not.
- Most described CC&CP as being 'enjoyable', 'interesting', 'well laid out', and 'entertaining'.
- Only very few associated the site with any negative words or phrases such as 'old fashioned', 'disorganised', 'nothing new' and 'untidy'.
- Those aspects of the site considered MOST enjoyable are: the Castle and being able to explore it all, the grounds, dog friendliness, atmosphere, views and ice cream!.
- **95%** agreed that MonLife does a good job at keeping the site in good condition.



Support us with our opportunities for volunteering

Become an active part of the Caldicot Castle community by exploring our volunteer options. Your support is instrumental in preserving this historical gem and ensuring its accessibility for years to come.

You would be joining a volunteer team that has grown from 4 to 10 active volunteers this year, covering a diverse range of opportunities from running guided tours to gardening and much more.

If you are interested in volunteering with us and / or would like to join, please email Alison Smith at alisonsmith2@monmouthshire.gov.uk.



We will be in touch soon with an events programme for next year, and details of our next stakeholder meeting, where you can give us feedback and any ideas you may have.

We are grateful for your ongoing support and passion for Caldicot Castle and Country Park. Together, we can continue to make this landmark a source of pride for our community.

