

The Friends of Dudley Castle



Message From Your Chairman

Some of you may know that a few of the Friends' members have been volunteering at Himley Hall for the Museum service. This is a project jointly organised by the Museum service, coupled with the tourism and Adult Education departments of the Council. However, it also reaching out beyond just those to include, amongst others, the Zoo organisation, in addition to the other main attractions at Castlegate.

The Zoo and the Council have been slowly working towards an overall plan to stabilise and enhance the complete visitor attractions for Dudley and a comprehensive scheme has been put together for the whole of the Zoo grounds including – at the top of the list - our Castle. These plans will involve an application (or more than one) to cover the repair and other stabilisation of the Castle buildings and then a future scheme to improve the visitor experience with additional signage, probable high level walkways as well as audio and/or visual aids similar to those in operation in similar venues.

For these funding applications to be made, the Friends of Dudley Castle's support is necessarily required, so the 'powers that be', across the departments I mentioned above, are offering to support a drive for new members. This will naturally create much greater publicity for the aims and objects of our association, by assisting us with representation at public displays of tourism both within and without the borough. This will include a republished information leaflet as well as the opportunity for interested people to add financial support to boost the grant fund applications. The possibility of matched funding via a monetary contribution from us, as well as the offer of time with members and other willing volunteers giving help at tours of the Castle etc., will create a better impression to the Heritage Fund administrators.

It must be said that it has taken a while to reach this present stage, but there are sound reasons why it has, not least of which is that a new regime of lottery funding has just taken place and therefore new rules are being applied.

There will be a need for a more active presence of Friends' members at a variety of events to help support this initiative to recruit new members and we will need to offer something to members that we have not been able to do for a little while now, such as better (and cheaper) entrance to the Castle grounds.

There are other ideas being considered so that attractive activities could be put on offer to members, new and old, as well as the general public; any encouragement of new interest and a bigger membership can only be for the good and enable us to work toward a better promotion of the Castle which, after all is our main aim!