

# **Recommendations on the redevelopment of Castlewellan Arboretum and Annesley Garden (CAAG)**



**Compiled by Outdoor Recreation NI for Newry, Mourne and Down  
District Council**

**on behalf of Castlewellan Arboretum Advisory Board (CAAB)**

**March 2016**

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## **1 BACKGROUND**

### **1.1 Outdoor Recreation NI**

Outdoor Recreation NI is a not-for-profit organisation whose role is to develop, manage and promote outdoor recreation across Northern Ireland. This is achieved through working in partnership with a wide range of organisations which have an interest in, or involvement with, outdoor recreation.

Our Vision - 'Placing outdoor recreation at the heart of society'

Our Mission - 'To create a vibrant outdoor recreation culture, through collaborative initiatives, that inspire action'

Our Strategic Priorities - In order to ensure a focus to our work, we deliver on 6 key priorities (as outlined in our Strategic Plan). This include-

- Championing the Outdoors
- Developing Partnerships and Promoting Best Practice
- Improving the Nation's Health and Well-Being
- Empowering Volunteers
- Delivering and Managing Quality Outdoor Recreation Products
- Increasing Awareness of Outdoor Recreation Opportunities

A summary of the work completed by Outdoor Recreation NI to date, within Castlewellan Forest Park, is included in Appendix A.

This report has been compiled by Outdoor Recreation NI's, Mourne Forest Development Manager, Clare Jones. The report sets out the recommendations of Castlewellan Arboretum Advisory Board (CAAB) established by Outdoor Recreation NI in May 2015.

### **1.2 Context of report**

Castlewellan Forest is currently owned and managed by Forest Service NI (FSNI), covering an area of approximately 1576 acres<sup>1</sup> (450 hectares). Since opening in the late 1960s, the Forest Park has been a popular destination for local residents and visitors and has consistently been within the top 10 visitor attractions in N. Ireland.

In 2014/2015, 153,455 visitors paid to use the Forest Park<sup>2</sup> and FSNI has anticipated that a similar number of non-paying visitors also used the Forest during the same period.

Visitors to the forest take part in a range of activities including walking/ running, mountain biking, camping & caravanning and various water based activities including canoeing.

Like the majority of the forests in the Mourne area, Castlewellan Forest Park has exceptional heritage, recreation and tourism potential due to the existing infrastructure of buildings, the trail networks, the Arboretum and Annesley Garden, the Peace Maze and Castlewellan Lake. However, substantial work is required in order to bring these facilities and services up to the standard required of a modern, functional visitor/ tourist attraction.

A Development Plan completed by Council in Sept 2013, identifies 'Key priorities for development' within Castlewellan Forest Park for the period 2013 - 2020. The Development Plan builds on the recommendations outlined within a number of recent reports namely;

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<sup>1</sup> This includes Bunkers Hill, Corry Wood and Clarkhill Wood

<sup>2</sup> Figure are for 1/11/14 – 31/10/15 - provided by FSNI (March 2016)

- The Assessment of the existing and potential tourism development opportunities available from Northern Ireland Forests (NITB and Forest Service, 2012)
- Assessing the opportunities for Tourism and Outdoor Recreation in Castlewellan Forest Park: A Snapshot Scoping Study (ORNI, 2013)
- Forest Fund Business Case (Forest Service, 2013)

In light of this Development Plan, in 2013, Outdoor Recreation NI was commissioned by Down District Council<sup>3</sup> to begin work on the development of the key priorities for the Forest including consideration of;

- The buildings
- The Arboretum and Garden
- Play provision
- Trail development (walking, mountain biking & horse riding)
- Mourne forest branding

This was formalized through a Service Level Agreement (SLA) between Down District Council and Outdoor Recreation NI. Following on from this, a full time 'Mourne Forest Development Manager' and 'Mourne Forest Recreation Officer' were employed with an office base established within Castlewellan Forest Park.

The vision was that this would be the first step in Council taking over responsibility for visitor services and recreation within the Forest Park.

It is within this context, that in 2014, Down District Council, in partnership with Outdoor Recreation NI, appointed an Architect led Multi-Disciplinary Design Team, Consarc Conservation Architects and Cogent Management Consulting (Economists), to complete –

- A Feasibility Study relating to a range of buildings within Castlewellan Forest Park; and
- A Feasibility Study relating to a range of buildings within Tollymore Forest Park

The aim of these studies was to create fully costed and visionary restoration plans that take into account –

- The needs of current and potential users including tenants, visitors/ tourists to the Parks, staff etc.
- The heritage value of the buildings and the wider site.

In addition, the study team was mindful of the potential for an HLF bid and a Conservation Plan was written to reflect this.

A meeting had taken place between ORNI, Down District Council and HLF<sup>4</sup> in August 2014 to discuss potential HLF funding for both Tollymore and Castlewellan Forest Parks. It was agreed that the priority for funding would be Castlewellan Forest Park (or an element of this) rather than Tollymore Forest Park.

Subsequently, a full report titled *"Conservation Plan; Castlewellan Forest Park"* was completed in April 2015 along with *"Castlewellan Forest Park; Economic Appraisal (inc. Summary and Appendices)"*.

In 2015, further meetings took place between Outdoor Recreation NI and –

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<sup>3</sup> Outdoor Recreation NI is working with Down District Council through a Service Level Agreement

<sup>4</sup> Paul Mullan, Head of Heritage Lottery and Una Duffy, Programme Manager

- DOE, Historic Monuments Unit<sup>5</sup>; and
- Heritage Lottery Fund<sup>6</sup>

Following on from this –

DOE, Historic Monuments Unit (as was called at the time) agreed to review the study and provide comments. Terence Reeves-Smyth provided a full and detailed report in 2015 titled *“Castlewellan Historic Demesne; The Way Forward”*.

HLF recommended that an advisory board be established to aid in the completion of an HLF for submission in December 2015.

Outdoor Recreation NI, 2016

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<sup>5</sup> Paul Logue, Acting Assistant Director and Terence Reeves-Smyth, Senior Inspector.

<sup>6</sup> Una Duffy, Programme Manager.

### 1.3 Castlewellan Arboretum Advisory Board (CAAB)



Fig. 1: First meeting of Castlewellan Arboretum Advisory Board (Jun. 15)

#### 1.3.1 Terms of Reference

The full Terms of Reference for the Board are contained in Appendix B.<sup>7</sup> The role of the Board is very specific and is not to advise on the overall redevelopment of the Forest Park.

The following are extracts from the Terms of Reference that highlight the specific role and membership of the Board.

**Role of Castlewellan Arboretum Advisory Board (CAAB):** *The overall role of CAAB is to advise Outdoor Recreation NI on technical issues relating to the above project. The main output of the group is to identify priority capital works and programmes for this project based on the work completed by Consarc Design Group, March 2015 and DoE, Historic Environment Division, May 2015. Copies of the above reports will be provided to CAAB members at the first meeting.*

*Outdoor Recreation NI established CAAB in May 2015.*

**Membership:** *Membership of the Board is made up of individuals with specific expertise relevant to the restoration and development of Castlewellan Arboretum and Annesley Garden. Board members were selected based on each individual's knowledge, experience and expertise in the following areas –*

- *Built Heritage*
- *Trees, shrubs and other plants*
- *Heritage Gardens and arboreta*
- *Community/volunteer engagement*

*Members sit on the Board as individuals and do not represent the interests of wider organisations.*

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<sup>7</sup> This was signed off by the Director of Enterprise, Regeneration and Tourism within Newry, Mourne and Down Council, (Marie Ward) in June 2015.



*There may be occasions where a topic or issue arises where the Board does not think it has sufficient expertise within its own members to consider this fully. In these situations, the Board will seek the advice of recognised external experts in the particular field under consideration.*

The following are the members of CAAB –

- Mark Johnston
- Seamus O’Brien
- Neil Porteous
- Aislinn O’Reilly
- Sam Harrison
- Terence Reeves Smyth
- Clare Jones, Mourne Forest Development Manager, Outdoor Recreation NI – Secretariat
- Council representative Damien (DJ) Morgan<sup>8</sup>

A profile of each member is contained in Appendix C.

Each original Board member signed the following documentation –

- Terms of Reference
- Conflict of Interest Form
- Confidentiality Form

In addition to the Board members listed in Appendix C, the following individuals attended meetings to offer input and advise CAAB.

- Mark Parker, Forest Service NI attended all meetings.
- Alwyn Sinnamon – current Head Gardener, CAAG attended meetings 2 -5.
- Shirley Keenan, Project Officer, Newry, Mourne and Down Council attended Meetings 3, 4 and 5.

#### **1.4 Content of report**

This report draws on the recommendations contained in –

- *Conservation Plan; Castlewellan Forest Park and Castlewellan Forest Park; Economic Appraisal*, Consarc Conservation Architects, April 2015. Hereafter referred to as the Consarc Report.
- *Castlewellan Historic Demesne; The Way Forward*, Terence Reeves-Smyth, Historic Environment Division (DOE), 2015. Hereafter referred to as the Terence Reeves-Smyth report.

The Chair of the Board and the Mourne Forest Development Manager, identified priority issues from the reports and these were brought to the Board for discussion. Subsequent recommendations were made by the Board. This is not an exhaustive list but includes only those issues that were considered over the course of 5 meetings.

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<sup>8</sup> A Council representative attended CAAB from Meeting 3 onwards.

In addition, where additional issues came to light, the Board has made recommendations in relation to Castlewellan Arboretum and Annesley Garden (from this point forward, referred to as CAAG) that are outside of these reports.

## **2 STRATEGIC RECOMMENDATIONS**

This section of the report considers the strategic recommendations for CAAG.

### **2.1 Summary of strategic recommendations**

The following table summarises the strategic recommendations contained within this report and identifies if these are high, medium or low priority.

Outdoor Recreation NI, 2016

Item	Recommendation	Priority
Membership/ role of CAAB post March 16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- A Project Steering Group is established with wider membership including Councillors</li> <li>- Specialist sub groups are established for specific issues</li> <li>- The CAAB sub group remains in place specialising in heritage gardens, horticulture and arboriculture</li> </ul> <p>Sub Groups –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Deal with issues identified by Project Steering Group</li> <li>- Identify and deal with additional issues relevant to their area of expertise as they become apparent</li> <li>- Meet as and when required</li> <li>- Report to or are represented on, the Project Steering group (via sub group Chair)</li> </ul>	High
CAAG as a garden tourist attraction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- CAAG should be developed and promoted as a garden tourist attraction</li> </ul>	High
Name	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Castlewellan Forest Park should be replaced with Castlewellan Demesne or Castlewellan Historic Demesne</li> <li>- The Arboretum and Gardens should have its own identify within the Demesne and the name Castlewellan Arboretum and Annesley Garden (CAAG) should be used</li> </ul>	High
Boundary	<p>The boundary should be enlarged from 100 to 189 acres.</p> <p>This should include –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The Castle Lawn</li> <li>- The European Larch Heritage stand</li> <li>- Area to the north of Rhododendron Wood</li> <li>- The show field</li> <li>- The area of any new car park and entrance/ exit road</li> </ul>	High
Access to CAAG from main road	<p>A new entrance/ exit should be created at the Bannanstown Road</p>	High
Car Parking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- A new car park should be developed to the rear of the castle</li> <li>- A new all ability trail is created to connect visitors from the new car park to the Annesley Garden</li> <li>- A visitor information panel is installed in the new car park</li> <li>- A pay and display system is installed within the car park</li> <li>- An annual permit system if introduced</li> </ul>	High

Item	Recommendation	Priority
Entrance to the Annesley Garden	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The existing gateway on the south wall of the Annesley Garden is used as the main pedestrian entrance (seasonal opening i.e. when visitor services building is closed)</li> </ul>	High
Visitor Services Building	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The existing 'Slaughterhouse' building is renovated to provide reception, meeting space and retail area</li> <li>- The 'Slaughterhouse' building is extended (to mirror footprint of former extension) to house toilets</li> <li>- A new pedestrian entrance is created into the Annesley garden from the 'Slaughterhouse' building (seasonal opening i.e. when visitor services building is open)</li> </ul>	High
Café	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The lean to buildings in the Bothy/ Frame Yard are renovated as a café (in partnership with a private sector operator)</li> <li>- A tender is issued and a private sector operator is appointed to manage and operate the café</li> </ul>	High
Bothy/ Frame Yard	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- A quality shop/ retail space is developed within this area. To include plant sales.</li> <li>- Public toilets are developed to cater for staff and visitors</li> </ul>	High
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Horticultural staff for CAAG are based within the Bothy Yard.</li> <li>- Space is allocated for storage of machinery, tools etc.</li> </ul>	High
Development of a Co. Down Garden Trail and Festival	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- A co. Down Garden Festival is developed</li> <li>- A Co. Down Garden Festival is developed and delivered on an annual basis</li> <li>- A strategic approach is taken with a lead organization and appointed Officer</li> <li>- An Audience Development Plan is created with appropriate resources to implement and deliver effectively</li> </ul>	
Tree/ woody plant survey	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Survey to be completed for entire CAAG area</li> <li>Survey should - <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Audit and recording of existing specimens – GIS and photographic record</li> <li>- Establish health and condition and identify arboricultural work required (including plant disease)</li> <li>- Identify vegetation to be removed</li> <li>- Provide an overall generic management plan</li> <li>- Provide detailed management plans for particular specimens</li> <li>- Prioritise and cost remediation works</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	High

Item	Recommendation	Priority
Forestry infill of historic parkland	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Felling to take place in line with FSNI Management Plans</li> <li>- An expert in heritage arboriculture to consider harvesting plans and identify any important specimens prior to harvesting</li> <li>- Following harvesting, these areas should not be replanted</li> </ul>	Low
Castlewellan Castle	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Consideration should be given to public use of the Castle and the castle linked into the Gardens when existing lease expires</li> <li>- Negotiations commence asap between relevant organisations regarding future use of/ public access to castle</li> </ul>	High
Satellite for other Botanic Garden (s)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Consideration should be given to CAAG becoming a satellite site for Botanic Garden(s)</li> </ul>	Medium
Management of Castlewellan Demesne	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The entire Demesne should be under one central management body</li> <li>- Negotiations commence asap between relevant organisations regarding the future management of the Demesne</li> </ul>	High
Staff structure for CAAG	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The staff structure for CAAG set out in this report should be implemented</li> <li>- The Head Gardener should have control over a budget between £45 - £50 annually</li> <li>- Someone should live on site within CAAG (for security reasons) – not necessarily the Head Gardener</li> </ul>	High
Friends of CAAG	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- A Friends of Castlewellan Arboretum and Annesley Garden charity should be established</li> <li>- ARC should be considered as a base for this</li> </ul>	High
Education and learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Links should be established with various education establishments within the UK and Europe</li> <li>- A representative from Greenmount Agricultural College should be invited to sit on CAAB</li> <li>- A visit by the RHS to CAAG should be facilitated in 2016</li> <li>- Opportunities should be identified on site or at partner locations to store and grow on plants</li> </ul>	High
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Research should take place to identify and secure bursaries</li> </ul>	Medium

Item	Recommendation	Priority
Preservation and recording of specimens	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The propagation project is taken forward</li> <li>- The collation of records project is taken forward</li> <li>- A botanical database is established that is accessible to the public including online</li> <li>- The whole collection is relabelled</li> </ul> <p>The 2015 survey of heritage trees should –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Be taken into account when completing the propagation and collation of records project</li> <li>- Form the basis of a botanical database and any subsequent publications</li> </ul>	High
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Research is completed to compare old and new measurements</li> <li>- A Champion Tree trail is developed</li> <li>- A Guide Book on CAAG is produced</li> </ul>	Medium
Tree Disease	<p>See tree/ woody plant survey plus -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Replace collection of hollies in Winter Garden with particular collection</li> <li>- Remove infected Lawson Cypress to rear of Annesley Garden (infected with Phytophthora lateralis)</li> <li>- Remove dead trees from within Dwarf Conifer Beds (infected with Coryneum Canker)</li> </ul>	High

Fig. 2: Summary of strategic recommendations



## **2.2 Membership/ role of CAAB moving forward beyond March 2016**

For the purposes of an HLF bid, the Board agrees that there needs to be wider involvement in the project from a range of interested organizations and individuals. For example, those representing community, tourism or private sector interests. In addition, The Board agrees that it would be useful to have a Councilor or Councilor's more closely involved in the project not only to ensure support within the Council chamber but also to ensure local awareness and support from the electorate.

This desire to expand membership is reflected in the minutes of a meeting of the Destination Mourne Mountains and Ring of Gullion Management Forum<sup>9</sup> where Mark Mohan<sup>10</sup>, requested that certain members of the Forum had requested to be members of the Board.

However, it is important that the specialism of the current Board remains focused so that issues relating to heritage gardens, horticultural or arboricultural can be addressed effectively and efficiently. Current Board members give their time and expertise for free and do not have the time to be involved in larger discussions on topics that do not necessarily require their individual expertise. E.g. licence arrangements with DARD/ FSNI, complementarity of the services within the Grange Courtyard etc.

### **2.2.1 Recommendations**

#### High Priority

The Board recommends that –

- A Project Steering Group is established with a much wider membership representative of the major interests/ elements of the project.
- Specialist sub groups are established to discuss specific issues. E.g. community, education, tourism.
  - The sub group - 'Castlewellan Arboretum Advisory Board' (CAAB) specialising in heritage gardens, horticulture and arboriculture remains in place to deal with issues specific to this area of expertise.

All sub groups should –

- Deal with issues identified by the Project Steering Group.
- Identify and deal with issues relevant to their area of expertise as they become apparent.
- Meet as and when required to deal with specific issues as they arise.
- Report to the Project Steering Group on specific issues identified.
- Report via the sub group chair who should be a full member of the Project Steering Group.

## **2.3 CAAG as a heritage landscape and tourist attraction**

Currently CAAG is one of many attractions and facilities within Castlewellan Forest Park that when combined, attract visitors to the Park. Other attractions that make up the overall package include the Walk Trails, the Lake, the Play Space (Animal Wood), the Peace Maze and the Mountain Bike Trails.

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<sup>9</sup> Minutes of meeting 16<sup>th</sup> September 2015

<sup>10</sup> Mark Mohan, is Senior Tourism officer with Newry, Mourne and Down District Council

One of the strategic considerations relating to the development of CAAG is could it be developed as a stand-alone attraction that would attract visitors in its own right.

The following text highlights the importance of CAAG as a heritage landscape and concludes that there is no doubt that it could be developed as a stand-alone visitor attraction of international appeal.

CAAG is a remarkable heritage garden and internationally important tree collection. Substantial evidence of this can be found in the published literature and records of its notable trees. In Edward Hyam's (1967) authoritative book *Irish Gardens* he describes Castlewellan as 'the best garden in the north of Ireland'.<sup>11</sup> In Terence Reeves-Smyth's (2001) *Gardens of Ireland* he states, 'Few arboreta in the world can match Castlewellan's remarkable collection of mature trees and shrubs'.<sup>12</sup>

While many of the trees are now under threat, there remain some truly remarkable specimens of great size and rarity. The Tree Council of Ireland (2005) publication *Champion Trees – A Selection of Ireland's Great Trees* lists many of Castlewellan's record-breakers.<sup>13</sup> In Owen Johnson's (2011) *Champion Trees of Britain and Ireland*, the evidence is even more obvious.<sup>14</sup> Johnson lists 20 of the great tree collections in Britain and Ireland that are outstanding for their number of champion trees. There are three Irish gardens on that list. First, the National Botanic Gardens at Glasnevin, Dublin, with 89 champions. Joint second with 40 champions is Mount Usher and Castlewellan. Mount Usher is widely regarded as the greatest landscape garden in Ireland and world-famous for its tree collection. The fact that Castlewellan actually has the same number of champion trees underlines its international standing. Sadly, a couple of these trees have been lost since Johnson's book was published but it may be that one or two other trees in the collection have subsequently grown to become champions in their own right. The number of extraordinary individual trees at Castlewellan is too many to mention here. However, there are notable specimens of *Podocarpus*, *Juniperus*, *Torreya*, *Picea*, *Cupressus*, *Drimys*, *Nothofagus*, *Abies* and many other genera.

Despite past recognition for Castlewellan's importance, the current state of the gardens has resulted in a lack of acknowledgement for its treasures in some recent literature. In Shirley Lanigan's book (2011) *The 100 Best Gardens in Ireland*, Castlewellan is not even mentioned, although 17 other gardens in Northern Ireland are featured.<sup>15</sup> Sadly, this is a reflection of how the decline of this heritage landscape and tree collection over the past decade has resulted in a significantly reduced profile among both the public and professionals.

Halting the decline of this wonderful garden and tree collection is not just a vital restoration task to ensure its continued enjoyment by the public, but also a scientific imperative. As global warming starts to change our treescapes, a few arboreta like Castlewellan can tell us much about how a huge variety of rare and tender trees can adapt to climate change. These special tree collections can also provide important propagation material and be the source of new and useful cultivars.

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<sup>11</sup> Hyam, Edward (1967) *Irish Gardens. With a Foreword by the Earl of Antrim. MacDonald and Co: London.*

<sup>12</sup> Terence Reeves-Smyth's (2001) *Gardens of Ireland. Mitchell Beazley: London.*

<sup>13</sup> Anon (2005) *Champion Trees – A Selection of Ireland's Great Trees. Tree Council of Ireland: Dublin.*

<sup>14</sup> Johnson, Owen (2011) *Champion Trees of Britain and Ireland, The Tree Register Handbook. Kew Publications, Royal botanic Gardens: London.*

<sup>15</sup> Lanigan, Shirley (2011) *The 100 Best Gardens in Ireland. Liberties Press: Dublin.*

### 2.3.1 Garden tourism in relation to CAAG

The following is an extract from the Economic Appraisal<sup>16</sup> completed for Castlewellan Forest Park in 2015 –

*Gardening is a popular outdoor hobby but in recent years, the scope of this outdoor activity has expanded. People are now travelling to visit gardens in other towns, counties and countries. With everything from stately homes with impressive gardens to smaller domestic gardens, Northern Ireland's offerings are already a long-established attraction for locals. However, the growing popularity and publicity of international exhibitions (e.g. the Chelsea Flower Show) is resulting in garden tourism establishing itself as a popular holiday activity.*

*Northern Ireland has a strong horticultural history and has proven itself to be a place where plants from many parts of the world can be successfully cultivated<sup>17</sup>. Garden tourism has continued to perform well in recent years, showing an increase of 49% between 2005 (34,300 visitors) and 2013 (70,000 visitors), albeit this still represents just 1% of the total tourism sector within NI<sup>18</sup>. Almost one third (31%, N=70,000) of visitors to gardens within NI in 2013 were out-of-state visitors<sup>19</sup> which highlights the significant economic impacts which could potentially be generated by cultivating this tourism market.*

*Consultations with key stakeholders and benchmark parks throughout GB and the Republic of Ireland have confirmed that Castlewellan Arboretum and Annesley Garden provides a 'stand-out' horticultural product which is further strengthened through the built heritage throughout the Forest Park. As such the importance of preserving and enhancing these assets cannot be underestimated.*

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<sup>16</sup> Castlewellan Forest Park, Economic Appraisal Final Report, May 2015, pp 34

<sup>17</sup> NITB (2012) 'Gardens and Tourism: Business Insights Series 2011/12'

<sup>18</sup> Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA) 'Northern Ireland Visitor Attraction Survey 2013'

<sup>19</sup> Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA) 'Northern Ireland Visitor Attraction Survey 2013'

The following table disaggregates the number of visitors (in 2013) at each of the Gardens across Northern Ireland:

<b>Table 3.8 – Visitor Numbers to NI Gardens (NISRA, 2013)</b>	
<b>Gardens</b>	<b>Visitor Numbers (2013)</b>
Mount Stewart	159,061 <sup>20</sup>
Rowallane Garden	52,920
Joey and Robert Dunlop Memorial Garden	6,500
Ballyrobert Cottage Garden	4,900
Greenmount Nature Trail	2,359
Irvinestown Centenary Sculpture Garden	2,000
Old Barrack House Garden	900
Orchard Acre Farm	284
<b>Total Visitor Numbers</b>	<b>228,924</b>

It can be seen from the table above that the majority (93%) of all visitors to gardens within NI in 2013 visited either Mount Stewart or Rowallane Garden with all other gardens receiving below 10,000 visitors per year. The Gardens both offer developed facilities for visitors (including a café, gift shop, bookshop, wedding provision, and a full events programme). These examples illustrate the visitor potential for Castlewellan if the garden product is linked in with effective visitor facilities throughout a site.

NITB research<sup>21</sup> suggests that the most common type of garden tourism break to take in Northern Ireland was with a partner/ spouse, with family parties second. Castlewellan Forest Park therefore could potentially have a unique position of offering world-class gardens within a site which also has a strong family-product (e.g. the Peace Maze, children's play, family cycle trails etc.).

The research emphasised the importance of having tea shops/ restaurants and picnic facilities on-site or close-by when visiting gardens. NITB suggested that this was because garden tourism is a peaceful, relaxing activity and tea shops/ restaurants allow the tourist the time to fully appreciate their surroundings.

The popularity of gardens as a destination for family days is relatively high across all respondents taking part in NITB's research. There is therefore significant potential for gardens to capitalise on this opportunity by offering child friendly facilities and activities, and perhaps family passes in order to draw in more families to spend their free time visiting gardens. In turn it is proposed that Castlewellan Arboretum and Annesley Garden would have the potential to become financially sustainable in future as a result of an enhanced garden tourism product. Going forward there may be potential to consider successful gardens such as Kilmacurragh National Botanic Gardens as a case study for the ongoing development of Castlewellan Arboretum and Annesley Garden.

<sup>20</sup> It should be noted that NISRA did not include figures for Mount Stewart. Instead, the 2013 visitor numbers for Mount Stewart have been sourced from the Association of Leading Visitor Attractions <http://www.alva.org.uk>

<sup>21</sup> Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA) 'Northern Ireland Visitor Attraction Survey 2013'

In addition, research completed as part of this study identified the following visitor numbers relevant to this piece of work.

Garden	2013	2014	2015
<b>Glenarm Gardens</b> <sup>22</sup>	Not available	Not available	8,000
<b>Antrim Castle Gardens</b> <sup>23</sup>	137,811	221,253	357,051
<b>Castle Ward</b> <sup>24</sup>	Not available	Not available	136,000
<b>Mount Stewart</b>	150,000	150,000	185,000 (post renovation)
<b>Lisburn Castle Gardens</b> <sup>25</sup>	Not available	Not available	149,541

Fig. 3: Visitor numbers to Northern Ireland gardens

In addition, Hillsborough Castle expect to get 200,000 visitors within five years; at the moment their figures are in the low thousands<sup>26</sup>.

The above research highlights the potential for the expansion of garden tourism within Northern Ireland and more importantly, the potential for CAAG to be a major component of the garden tourism product.

### 2.3.2 Comparative Analysis

In order to further assess the potential of CAAG, it is useful to compare the site to other garden tourism sites in NI, ROI and GB.

Mount Stewart, Co. Down, Killmacurragh, Co. Wicklow and Westonbirt Arboretum in Gloucestershire were identified by the Board as good practice comparisons.

The following table highlights the key characteristics of CAAG and these sites. The aim of this table is to show that CAAG is of international significance and directly comparable to other sites of notable importance.

<sup>22</sup> Glenarm Estate Office, February 2016

<sup>23</sup> Samuel Hyndman, March 2016

<sup>24</sup> National Trust, March 2016

<sup>25</sup> Lisburn and Castlereagh Borough Council, March 2016

<sup>26</sup> Terence Reeves-Smyth, March 2016

Site	Current Area	Designation	Car parking	Visitor Services <sup>27</sup>	Summary of botanical/ arboricultural interest	Other comments
<b>Castlewellan Arboretum and Annesley Garden (CAAG)</b>	100 acres  Proposed – 189 acres	Historic Parks, Gardens and Demesne Register, DoE	Up to 4 cars	None within CAAG	40 champion trees <sup>28</sup>  1750 - Formal park first laid out  Early 1800's - further landscaping, thought to be attributed to John Sutherland  1850's – Castle constructed (architect William Burn), walled garden redeveloped substantial planting (including exotics) of pleasure grounds.  Late 1800's – Plantations of conifers, pathways and vistas added along with follies. 3,000 rare shrubs and trees planted to create internationally important arboretum.	<i>“As a whole, this historic demesne, constitutes one of the most important surviving components of Ulster’s built heritage”<sup>29</sup></i>  <i>“Castlewellan Forest Park can be considered exceptionally significant in terms of historical, cultural and designed landscape importance. The site also contributes architecturally, archaeologically to the character of the area.”<sup>30</sup></i>  NB Castlewellan Forest covers an area of 1575 acres - this includes woodlands known as Ballymagreehan, Clarkhill, Corry Wood and Bunkers Hill.
<b>Mount Stewart</b>	865 acres (2014)	Historic Parks, Gardens and Demesne Register, DoE	Up to 200 cars  (plus overflow parking for events)	Café/ restaurant  Toilets  Gift shop  Visitor information centre	The garden reflects a rich tapestry of design and great planting artistry that was the hallmark of Edith, Lady Londonderry. The mild climate of Strangford Lough allows astonishing levels of planting experimentation. The formal areas exude a strong Mediterranean feel and resemble an Italian villa landscape; the wooded areas support a range of plants from all corners of the world, ensuring something to see whatever the season.	The garden is expanding again in response to projected sea-level rises in Strangford Lough. By 2025, there should be an additional 20 acres of woodland garden, bringing the garden area up to a total of 80 acres. The demesne offer will expand from 2016 onwards.
<b>Rowallane Garden</b>	202 acres (2014)	Historic Parks, Gardens and Demesne Register, DoE	Up to 100 cars	Café/ restaurant  Toilets  Gift shop  Visitor information centre	Carved from the County Down landscape, the garden has grown from the 19th century beginnings of the Reverend John Moore and his nephew Hugh Armytage Moore. Their vision helped create a place where you can leave the outside world behind and immerse yourself in nature’s beauty. The gardens are a mix of formal and informal spaces with many unusual vistas and unique plants from across the world. The trees, plants and shrubs range in ages, size and colour and create a spectacle throughout the year.	Rowallane is being re-planted following some outbreaks of Phytophthora ramorum. The disease required the removal of Laurel which has opened up the garden. The re-planting will be ‘Robinsonian’ in style around the many natural rock outcrops.
<b>National Botanic Gardens, Kilmacurragh</b>	50 acres with a further 62 being negotiated from Coillte.	National Botanic Gardens.  Historic Garden and Demesne.	Up to 50 cars  (plus overflow of 40 cars)  Expansion planned	Café/ restaurant  Toilets  Visitor information area planned	Gardens and house date to 1697, remnants of a French Park survive, this was overlaid by a romantic 19 <sup>th</sup> century Robinsonian Garden from the 1850s. Internationally important collection of trees and shrubs supplied by Messrs Veitch, Messrs Rollinson of Tooting, the Royal (now National) Botanic Gardens, Glasnevin, RBG, Kew, based on the collections of the great plant hunters and collections made in India by the Acton family. Particularly famous for rhododendrons and Southern Hemisphere conifers.	One of the largest restoration projects in Ireland at present, the Queen Anne house is about to be re-roofed and the demesne is seeing its greatest period of planting since the 1870s. The gardens are again a trial ground for newly introduced species from across the globe. Spectacular in spring, particularly for Robinsonian bulb lawns and species rhododendrons.  A policy is in place to purchase any adjoining lands should their sale arise.
<b>Westonbirt Arboretum</b>	600 acres	National Arboretum <sup>31</sup>	Up to 200 cars	Café/ restaurant  Toilets  Gift shop  Visitor information centre	15,000 labelled trees (around 2,500 different types of tree) from Britain, China, North America, Japan, Chile and other temperate climates. Planting started in the 1850s by Robert Holford; the rich Victorian landowner to whom the Westonbirt estate belonged.	<i>“One of the finest collections of temperate trees and shrubs in the world.... A place of environmental and historical importance.... Westonbirt is known internationally for its spectacular autumn colour display, but offers an unforgettable day out all year round, from magnificent flowering trees in spring, to sculptural and bright-stemmed specimens in winter.”<sup>32</sup></i>

Fig. 4: Comparison of CAAG with other garden tourism sites - UK and Ireland

<sup>27</sup> Visitor Services (within this context) include toilets, café, shop and visitor information centre

<sup>28</sup> Champion Trees of Britain and Ireland, Owen Johnson, 2011, The Tree Register Handbook, Kew Publications, Royal Botanic Gardens Kew

<sup>29</sup> Castlewellan Historic Demesne, The Way Forward, Terence Reeves-Smyth, May 2015, Introduction

<sup>30</sup> Conservation Plan, Castlewellan Forest Park, Consarc Conservation Architects, April 2015

<sup>31</sup> Westonbirt Arboretum was given the status of National Arboretum in 2001 by the Department for Trade and Industry

<sup>32</sup> <http://visitbristol.co.uk/things-to-do/westonbirt-the-national-arboretum-p26391>



The Board concluded that there is no doubt that CAAG has the potential to be one of the top garden tourism sites within the UK and Ireland. This is in relation to the extent and quality of the heritage plant and tree collection but also due to the collection being set within the context of one of the most important heritage landscapes in Ireland.

If a comparison is drawn with Mount Stewart, it can be anticipated that CAAG has the potential to attract in the region of 100,000 per annum<sup>33</sup> (See Section 2.3.1). This is subject to adequate visitor facilities being put in place that are managed and marketed in an effective manner.

In light of discussions relating to other sites, the Board also highlighted the huge potential to create a Co. Down Garden Trail, similar to Carlow and Wicklow. This is considered in more detail in Section 2.13.

CAAG is home to a range of exotic and rare trees and shrubs, this is highlighted in the photograph below.



Fig. 5: Schima wallichiana (Oct. 15)

### 2.3.3 Recommendation

#### High Priority

CAAG should be developed and promoted as a garden tourist attraction.

### 2.4 Name

One of the main strategic decisions relating to CAAG is the name. This is discussed within TRS report.

Currently, the Arboretum and Garden is not marketed in its own right. Castlewellan Forest Park is promoted as the destination/ tourist attraction and the Arboretum and Garden is identified as one of the attractions within the Park.

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<sup>33</sup> It is anticipated that visitor numbers on this scale will be attracted only if the Castle is part of the visitor experience

Forest Parks were created following an amendment to the Forestry Act (NI) 1953 allowing for the designation of Forest Parks & Forest Recreation Areas. The statutory basis for managing Forest Parks is now covered by the Forestry Act (NI) 2010. Therefore, the term Forest Park was created as a management tool rather than a brand name.

If the site is to be developed as a stand-alone 'garden' tourist attraction, then an appropriate name is required that will –

- Be specific and unique to the Arboretum and Garden
- Appeal to visitors
- Provide some understanding for visitors about the attraction
- Be marketable

The Board identified the following issues in relation to the current name –

- Forest Park does not portray the required image i.e. an important collection of plants/trees within a heritage setting.
- International visitors don't relate to the term Forest Park.
- Locally people called the site 'The Demesne'. However, *people may not identify with the word 'Demesne'*.
- The Arboretum and Garden within the Demesne have always been known historically as 'Castlewellan' and are now known as such throughout the world.
- The name 'Castlewellan Arboretum and Annesley Garden' provides both the historic link with the Annesley family and the link with Castlewellan.

In addition, there was also a discussion about the name 'National Arboretum' which is often applied to Castlewellan.

For example, on the following website -

[www.gardens-guide.com](http://www.gardens-guide.com)

[www.discovernorthernireland.com](http://www.discovernorthernireland.com)

However, there is no statutory designation relating to a 'National Arboretum' in Northern Ireland<sup>34</sup>.

While the term National Arboretum implies a site of national or premier importance, some Board members felt that the term 'national' might be divisive of communities.

#### **2.4.1 Recommendations**

##### High Priority

The Board recommends that –

- The name Castlewellan Forest Park is replaced with Castlewellan Demesne or Castlewellan Historic Demesne. This reflects the historic importance of the site. This should become the 'headline' name for example for use on promotional literature for the site and brown road signage to the site.
- The Arboretum and Garden, needs to have its own identity within this i.e. as a specific feature of the Demesne.

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<sup>34</sup> There is such a designation in GB - Westonbirt Arboretum was given the status of National Arboretum in 2001 by the (then) Department for Trade and Industry.

- The name Castlewellan Arboretum and Annesley Garden (CAAG) should be used for the area covered by the arboretum and walled garden.

The Yorkshire Arboretum is comparable as it sits within the wider site of Castle Howard Estate. The image below is an extract from their website.

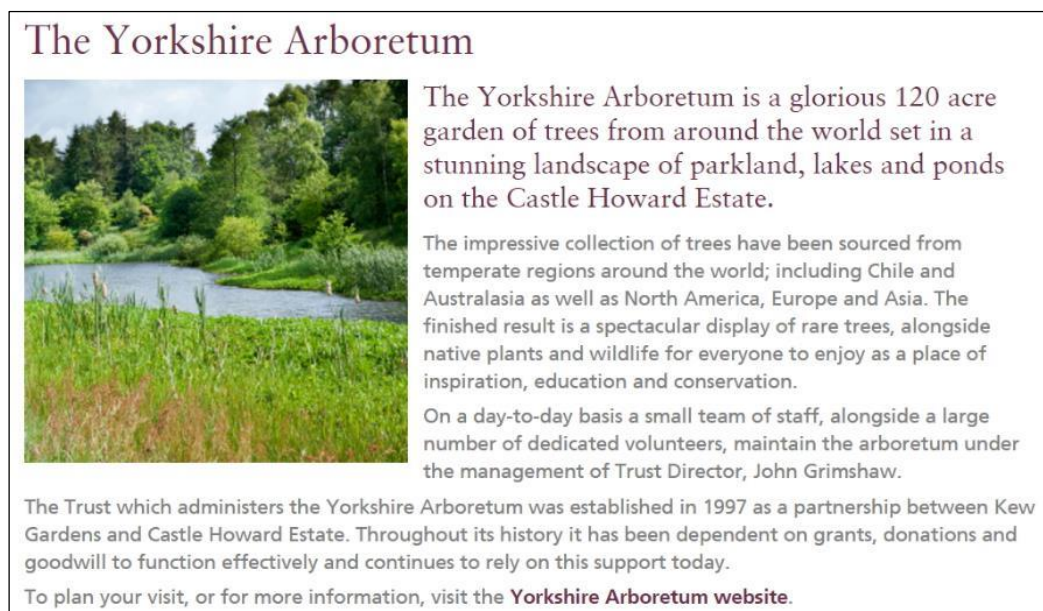


Fig. 6: The Yorkshire Arboretum

## 2.5 CAAG Boundary

The current boundary of the Arboretum (including the Annesley Garden) is shown in Fig. 7. This covers an area of approximately 100 acres.

The Board discussed if this was the most appropriate boundary moving forward particularly in light of a potential Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) bid for the Arboretum and Garden.

The Board agreed that any part of the planned landscape that immediately affects or could affect the Arboretum and Garden should be included within its boundary.

### 2.5.1 Recommendations

#### High priority

The Board recommends that –

The boundary is enlarged to include the following 4 areas –

- The Castle Lawn extending to the east to Lime Avenue – this area was historically part of the Pleasure Ground.
- The European Larch Heritage Stand (shown in Fig. 7 as the Old Rose Garden). This area contains European Larch dating back to early in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. This is of heritage value but also protects the heritage tree collection.
- Area to north and east of Rhododendron Wood – this allows for expansion of the Arboretum and also contains old broadleaves trees. The area is well sheltered and south facing.

- The show field which should be preserved as parkland<sup>35</sup>.

In addition –

- The area of any new car park and entrance/ exit road must be included to ensure that it is all managed as one entity.

Fig. 8 shows the proposed new extended boundary for CAAG. This covers an area of 189 acres, an increase of 89 acres.

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<sup>35</sup> Mark Parker stated that Forest Service NI would want the show field to be included in any license agreement with Council.



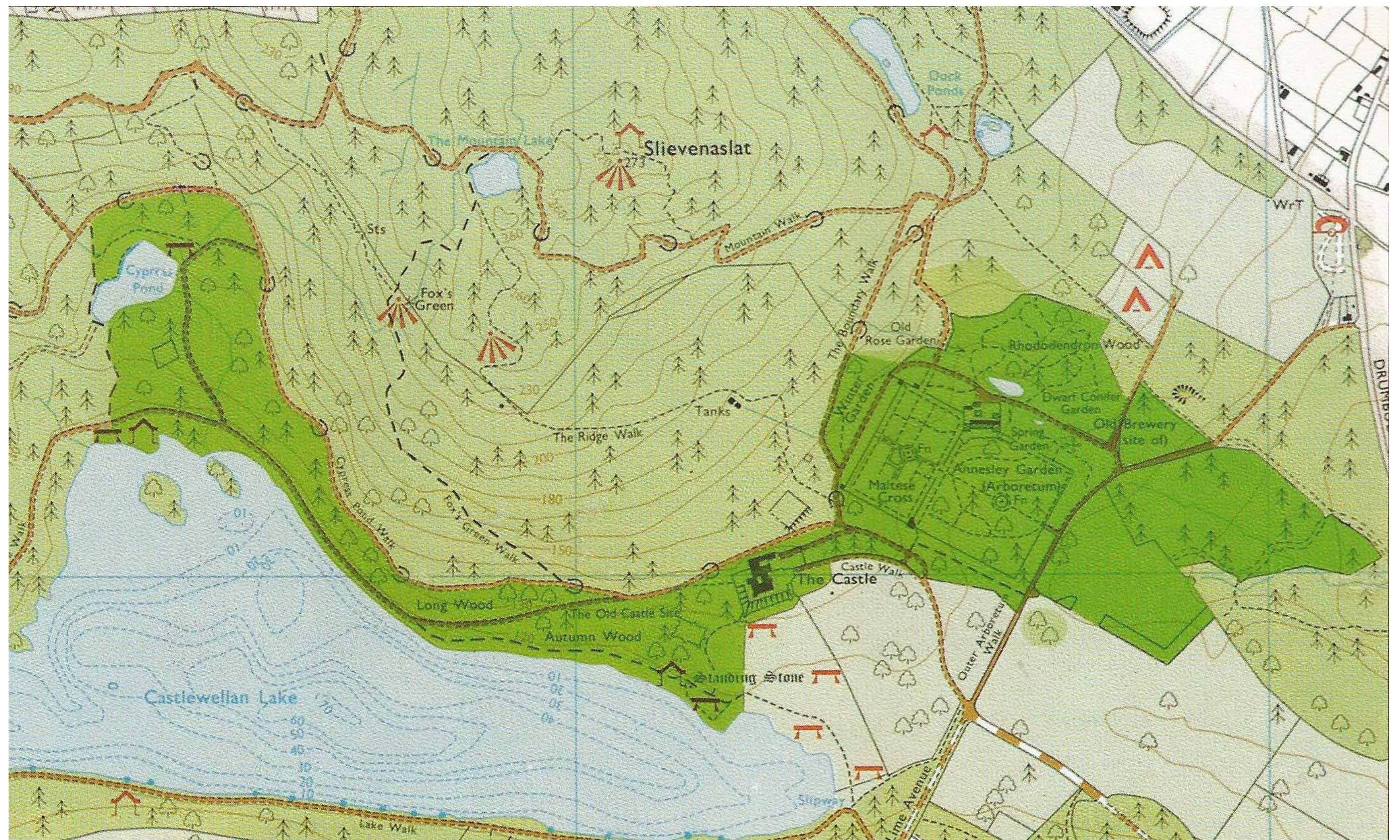


Fig. 7: Current boundary of Arboretum c. 1980



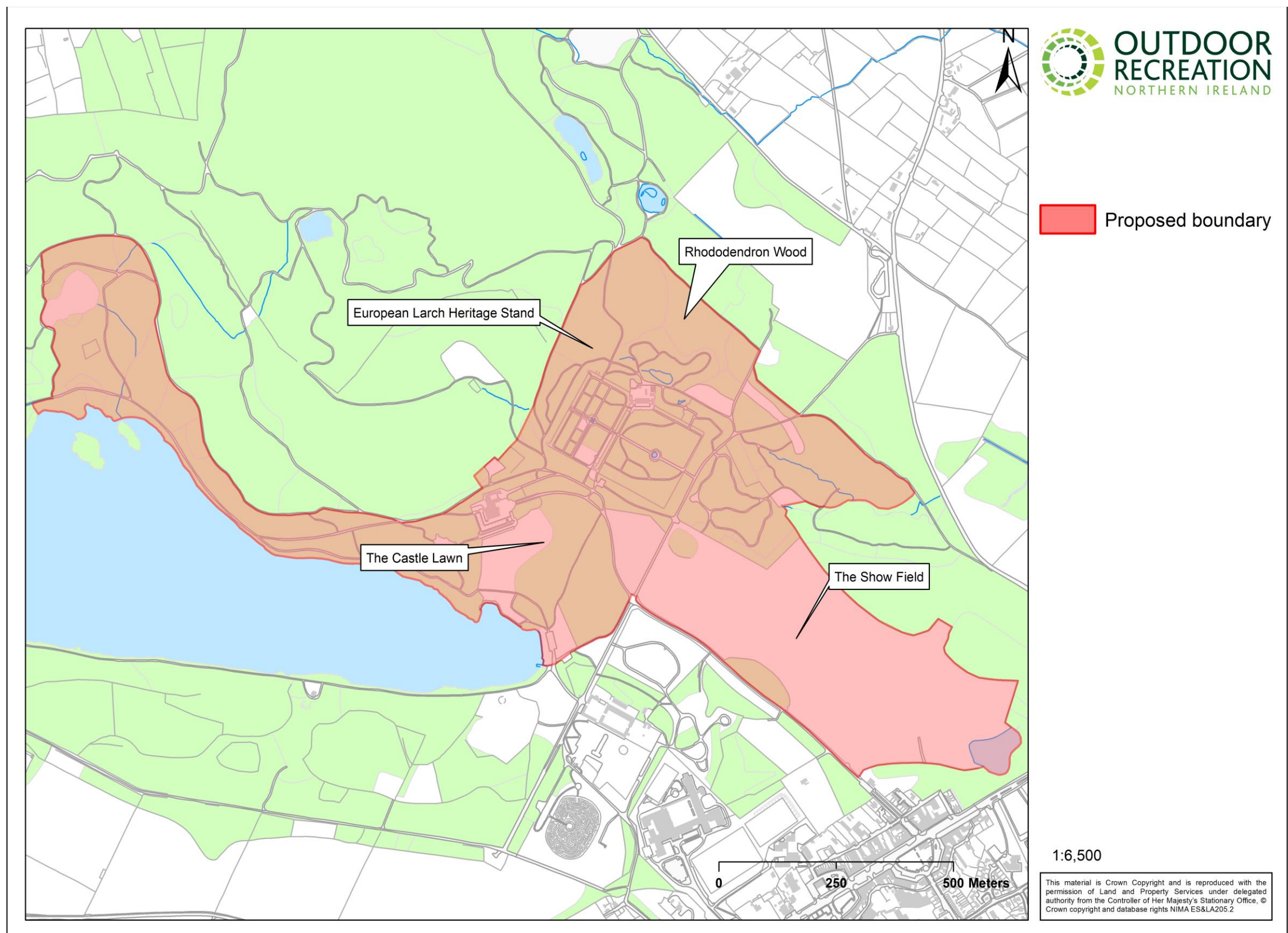


Fig. 8: Proposed CAAG boundary (Nov. 15)



## **2.6 Access for visitors to CAAG**

A practical consideration, if CAAG is to be developed as a stand-alone attraction, is in relation to -

- The main entrance and exit from the main road to CAAG
- The main entrance and exit to the Annesley Garden (by pedestrians)
- Main car parking for CAAG, including for those of reduced/ limited mobility

### **2.6.1 Current provision**

Currently visitors wishing to go to the Arboretum and Garden enter the Park through the front gates (from the centre of Castlewellan) and proceed to the main car park (adjacent to the Grange Courtyard) down the main avenue and up the Lime Avenue. Once visitors park, a Category 3 walk trail branded as the 'Annesley Garden Walk' leads to CAAG.

There are currently 4 public entrances to the Annesley Garden including via the –

- Bothy Yard (north east side);
- Lower Annesley Garden (north east side);
- Upper Annesley Garden (north east side);
- Lower Annesley Garden (south west side).

These entrances are open during park opening hours.

There is also a small car park adjacent to a south west side entrance. This has space for a maximum of 3 cars and is currently for use only by prior arrangement with FSNI.

The map in

Fig. 9 highlights current –

- Existing car parking at Grange, Lakeshore and adjacent to Annesley Garden
- Annesley Garden Walk from Grange

Fig. 10 is a photograph of the car park adjacent to Annesley Garden (west side).

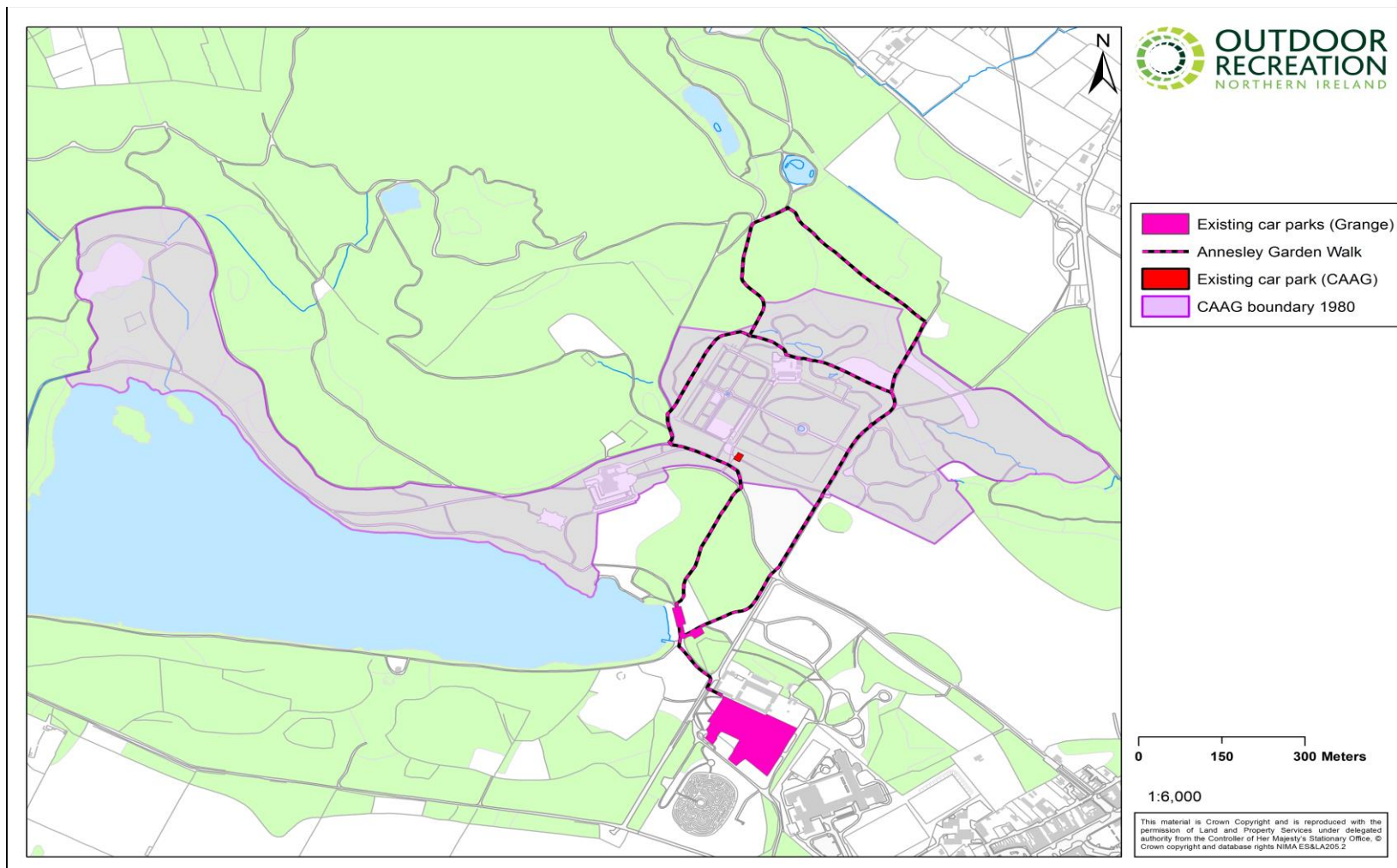


Fig. 9: Map - Current car parking and access to CAAG



Fig. 10: Photo - car park south west Annesley Garden (Jan.16)

Issues in relation to current car parking and access -

- The main car park is not beside the Arboretum and Garden - the majority of visitors are more likely to visit facilities/ attractions directly beside the main car park;
- The Annesley Garden Walk is a Category 3 Multi Use Trail <sup>36</sup> and includes the crossing of 2 vehicle roads. A Category 3 Trail is suitable for walkers and runners of mixed but not all abilities and is not suitable for the following pedestrian users - those of limited mobility or impaired vision, those with baby buggies. The topography and landscape mean that the creation of a sustainable Category 1 Multi Use Trail i.e. All Ability, is not possible without having a negative impact of the landscape.
- The distance from the car park to the Arboretum and Garden is a minimum walk of 800m (following the formal walk trail system);
- There is no clear entrance/ threshold to the Arboretum i.e. visitors may not necessarily know they are in it.
- There is no clear entrance to the Annesley Garden i.e. there are 4 entrances that are open to the public (opening times apply).

The result is that access to CAAG for many people, especially those of limited mobility is not straightforward.

Fig. 11 shows the proposals developed by Consarc<sup>37</sup>. Of note, in relation to this section of the report is -

A – Section of new road forming new entrance to and exit from Bothy Yard

B – Existing road widened to allow for vehicle access

<sup>36</sup> A full definition of an All Ability Category One Multi Use Trail is contained in Appendix D

<sup>37</sup> Conservation Plan, Castlewellan Forest Park, Consarc Conservation Architects, April 2015

K – New car park 90 cars

L – Proposed bus layby/ disabled parking

M – Proposed new visitor kiosk and toilets

Outdoor Recreation NI, 2016





Fig. 11: Map - Bothy Yard concept layout (Consarc Report)



Fig. 12 shows the proposals highlighted in the Terence Reeves-Smyth report. Of note, in relation to this section of the report is -

- The new entry and exit to CAAB
- The new car park

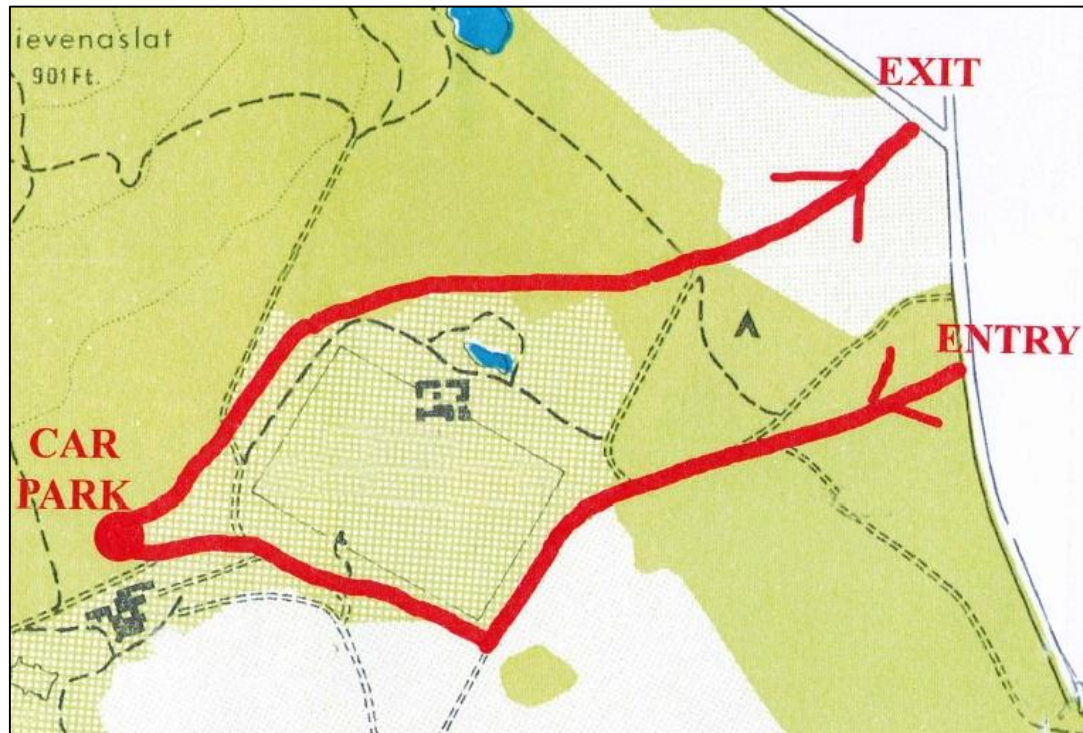


Fig. 12: Map – Proposed new entry/ exit and car park

## 2.6.2 Recommendations

### High Priority

In light of the above information, the Board recommends that -

- A new entrance and exit is created from the main road to access the CAAG. This should link to;
- A designated CAAG car park is created which will be connected to the Annesley Garden by an All Ability Walk Trail;
- A main entrance is designated into the Annesley Garden. The main entrance should include provision of a range of visitor services to welcome, orientate and inform.

Each of these recommendations is now considered individually.

## **2.7 New entrance and exit from main road to access CAAG**

In terms of a new entrance and exit from the main road, 2 different access options were presented to the Board.

These options were identified following consideration of both the Consarc and Terence Reeves-Smyth proposals and site visits. Any new entrance and exit system must be suitable for both cars and coaches.

Fig. 20 and Fig. 24 set out the pros and cons of each option.

### **2.7.1 Discussion of Option 1**

This option involves the development of a new 2-way road or a single lane road (with sufficient passing places), from the Bannanstown Rd to a new car park located at CAAG. A map outlining this proposal is shown in Fig. 13.

Outdoor Recreation NI, 2019

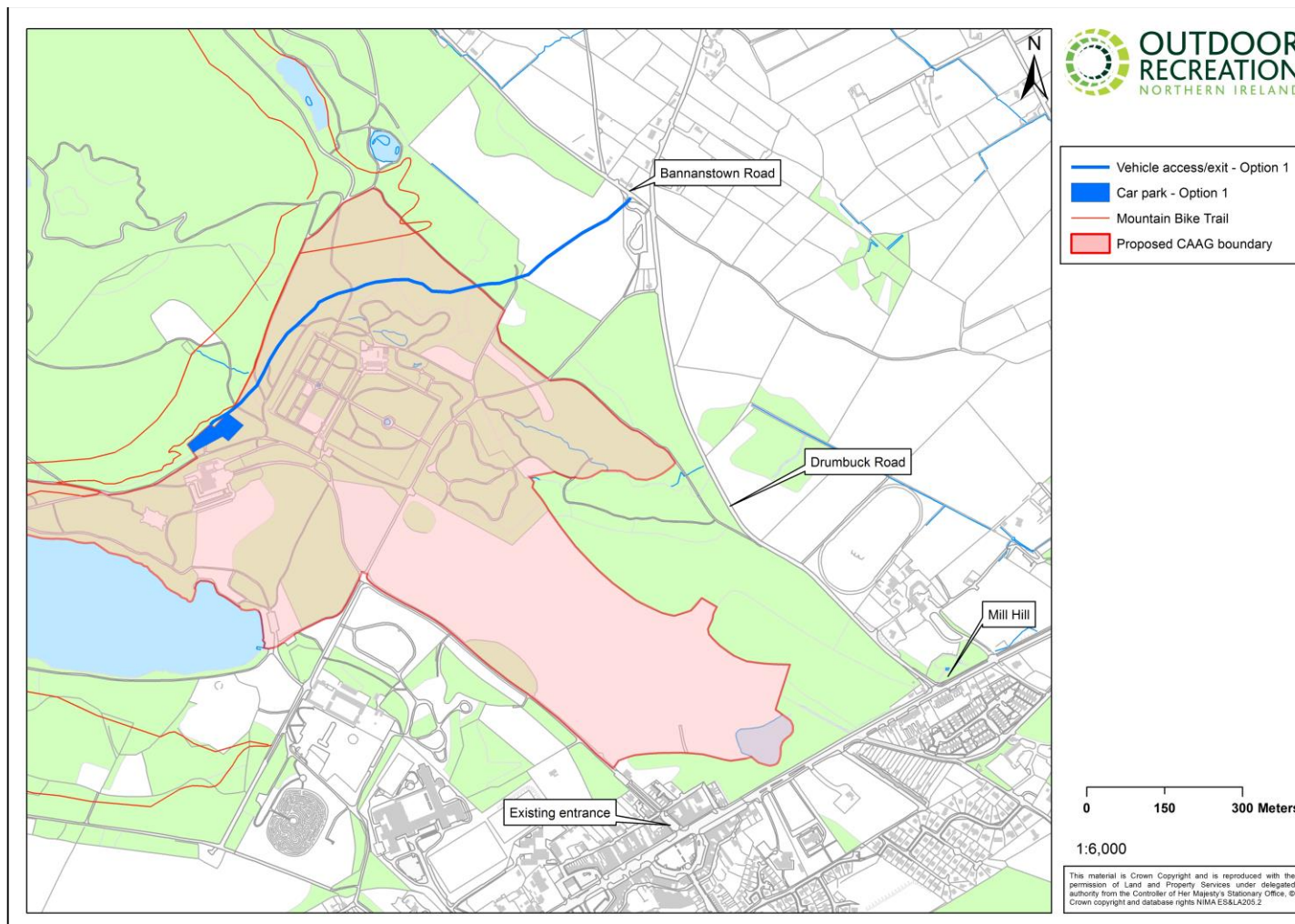


Fig. 13: Map - Option 1 Access



The proposal includes the following two elements -

## 1. Entrance

It is proposed that the entrance would be through the old Bannanstown Road Demesne Gates as shown in Fig. 14. These are currently used as the entrance to the 'Touring in the Trees'<sup>38</sup> site.

TRS<sup>39</sup> describes this entrance as follows –

*"Demesne carriage entrance built in the 1870s as part of the remodelling of the northern portion of the demesne and its incorporation into the landscape park. The gate piers are of ashlar with plain coping stone set about ten yards in from the road and flanked by a semi-circular rubble-stone wall screen about ten feet high. The original gates are missing; now closed by a wooden farm gate".*



Fig. 14: Photo - Proposed entrance/ exit on Bannanstown Rd (Jan. 16)

## 2. New 2-way road or a single lane road across Northern Park

This option involves the creation of a new section of road approximately 750m long. The exact location has not been identified and would need to be considered by a suitably experienced engineer in the context of the potential impacts on the heritage assets of the area.

The proposed new road would go through –

- i. The Touring in the Trees Caravan Park

The proposed new road would use the same entrance as the Touring in the Trees site although would not necessarily impact on the site itself.

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<sup>38</sup> For more information on Touring in the Trees visit - [www.nidirect.gov.uk/camping-and-caravanning-in-forests](http://www.nidirect.gov.uk/camping-and-caravanning-in-forests)

<sup>39</sup> Terence Reeves-Smyth Report, pp123

Touring in the Trees is a scheme established and managed by Forest Service NI. Users of Touring in the Tree sites must hold an up to date permit. This allows permit holders to stay in 11 touring caravan sites within Northern Ireland forests for up to 3 nights at one site. The forest sites are reserved for permit holders only.

ii. The Northern Park

TRS<sup>40</sup> describes Northern Park as follows –

*“The north side of the demesne along the Bannanstown Road was transformed during the late 1860s and early 1870s with the removal of a network of small irregular fields associate with tenant farmers for a distance of over half a mile. In place of these little fields was a long half mile strip of open parkland with woodland belts alongside the road (now removed) and another on the south side fringing the north slopes of Slievenaslat ..... The parkland remained intact until the 1970s when the Forest Service planted the western area leaving come eighteen acres intact on the eastern side”.*

This is currently a grazed field as shown in the photo in Fig. 15.



Fig. 15: Photo - Northern Park looking east (Oct. 15)

iii. The former Demesne wall

A new access is required through the former demesne wall. Fig. 16 shows an existing gateway which could be adapted and used.

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<sup>40</sup> Terence Reeves-Smyth Report, pp 121





Fig. 16: Photo – Proposed access through Demesne wall

At other points along its length, the wall is in poor repair as shown in Fig. 17.





Fig. 17: Photo – Evidence of poor repair in Demesne Wall

TRS<sup>41</sup> describes the demesne wall as follows –

*“Drumbuck plantation wall, shown on the 1810 maps and of eighteenth century date, enclosing the northern limit of the old Drumbuck Wood, built of uncoursed dry stones, about five feet in height”.*

The opening would have to be wide (and high) enough to accommodate 2-way vehicle traffic and coaches. The exact location of this access point has not been identified and will depend on the line of any new road.

iv. The Conifer Plantation - north-west part of CAAG

Conifer Planation is described by TRS as follows <sup>42</sup> -

*An area “..of about eight acres on the eastern slopes of Slievenaslát and lying immediately north of the Rhododendron Wood. It had been flanked by woodland on each side (east and west) since 1820s when it was part of a deer park north of the walled garden. It remained open land until the 1970s when the area was infilled with spruce.”*

A photo of this area (from the south) is shown in Fig. 18.

<sup>41</sup> Terence Reeves-Smyth Report, pp124

<sup>42</sup> Terence Reeves-Smyth Report, pp 119





Fig. 18: Photo - Conifer Plantation (Nov. 15)

v. Clarkhill Wood East – north west part of CAAG

Clarkhill Wood East is described by TRS<sup>43</sup> as follows –

*A... “Woodland block on the east slopes of Slievenaslát composed of largely mature deciduous beech and oak planted in the 1840s after this area has ceased being a deer park. The wood incorporates two large earlier tree clumps. A portion of the wood adjoining the west side Axial Avenue was infilled with conifers after it ceased to be used as a camping site”.*

A photo of this area is shown in Fig. 19.

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<sup>43</sup> *ibid.*



Fig. 19: Photo - Clarkhill Wood East (Oct. 15)

Outdoor Recreation

The following table sets out the pros and cons of this option.

<b>ACCESS OPTION 1 – to/ from Bannanstown Road</b>	
<b>Pros</b>	<b>Cons</b>
Existing Demesne entrance with associated wall sweep. Entrance is set well back from the road.	The existing Demesne entrance would have to be widened, gate post(s) relocated and part of the wall removed.
Minimal disruption to CAAG.  <i>TRS, pp 228 – ‘Bearing in mind that this will be serving the Annesley Garden/ Arboretum for a generation and more to come, it is certainly worth spending large sums to ensure that access roads do not impact upon the heritage asset’.</i>	The extent of new build road required i.e. up to 1km new build. The implications of this relate to – <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cost</li> <li>• Impact on the forest environment - In terms of trees that would have to be removed and possible cost to FSNI in terms of lost revenue from timber receipts.</li> <li>• Impact on the heritage – this may dictate that the road has to avoid certain areas.</li> </ul>
Potential to follow historic line for 1 <sup>st</sup> 100m shown on 1835 map.	The Touring in the Trees Caravan park (managed by FSNI) may be impacted on.
Traffic and pedestrians kept completely separate. Therefore, visitor/ vehicle conflict minimised.	One entrance and exit would lead to a concentration of vehicles at one access point on Bannanstown Rd.
This route could also be used to access the Castle, thereby reducing traffic on the main entrance avenue.	This would cross the existing Mitchell’s Lake Walk (up to 2 times). Therefore, this trail would need to be rerouted or traffic calming measures i.e. crossing places put in place at appropriate locations.
This would provide an opportunity to reinstate/ repair the Demesne Wall.	
The road would be screened from the rest of the Arboretum and Garden by existing mature trees.	
Visibility at the junction between the Drumbuck Rd and Mill Hill may need to be improved.	

Fig. 20: Summary - Option 1 access

### 2.7.2 Discussion of Access Option 2

This option is based on the recommendations of the Consarc report<sup>44</sup>. A map outlining this proposal is shown in Fig. 21.

<sup>44</sup> Consarc Report, pp43





Fig. 21: Map - Option 2 access

This option involves the development of 3 elements –

- i. A new entrance/ exit onto the Drumbuck Road

Consarc recommends the opening up of a new 6m wide entrance with associated sightlines and work to existing Demesne walls. This would be located approximately 50m south of the existing Drumbuck Gate Lodge and gates.

- ii. A new 2-way road to the west corner of the Annesley Garden

This involves the construction of new 100m section of road through an area of recently clear felled forest shown in Fig. 22.





Fig. 22: Proposed new road - Option 2 access

Consarc has estimated a cost of £40,000 to complete the above 2 elements. This includes excavation of grassland, formation of substrate and tarmacing of surface on the new road section.

- iii. A roadway, catering for a one way, clockwise flow of traffic, around all four sides of the Annesley Garden.

This would involve the use of approximately 1200m of existing roadway made up of forest road and existing tarmac road. Consarc has estimated the cost of the associated capital works at £190,000 as follows –

<b>Road alterations</b>	Access – existing roadway widened to allow for 2-way access	Existing access road to be widened to allow for two-way traffic. Length (400m). Allow for removal of vegetation including tree roots. Allow for new verges/ kerbs/ drainage channels etc. Allow for new hedge planting.	£120,000
	Access – exiting roadway adjacent to Spring garden		£55,000
	Access – to car – park (Option 2)		£15,000

Fig. 23: Cost of road alterations - Option 2 access

The following table sets out the pros and cons of this option.

<b>ACCESS OPTION 2 – the development of a new entrance/ exit onto the Drumbuck Road</b>	
<b>Pros</b>	<b>Cons</b>
One entrance and exit point onto Drumbuck Road.	High impact on CAAG. Dissection of Arboretum including – <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Harrisons Vista</li> <li>- Grounds adjacent to Castle</li> <li>- Winter Garden</li> <li>- Annesley Garden would be enclosed by the road on all 4 sides.</li> </ul>
Approximately 1200m of this route is on existing forest roads or tarmac road – therefore hard surface already in place.	Noise of traffic will be audible from Annesley Garden and throughout much of the Arboretum. This will disturb the peace and quiet and general ambience of the place.
This route could also be used to access the Castle.	Works required – <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Up to 100m new build road.</li> </ul> Up to 400m upgrade required to make forest roads suitable for public vehicles.
This could connect into either car park.	This route could lead to potential conflict between vehicles entering/ exiting the car park and pedestrians accessing the Annesley Garden. Consideration would need to be given to visitor flow e.g. crossing points.
	Visibility at the junction between the Drumbuck Rd and Mill Hill may need to be improved.

Fig. 24: Summary - Option 2 access

### **Discussion with Transport NI (formerly Roads Service NI)**

At the recommendation of the Board, Transport NI was contacted to discuss the proposals and an outline of these was provided<sup>45</sup>.

Transport NI responded by stating that in principle there is no issue with the proposal to create an entrance/ exit onto the Drumbuck or Bannanstown Roads. However, the minimum requirements would be -

- Drumbuck Rd/ Bannanstown Rd would have to be widened to 5.5m;
- Site splay lines of 2.4m x 80m or for coaches 4.5m x80m would have to be in place at any entrance/ exit.

<sup>45</sup> Clare Jones phoned Harry McKibben on 10<sup>th</sup> August 2015. This was followed up with an email setting out the proposals in text and as a map – sent to Rowan Laughlin. Harry McKibben phoned Clare Jones on 17<sup>th</sup> August 2015 to discuss.

In addition, Transport NI stated that Mount Pleasant Trekking Centre has applied for planning to create a caravan park on the Drumbuck Rd and that it is a condition of planning permission that the road must be widened to 5.5m and a footpath installed from caravan site to the town. If this goes ahead, this may aid with any future application to create a new entrance/ exist to CAAG.

### **2.7.3 Recommendations**

#### High Priority

In light of the above information, the Board recommends that –

Option 1 is taken forward. i.e. a new entrance and exit onto the Bannanstown Road. This must accommodate the 2-way flow of both private vehicles and coaches and involves the construction of up to 1km of new road. While the Board believes that this would be the ideal scenario, the Board recognises that practical and financial issues may be a major constraint to this development.

In order for Option1 to be taken forward, the following additional preparatory work is required as a minimum (not necessarily in this order) -

- Consultation with Forest Service NI regarding the potential impact and mitigation on harvesting operations and felling/ thinning plans;
- An engineer to complete drawings and cost the development, (to include landscaping post construction);
- Further engagement with DRD Roads Service;
- Tree surveys to assess impact on any heritage trees and identify mitigation;
- Ecological surveys to identify any protected species and identify mitigation;
- Securing planning permission;

### **2.8 Car parking**

In light of the previous discussion relating to the current provision of car parking (as shown in

Fig. 9), the Board considered should a new car park be created specifically for visitors to CAAG.

The Board agreed that a new car park is essential if CAAG is to become successful as a stand-alone attraction (in terms of appealing to and attracting visitors).

The Board briefly discussed the idea of a green transport system that could bring visitors from the Grange Courtyard or from the town of Castlewellan. This idea was raised by HLF<sup>46</sup>. The Board agreed that this is not a practical solution and that a new car park should be considered in more detail.

Two options for a new car park were considered and are now discussed in detail.

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<sup>46</sup> Meeting with Una Duffy, HLF Programme Manager, 8/05/15

### **2.8.1 Discussion of Option 1**

Car park Option 1 is located to the rear/ north of the Castle. A map of this location is shown in Fig. 25.

Outdoor Recreation NI, 2016

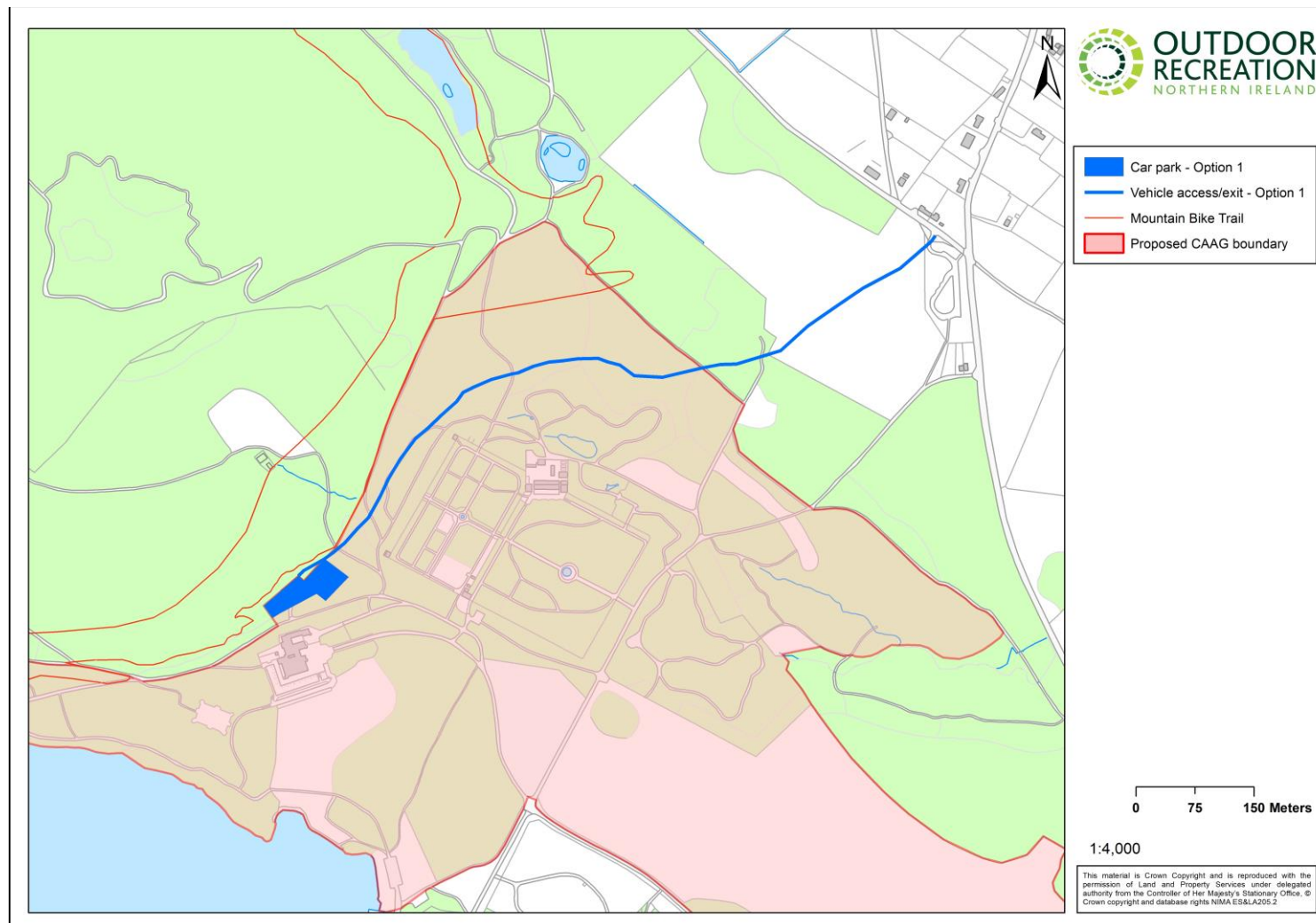


Fig. 25: Map - Option 1 car park



In relation to this area, an extract from TRS report<sup>47</sup> states -

*“Originally a rough square clearing in the woodlands above and north east of the castle covering about an acre. Shown on the 1919 Ordnance Survey map and in the 1950s appears to have been used to grow vegetables. Its original function may have been to hold sheep prior to entering the sheepwash. Since the 1970s the area was largely planted over save a small graveled parking areas, marked car park on the 1987 Ordnance Survey map...”*

The report goes on to recommend -

*“The best car park location for the garden and arboretum is the south sheepwash paddock, behind the castle. The area could be profitably reopened and leveled to provide a car park for both the castle ... and the Annesley Garden/ Arboretum. Large clearance and levelling here could provide space for over 300 vehicles without impacting upon the landscape”.*

The main constraint on this option is that this area is currently is contained within a private lease to Cloverlea Hall along with Castlewellan Castle. The current lease is not due to expire until 2024. However, it is understood that the current leasees wish for the lease to continue and have plans for the site. For further discussion on the Castle see Section 2.16.

There is an opportunity for Council to liaise with FSNi to ensure that provision of a car park on this site could be accommodated in the near future. Depending on the terms of the current lease, this may not be possible until the existing lease has expired.



Fig. 26: Photo – Option 1 car park (Jan. 16)

The following table summarises the pros and cons of this option.

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<sup>47</sup> Terence Reeves-Smyth Report, pp 228

<b>CAR PARK OPTION 1</b> – Located to the north of the Castle.	
<b>Pros</b>	<b>Cons</b>
Car park is adjacent to the Annesley Garden.	<p>The area is currently contained within a private lease along with Castlewellan Castle (lease due to expire in 2024).</p> <p>The current leasee has plans to develop ‘a barn’ on this site to provide an outdoor space for residents.</p>
This site is shown as a car park on the 1987 Ordnance Survey map.	<p>A section of the mountain bike trail would have to be moved up slope and then screened. This involves completion of trail design (by a specialist mtb trail designer) and construction of the new mtb trail (by a specialist contractor) *</p> <p>* In relation to the rerouting of the mtb trail - there is space to accommodate this and creation of a new section of mtb trail at this point could include the replacement of a forest road climb with a section of singletrack (which would be welcomed by mountain bikers).</p>
Ample space for a large car park – up to 300 cars.	
Fits into the historical landscape and could mirror a historical boundary. Therefore, minimal impact on heritage landscape.	
Car park could also provide parking for visitors to the Castle.	
Ability to connect visitors from car park to access for pedestrians into the Annesley Garden.	
This car park could be connected to either Access Option 1 or 2.	

Fig. 27: Summary - Option 1 car park

### 2.8.2 Discussion of Option 2

Option 2 is located to the north-west side of the Annesley Garden on the site of the Winter Garden. A photograph is shown in Fig. 28 (proposed car park to right hand side of forest road) and Fig. 29.



Fig. 28: Photo - Option 2 car park (Nov. 14)



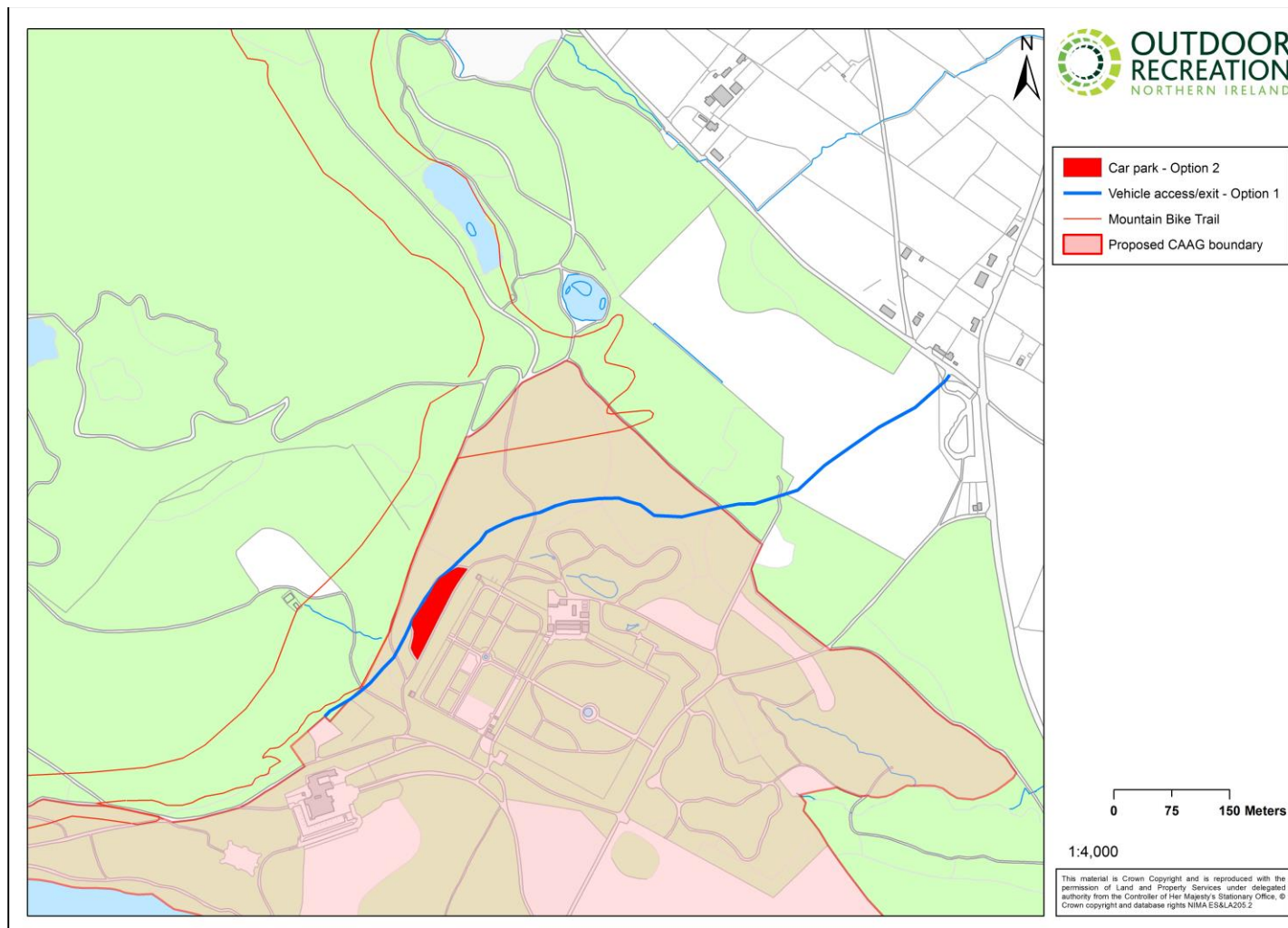


Fig. 29: Map – Option 2 car park

An extract from TRS report<sup>48</sup> details the historical significance of this site -

*'The Winter Garden/ Former Sheepwash Meadow is an area of 4.2 acres lying to the west side of the Upper Walled Garden. It is marked on the 1810 map where it is shown covered in trees and very probably dates to the creation of the Upper Walled Garden in the 1750s when it was very probably used as a slip garden. By the 1830's the area was open parkland delimited on three sides by woodland ..... By the 1950's these isolated trees were gone and the area was completely open, save for the remains of the planting alongside the garden wall. In the 1960s the area was planted by Gerald Annesley with holly varieties to supply the florist business; after the Forest Service took over on 1969 they transformed the area in the Winter Garden with its cultivars of holly and mahonia. The ground of the area slopes gently from west to east and is bounded by a low wall on its western perimeter (now engulfed in woodland); the ground slope of the area becomes sharper at the north end. A demesne roadway, shown on the early 20<sup>th</sup> century Ordnance Survey maps crosses the western side of the area and it currently marks the west boundary of the Winter Garden. Another demesne roadway runs parallel to the west wall of the upper walled garden'.*

The report also states -

*"Cars could ... be parked in the Winter Garden/ Former Sheepfield Parkland, but this could potentially damage part of the heritage asset".*

The Consarc report<sup>49</sup> recommends this location for the development of and car park and details the provision of up to 80 car parking spaces and bus drop off area at a capital cost of £120,000.

The following table sets out the pros and cons of this option.

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<sup>48</sup> Terence Reeves-Smyth Report, pp 71

<sup>49</sup> Consarc Report, Section 9.2, Schedule of Works

<b>CAR PARK OPTION 2</b> – Located within the Winter Garden to the north-west of the Annesley Garden.	
<b>Pros</b>	<b>Cons</b>
Car park is adjacent to the Annesley Garden.	An area of the historic Arboretum would be lost and the Arboretum would be dissected. This may be deemed unacceptable by DoE, Heritage Environment Division (at time of planning application).
The Winter Garden (largely holly) is diseased and needs to be replaced.	A new visitor services building would have to be constructed adjacent to the Annesley Garden - this may be deemed unacceptable by DoE, Heritage Environment Division (at time of planning application). See Section 2.10.1 for more detail.
Access for pedestrians into the Annesley Garden could be accommodated through an existing mid eighteenth century garden gate at the top of the Upper Walled Garden shown in Fig. 36.	The opening up of this entrance would involve the relocation of the Dinah Browne memorial seat as shown in Fig. 41.
The above entrance is aligned upon the main axial path down the garden centre, therefore an immediate impact on entrance/ arrival. This is highlighted by the photo in Fig. 40.	
This car park could be connected to either Access Option 1 or 2.	

Fig. 30: Summary - Option 2 car park

### 2.8.3 Car parking – income generation

The main revenue stream for Council in relation to the development of CAAG is likely to be car parking revenue. If Council wishes CAAG to be cost effective, it is essential that opportunities to collect this revenue from visitors be maximised.

Two management models were considered by Cogent Consulting as part of the Feasibility Study as follows –

1. Pay and display system – this is based on honesty and requires a member of staff to empty the machine on a regular basis and check that users have bought a ticket. While the member of staff would have no enforcement powers, parking notices could be issued to users that have not paid.
2. Barrier system – pay on exit. This system involves visitors receiving a ticket at an entrance barrier (on entrance to car park) and paying on exit (on exit from car park) at a second barrier. The main issue with this, is that a full time attendant must be on site at all times to manage the barrier system and deal with any faults. The income from this option will obviously be higher as everyone has to pay.

Any payment method proposed must consider technologies to allow payment by credit/debit card.

The estimated costs for installing and managing the above systems<sup>50</sup> are set out in Fig. 31.

	Pay and display system	Pay on exit system
Installation cost	£6,000 (per unit)	£20,000
Operating costs per annum	£150	£3,300
Parking enforcement per annum	£2,340	£25,220 (Attendant to be on site at all times but completing other tasks)

Fig. 31: Costs associated with car park income models

## 2.8.4 Recommendations

### High Priority

#### 2.8.4.1 Location

In light of the above information, the Board recommends that Option 1 is taken forward as shown in Fig. 25.

As shown, the car park would be located to the rear of the Castle and not extend further the area clearly shown on the Ordnance Survey Map of Castlewellan (1934).

#### 2.8.4.2 Connection to Annesley Garden

It is recommended that a new all ability (Category 1)<sup>51</sup> trail is created for visitors leading from the car park to the Annesley Garden through the mature beech trees as shown in the photo in Fig. 32. In order to create the required gradient for an all-ability trail, the trail must contour the hillside (rather than take a direct route). This is highlighted on the map shown in Fig. 33.

<sup>50</sup> Consarc Report, Economic Appraisal

<sup>51</sup> Category 1 Multi-Use Trail - as defined in 'Principles and standards for trail development in Northern Ireland', ORNI, 2013 – See Appendix D for definition.





Fig. 32: Photo - location for all ability trail connecting car park to Annesley Garden

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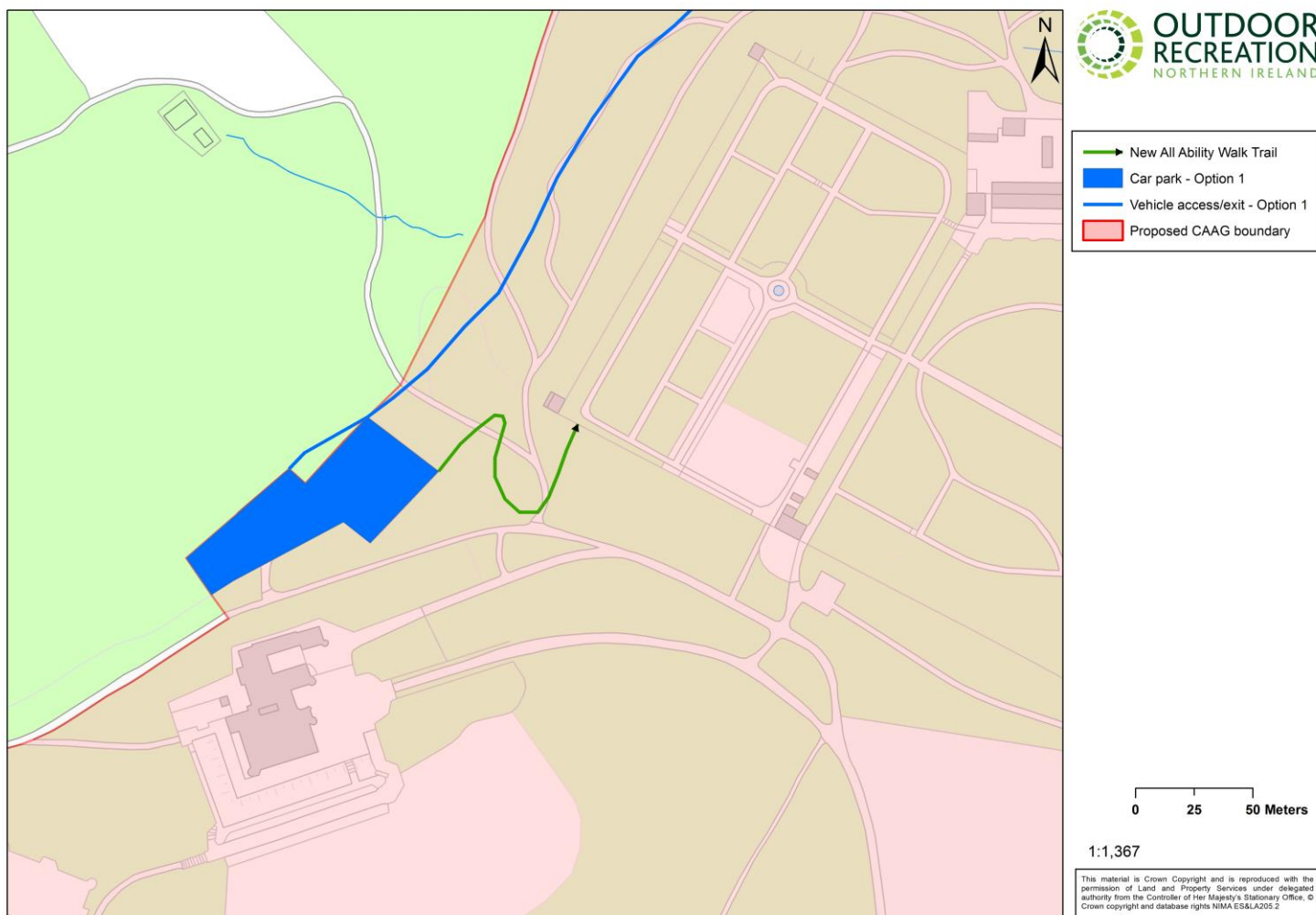


Fig. 33: Map –All ability trail connecting car park (Option 1) to Annesley Garden

A suitably experienced trail designer and contractor must be employed to complete this work. This is to ensure that the trail meets the standards of an All Ability Trail and to ensure that there is no unacceptable impact on the heritage landscape.

It is recommended that the car park includes a minimum of 200 car parking spaces plus designated space for coaches. This will include designated disabled parking spaces. Finally, the Board recommends that the location of overflow car parking (particularly for events) is considered as a priority.

The estimated required capacity of the car park and overflow car park needs additional careful consideration. Comparison should be drawn with similar sites e.g. Mount Stewart

### 2.8.5 Visitor Information

Visitor information is another essential component of any major visitor attraction.

An information panel should be located within the main car park to include the following elements –

- Large scale map – clearing showing points of interest, visitor services, trails etc.
- Information – including what to see, services etc.
- An updateable section – this allows for updates to be posted throughout the year by management staff. E.g. upcoming events, what to see at certain times of the year, volunteering opportunities etc.

This information panel must be clearly visible for users and contain accurate and up to date information at all times. In addition, information panels provide users with information required to make an informed decision about what they are about to undertake. They are also an effective management tool to ensure that users move around a site in the anticipated and predicted way.

The estimated cost of an information panel is £2,000; these should also be updated to reflect any new development. This cost includes design, production and installation for a panel similar to that shown in Fig. 34.



Fig. 34: Castlewellan Forest Park – trailhead information panel



### 2.8.6 Income generation

It was agreed by the Board, that income generation was not part of its remit or area of expertise.

However, Outdoor Recreation NI recommends that in the short term a pay and display system is installed in the main car park for CAAG. As user numbers increase and a member of staff is on site full time, consideration should be given to installation of the pay on exit model.

It is recommended that all users pay a car parking charge of £5 per day or purchase an annual permit of £35 per annum. This equates to seven visits per annum<sup>52</sup>.

### 2.9 Entrance to Annesley Garden

Based on the locations discussed for the development of the car park, 2 options for the main entrance to the Annesley Garden were discussed by the Board.

While the Bothy Yard has a range of buildings that could be converted to accommodate visitor services, this was discounted as the main entrance as it is not convenient to either of the proposed car parks.

#### 2.9.1 Discussion of entrance to Annesley Garden Option 1

The main access point to the Annesley Garden would be through the upper gate on the south wall. This was the traditional entrance point used by the Annesley family in the later 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century, (being closest to the Castle). This path is clearly shown on the 1919 Ordnance Survey Map in Fig. 35.

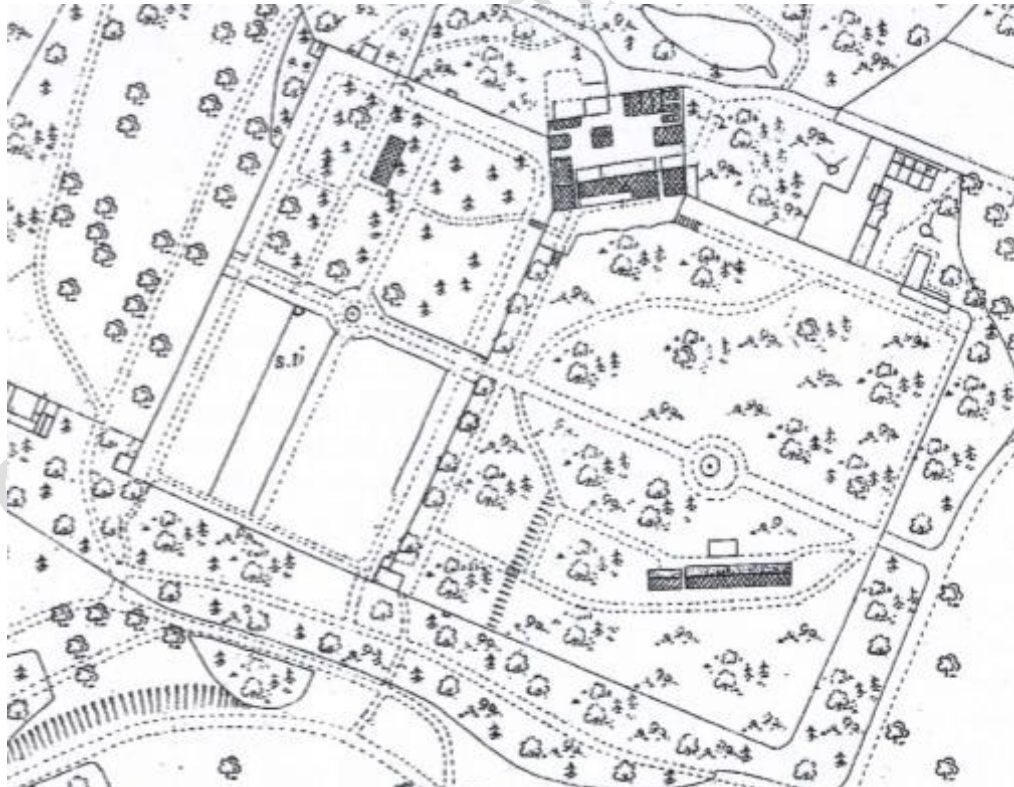


Fig. 35: The 25-inch Ordnance Survey map (1919)

<sup>52</sup> This is based on the calculation used by Forestry Commission as sites such as Dalby Forest.



An extract from TRS report<sup>53</sup> relating to this gateway states –

*“It has a plain ashlar gate surround, incorporating a keystone, is mid-eighteenth century in date. The gate is of good quality wrought iron closely spaced vertical infill-bars, to help prevent vermin like rabbits enter the garden. This could become one of the main visitor entry points into the walled garden.... The path leading to the gate will need to be restored and the area surrounding this made into a lawn.”* This is clearly shown in Fig. 36.



Fig. 36: Gateway to Annesley Garden – Option 1 (Jan. 16)

In addition, the ‘Slaughterhouse’ building at the west corner of the Upper Annesley Garden has the potential to be converted into a Visitor Services Building and include information and toilets for visitors. This building is shown covered in ivy, to the left hand side of the photo in Fig. 37. More information on Visitor Services is contained in 2.10.



Fig. 37: Photo - Option 1 Annesley Garden entrance (Jan. 16)

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<sup>53</sup> Terence Reeves-Smyth Report, pp 73

The following table sets out the pros and cons of this option.

<b>ENTRANCE TO ANNESLEY GARDEN OPTION 1</b> – existing gateway through upper gate on the south wall of Annesley Garden.	
<b>Pros</b>	<b>Cons</b>
Exiting gateway, traditionally used by the Annesley family to access the Garden access path shown on the 25-inch Ordnance Survey map dates 1919 of the walled garden.	
The existing 'Slaughterhouse' building could be converted to provide basic visitor services.	
Appropriate signage could be installed to lead visitors through the garden to the Bothy Yard (with associated visitor services).	Opposite side of Annesley Garden to the Bothy Yard.

Fig. 38: Summary – Option 1 Annesley Garden entrance

### 2.9.2 Discussion of entrance to Annesley Garden Option 2

This location is adjacent to the Winter Garden and therefore connects with car park Option 2. The location of this entrance is highlighted in Fig. 39.

An extract from TRS report<sup>54</sup> describes this entrance –

*Pedestrian side entrance into the top of the Upper Walled Garden, aligned upon the main axial path down the garden centre. The ashlar gate surround, incorporating a blocked 'Gibbsian' surround and keystone, is mid eighteenth century in date, while the gate is of good quality wrought iron. The lower portion of the gate has double the number of vertical infill-bars, to help prevent vermin like rabbits enter the garden. No path is shown leading to the gate on the 1919 Ordnance Survey map indicating that by that time the gate was not used. In front of the gate and facing down the border oath is a fine semicircular Victorian conservation seat incorporating squirrels in the iron decorative motifs. The bench, a gift to Castlewellan, is inscribed 'Enjoy the beauty Dinah loved this place 2001'; it is a memorial to the late Dinah Browne (Conservation Volunteers NI) and was dedicated in 2003".*

<sup>54</sup> Terence Reeves-Smyth Report, pp 79





Fig. 39: West garden gate dating to 1750s as seen from the outside (Jan. 16)



Fig. 40: View on entrance down main axial path of Annesley Garden (Feb. 16)



Fig. 41: The Dinah Browne memorial seat (Nov. 14)

The following table sets out the pros and cons of this option.

<b>ENTRANCE TO ANNESLEY GARDEN OPTION 2</b> – existing mid eighteenth century garden gate at the top of the Upper Walled Garden (opposite the Winter Garden)	
<b>Pros</b>	<b>Cons</b>
Existing historical entrance - mid eighteenth century garden gate at the top of the Upper Walled Garden. However, no path is shown leading to the gate on the 1919 Ordnance Survey map indicating that by that time the gate was not used.	No existing buildings at this location that could accommodate visitor services. Therefore, a new visitor services building, requiring planning permission, would have to be constructed adjacent to the Annesley Garden.
Adjacent to the Winter Garden and the location of car park option 1.	The Dinah Browne memorial seat would have to be moved, possibly to another location within the Garden.
This entrance is aligned upon the main axial path down the centre of the Annesley Garden, therefore an immediate impact on entrance/ arrival. This is highlighted in Fig. 40.	

Fig. 42: Summary - Option 2 Annesley Garden entrance



### **2.9.3 Recommendations**

#### High Priority

In light of the above discussion, the Board recommends that Option 1 is taken forward.

### **2.10 Visitor services for CAAG**

In order for CAAG to become a cost effective and stand-alone tourist attraction, support services need to be put in place for users. Although visitor services are essential, the scale, type and content of these vary greatly among sites from multi-million-pound visitor centres to basic toilets or temporary mobile catering.

Following a discussion and consideration of facilities and services provided at similar sites, as summarised in Fig. 4, the Board agreed that a range of essential visitor services are required within CAAG.

This includes as a minimum –

- Toilets
- Visitor services building - containing up to date visitor information
- Café
- Car parking (see Section 2.4 for further information).

There are currently no visitor services at CAAG, other than the small car park (for use by arrangement) located at the south west side of the Garden. The map shown in Fig. 43 shows the location of this car park along with visitor services within and adjacent to the Grange Courtyard. This highlights the distance of facilities from and lack of facilities within CAAG.

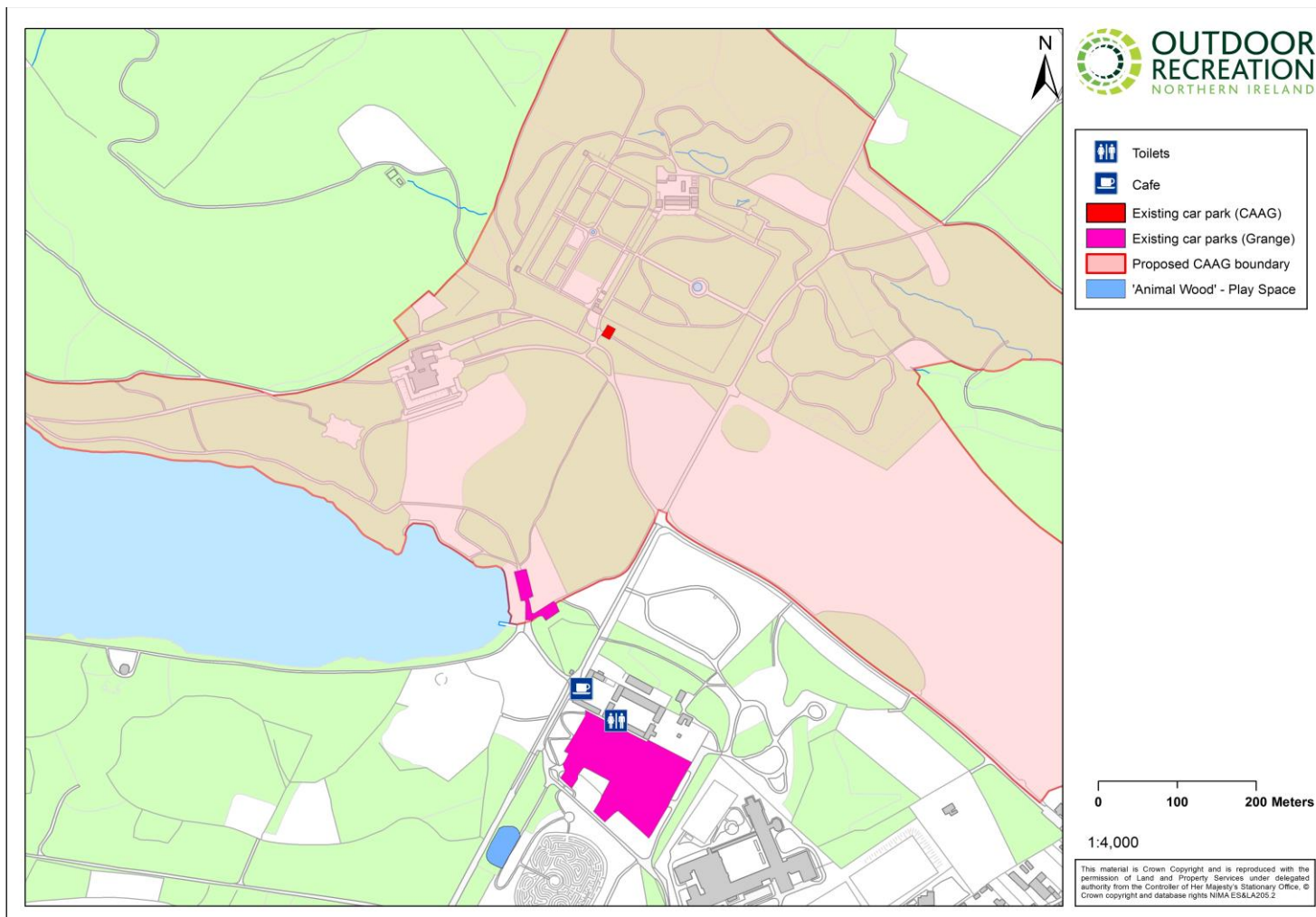


Fig. 43: Map - current visitor services

### 2.10.1 Visitor services building

It is anticipated that CAAG will provide –

- A manned visitor information point
- A range of visitor services including regular guided tours and events;
- A range of appropriate merchandise for sale including for example books, maps, postcards etc.
- Toilets

Therefore, a suitable building is required to host these services ideally located close to the car park (for use of arrival).

The Board considered 2 options for a visitor services building that could accommodate these services.

### 2.10.2 Visitor services building – Option 1

This option involves the restoration and possible extension of an existing building located to the south end of the Upper Walled Garden. This could accommodate information, reception and toilets.

The Consarc Report<sup>55</sup> describes the building as follows –

*“Rubble stone with brick corbel course at wall head, slate roof, brick reveals and timber lintels. Brickwork elevation and chimney to the walled garden side”*

The floor area is estimated at 60m<sup>2</sup>.

Consarc details required works to include “full external and internal restoration including services – connect new mains water connect to NIE”. The approximate cost is estimated at £100,000.

TRS<sup>56</sup> provides additional detail of the building as follows –

*“Single storey rubble stone building, roughly square in plan with pyramidal slated roof.... On the 1810 and 1830s maps there were four such external garden corner buildings, two of which survive... The building is sometimes referred to as the ‘slaughter house’, but there is no real evidence it fulfilled this function in the past. While it is marked on the 1810 and 1830s maps, the building is not original to the mid eighteenth century walled garden and is probably Regency in date. It has blocked door and window on the north side. North of the building there is a length of cement coped garden wall which marks the former presence here of some form of extension, probably a lean-to.”*

TRS goes on to recommend the following in relation to this building –

*“Could be restored as a visitor reception shop for the Arboretum If the entrance was placed at the corner gate. As the building formerly has an extension at its north side, this would allow a new extension to be added...”*

The photograph in Fig. 44 shows the building in its current condition. The cement coped garden wall is clearly evident to the left hand side of the picture.

Fig. 46 shows the building from within the Annesley Garden.

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<sup>55</sup> Consarc Report, pp 61

<sup>56</sup> Terence Reeves-Smyth Report, pp72



Fig. 44: Option 1 – Restoration of existing building (Jan. 16)

### 2.10.3 Visitor Services Building – Option 2

This option involves the development of a new visitor services building adjacent to car park Option 2 i.e. opposite the Winter Garden and beside the Annesley Garden wall. This building would connect visitors to the Entrance to the Annesley Garden Option 2.

The Consarc report recommends the development of a new amenity building at this location. It is proposed that this is a thatched roof building providing a covered information area and toilets. The capital cost of this building is estimated at £100,000. A concept layout is provided in Fig. 45.



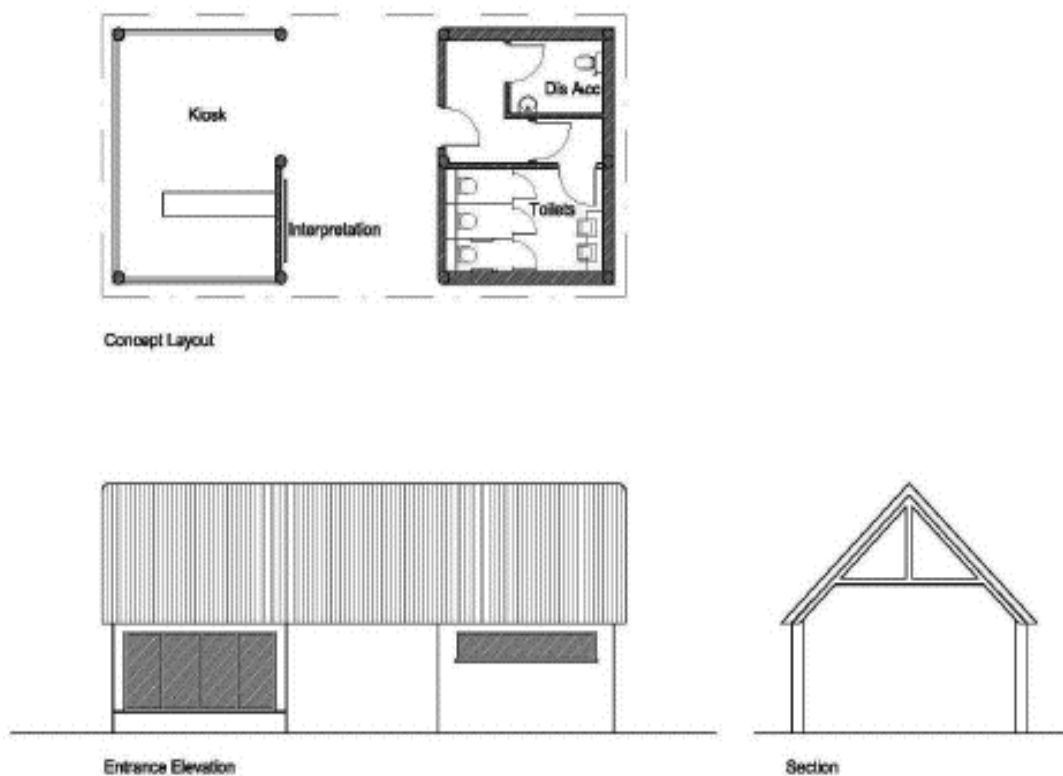


Fig. 45: Option 2 - Concept layout for new build visitor services building

#### 2.10.4 Recommendations

##### High Priority

Board recommends that Option 1 is taken forward.

This involves the refurbishment and possible extension of the existing building located to the south end of the Upper Walled Garden. This building should include –

- Visitor information in existing building including reception, meeting space and retail area for small gift items. The ability to close this during winter months should be considered.
- Toilets – to be developed within an extension to mirror the footprint of the former extension highlighted by the cement coped garden wall. This building should host a minimum of 10 (5 male/ 5 female) including disabled toilets. These must be designed to be accessible if the visitor's services building is closed. (i.e. during out of season/ winter months).

In addition, consideration should be given to direct access to Annesley Garden from the visitor services building. This would involve creating a new doorway in the wall of the visitor services building to enable visitors to flow through the building and into the garden. This could be used when the building is open. An artist's impression of how this could look from within the Annesley Garden, is shown in Fig. 46.

If the visitor building was closed, then the existing gateway (to the left hand side of Fig. 46) would provide the entrance.



Fig. 46: Proposed visitor services building with doorway (Nov. 14)

#### 2.10.5 Café

The Board agreed that a café is essential if CAAG is to be developed as a stand-alone tourist attraction. This not only attracts visitors to the site but generates income, encourages visitors to stay longer on site (thereby encouraging greater spend) and may also provide private sector opportunities.

The photographs in Fig. 47, show the café at Kilmacurragh (both internally and externally). This is comparable to CAAG as the café is housed within a restored estate building that is part of the courtyard complex. At Kilmacurragh, the café helped to treble annual visitor numbers from 27,000 to an estimated 60,000 per annum<sup>57</sup>.

As a contrast, the café at Westonbirt Arboretum is within a purpose build visitor services building as shown in Fig. 48.

However, what both examples highlight, is the provision of indoor and outdoor space.

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<sup>57</sup> Seamus O'Brien, 2015



Fig. 47: Café at Kilmacurragh (Jul. 15)





Fig. 48: Westonbirt Arboretum – restaurant (Mar. 15)

The buildings within the Frame/ Bothy Yard was considered for the provision of a café (and associated visitor facilities).

The benefits of this location include –

- A range of existing buildings with the potential to be adapted;
- This was historically (and until recent years) the hub for CAAG activity;
- The buildings have recently been restored by Forest Service NI to ensure that they are structurally sound.

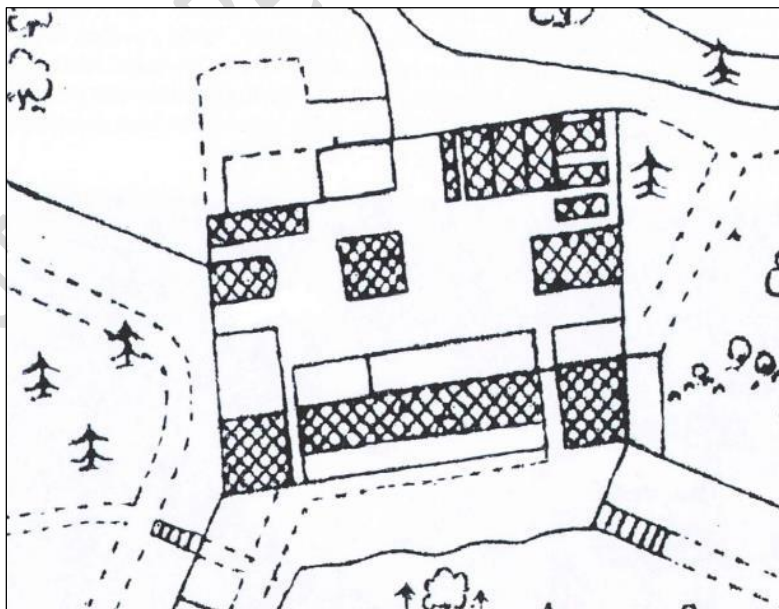


Fig. 49: Frame/ Bothy Yard - Ordnance Survey 25-inch map (1919)



TRS<sup>58</sup> provides a general description of the Frame Yard as follows –

*“The construction of the terrace and glasshouses in 1869-1870 was also accompanied by the building of a frame yard to the north. Sometimes called the ‘Bothy Yard’ it occupies a rectangular area 180 x 100 feet enclosed by walls on its west, north and east sides and by terrace glasshouses on the south. The new frame yard replaced the old one located in the Lower Garden... In its heyday before the Great War it contained no less than thirteen glasshouses, a bothy, and a number of lean-to potting sheds, which also housed boilers in pits to heat the terrace glasshouses..... Only a portion of the original buildings survive in the frame yard, notably the lean-to ranges behind the terrace glasshouses, the bothy and a lean-to glasshouse in the north-west corner. There are foundation traces of other buildings, while others have been demolished leaving no trace”.*

In relation to the development of a café facility, the central lean-to range of buildings was discussed.

These are described by TRS<sup>59</sup> as follows –

*“Lean-to range behind the central glasshouse range of the front terrace. Nine bays with three doors and six windows. Like the bothy house, with which it is contemporary, it is built with slated roof, rubble stonewalls and black trim around doors and windows. The building was externally (but not internally) restored in 2013-14, save for the west end, which has corrugated iron roof, its town windows and doors protected by galvanized mesh. Windows of the restored section have timber sliding-sash openings (3/6), batten timber doors and a centrally placed brick chimney. The building has a coupled roof with replacement common rafters, its principals and purlins being original. Internally it is divided into four room; at the east is a small room lit by a single window which formerly contained a pit for the boiler to heat the glasshouse. This room is linked internally via a party wall door with a central room lit with two windows; it has quarry tiles on the floor and a brick chimney breast at the west end. The adjacent room to the west, entered by a door and lit by a single window, has a projecting brick chimney breast. The west end three bays, unrestored, has one room internally.”*

This range of buildings –

- Backs onto the Annesley Garden offering the opportunity to connect directly into the Garden. This could be through either -
  - A new entrance created through the back wall of the glasshouse/ lean to; or
  - The existing gateway, as shown in Fig. 51.
- Has recently been renovated by FSNI. The buildings are now structurally sound.

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<sup>58</sup> Terence Reeves-Smyth Report, pp 109

<sup>59</sup> Terence Reeves-Smyth Report, pp 111



Fig. 50: External lean-to buildings within Frame Yard



Fig. 51: Existing access from Bothy Yard to Annesley Garden

While technically outside the remit of CAAB, the Board did discuss the potential management of the café. It was agreed that there is an opportunity for Council to engage with the private sector to operate the café, rather than Council operate the café with its own staff.

The advantages of this include –

- Competitive and modern offering to customers
- Ability to extend or terminate contract (depending on success)

- Opportunity for Council to generate direct income. Council should consider the best model for the operation of the café, i.e. run by a private operator with Council taking a percentage of the profit income or Council taking a fixed amount per annum irrelevant of profit.
- Added value, for example the private operator may be able to provide other services (as part of the tendered package) e.g. provision of information on CAAG, selling small merchandise e.g. post cards, brochures etc. Hosting of exhibitions e.g. photographic or paintings etc.

#### **2.10.6 Recommendations**

##### High Priority

The Board recommends that –

1. The lean-to buildings within the Frame Yard are renovated and developed as a café.

The layout and content of the building would need careful consideration to ensure best use was made of the space, that the needs of users are being met, that the needs of the operator are met.

2. A private sector operator is tendered for and appointed to manage and operate the café.

Any contract offered should consider:

- Opening hours – may be dependent on seasons.
- Income from contract e.g. peppercorn rent, percentage of turnover/ profit. It may be worth having this on a sliding scale with minimal charges to the operator in Year 1 and increasing each year dependent on turnover.
- Input into cost of internal fit-out.
- Length of contract/ get out clauses for either party.
- Menu – coffee and cake or good quality home made fresh local produce versus chips, consideration of take away options for mountain bikers and walkers.
- Price point – the items on offer must be priced according to the market.
- Fit with CAAG brand.
- Previous experience.
- Possible management of an outdoor space e.g. picnic tables, bin etc.

3. Development with private sector operator

It is recommended that the internal layout and financing options are developed in partnership with the private sector operator to ensure that this aids their specific business proposal.

#### **2.11 Bothy Yard – other visitor services**

As discussed in Section 2.10.1, in order for CAAG to become a cost effective and stand-alone tourist attraction, support services need to be put in place for users.

##### **2.11.1 Recommendations**

##### High Priority

The Board recommends that –

- A quality shop/ retail space is developed in the Bothy Yard to include plant sales, souvenirs etc. This is in addition to the visitor services building discussed in 2.10.4. Altamont Gardens, Co. Carlow, provide an excellent example of quality plant sales within a walled garden setting as highlighted in Fig. 55.
- Public toilets are developed within the Bothy Yard to cater for visitors and staff.

## **2.12 Bothy Yard – Horticulture staff**

### **2.12.1 Recommendations**

#### High Priority

The Board recommends that –

- The horticultural staff for CAAG are based within the Bothy Yard.
- Space is allocated for storage of machinery, tools etc.

There are a range of buildings with the potential to host the visitor services and staff. Photos of these both externally and internally are shown in Fig. 53, Fig. 53 and Fig. 54.





Fig. 52: The head gardener's office (Feb. 16)





Fig. 53: The Bothy House (Feb. 16)







Fig. 54: The potting sheds (Mar. 16)





Fig. 55: Altamont Plant Sales (Jul. 15)



### 2.13 Development of a Co. Down Garden trail and festival

The map in Fig. 56, shows the current gardens (open to the public) in Northern Ireland. As shown, there are currently 15 gardens open to the public all year round. In addition, there are numerous other private gardens that open by arrangement, for example, through the National Trusts Ulster Gardens Scheme. This map below highlights the concentration of gardens open to the public all year round within Co. Down.

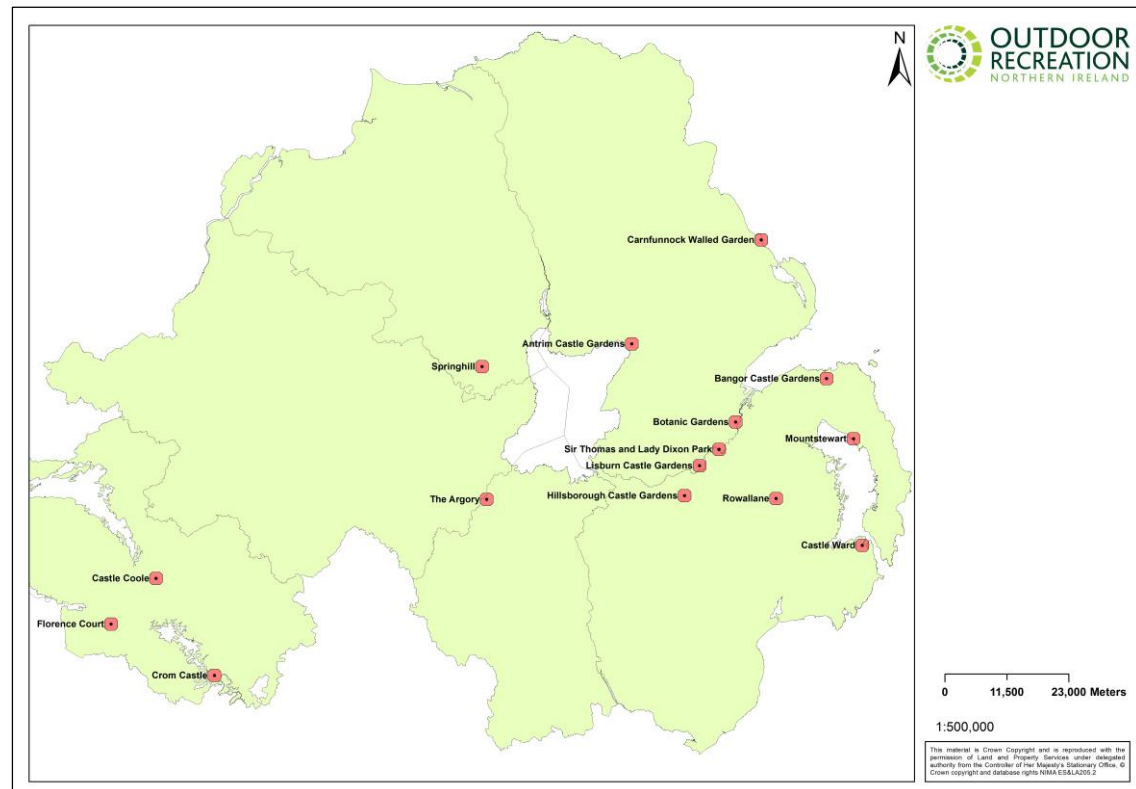


Fig. 56: Map of public gardens within Northern Ireland

Following on from this, Fig. 57 below, shows that 4% of tourist attractions within Northern Ireland in 2014, were identified as Gardens<sup>60</sup>.

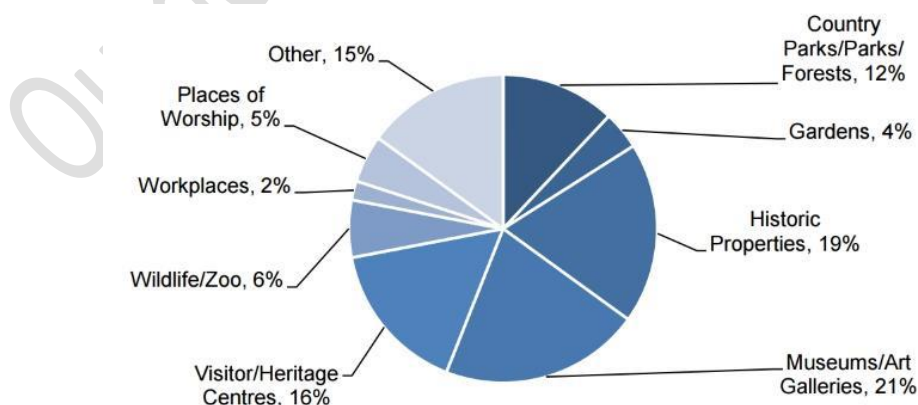


Fig. 57: Percentage of attractions by attraction category

<sup>60</sup> NI Attraction Statistics, Jan- Dec 2014, NISRA, Tourism Statistics Branch

While the number of ‘gardens’ is relatively low, research shows that 342,000 visits to a garden took place in 2014.<sup>61</sup>

Attraction Category	Number of Visitors (Thousands)	(%)
Country Parks/Parks/Forests	5,793	38%
Gardens	342	2%
Historic Properties	1,274	8%
Museum/Art Galleries	1,407	9%
Visitor/Heritage Centres	3,029	20%
Wildlife/Zoo/Nature Reserve	854	6%
Workplaces	21	<1%
Places of Worship	504	3%
Other	2,101	14%
<b>Total (188 responding attractions)</b>	<b>15,325</b>	<b>100%</b>

Fig. 58: Number of visits by attraction category 2014

There is no doubt that CAAG has the potential to be developed as a major ‘Garden Tourist Attraction’, as discussed in Section 2.3. In addition to the redevelopment of CAAG, the Board considered the development of a Co. Down Garden Trail and a Co. Down Garden Festival as 2 methods of enhancing the appeal of Co. Down and most importantly here, the appeal of CAAG as a tourist destination.

Additionally, the Board agreed that the development of CAAG could act as a catalyst for raising the profile of other gardens within Northern Ireland.



Fig. 59: Altamont Gardens – Carlow Garden Trail

<sup>61</sup> Visitor attraction survey, 2014, Additional charts and tables online, NISRA, Tourism Statistics Branch

### 2.13.1 Co. Down Garden Trail

A garden trail includes a series of quality gardens, open to the public, within a defined area (normally a County or region). Many trails have branded road signage to direct visitors to each garden site, as highlighted in Fig. 60.



Fig. 60: Road signage - Carlow Garden Trail

There are numerous garden trails throughout Ireland including Antrim, Boyne Valley, Donegal, Carlow and Wexford.

Antrim Garden Trail, including eight gardens is described by Tourism NI as follows -

*“The Antrim Garden Trail includes some of the most distinguished public and private gardens whose discovery will be the highlight of many a garden tour or afternoon out. Some of the gardens are open to the public with specific opening days and times, while others are open by appointment. All the information relating to opening times, contact details and locations for the gardens, can be accessed on [www.antrimgardens.com](http://www.antrimgardens.com) or gardens can be contacted by telephone. Individual visitors as well as groups are welcome, however larger groups should book in advance to avoid disappointment. In some cases, special tours and refreshments can be arranged at an additional charge”.*<sup>62</sup>

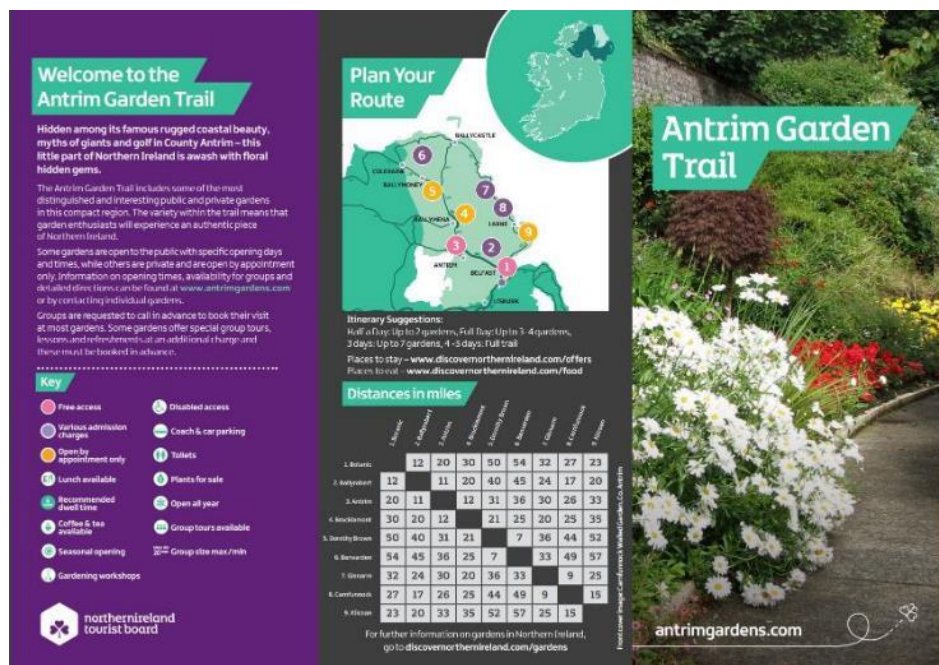


Fig. 61: Antrim Garden Trail leaflet

<sup>62</sup> [www.discovernorthernireland.com/gardens/Antrim-Garden-Trail-A2130](http://www.discovernorthernireland.com/gardens/Antrim-Garden-Trail-A2130)



An extract of the Wexford Garden Trail website is shown in Fig. 62. As is shown, this website includes comprehensive information including maps, events, opening times etc.



Fig. 62: Wexford Garden Trail

### 2.13.2 Garden Festival

A garden festival is an event held over a few days to a week. Numerous public and private gardens are open to the public at agreed times throughout the week – these may be additional to those on the Garden Trail. Talks and events are held at each site with bookings taken for most events (due to limited capacity). A good example is the annual Carlow Garden Festival that attracts thousands of visitors annually. Talks and tours by prominent gardeners such as Dr Matthew Jebb<sup>63</sup> attract hundreds of participants as shown in the photos below.

<sup>63</sup> Dr Matthew Jebb is Director of the National Botanic Gardens in Glasnevin, Dublin





Fig. 63: Carlow Garden Festival – Altamont Gardens Tour July 2015

### 2.13.3 Recommendations

#### High Priority

The Board recommends –

- That a Co. Down Garden Trail is developed that would include public gardens such as Rowallane, Mount Stewart & Castlewellan Arboretum and Annesley Garden.
- A strategic approach is taken to this development as the sites are within multiple Council areas. A lead organisation and appointed Officer is required to take the project forward.
- That a Co. Down Garden Festival is developed and delivered on an annual basis,
- The Garden Festival should include –
  - A range of gardens including small-scale gardens,

- Private gardens should be included (with permission from the landowner) e.g. Ringdufferin, Rosemount etc.
- An Audience Development Plan is created with appropriate financial resources allocated to implement and deliver the plan.

## **2.14 Tree/ woody plant survey**

Throughout the Terence Reeves-Smyth report there is frequent mention of the need to conduct a detailed tree/ woody plant survey of certain areas before various works are undertaken. Members were asked for their views on the nature and extent of the survey work required and the priority this work should be given.

### **2.14.1 Recommendations**

#### High Priority

The Board recommends that a full tree and woody plant survey is completed for the entire CAAG area. This should be done –

- Within the context of this being a historic and designed landscape with a valuable heritage collection.
- By a paid arboriculture consultant with botanical expertise (including advanced plant identification skills).
- With the advice of CAAB including agreement on the Terms of Reference for this work.

This survey should –

- Audit and record existing trees and woody plants. To be mapped on GIS, photographed and tagged (where appropriate) and manually recorded.
- Establish the health and condition of all specimens and identify what arboricultural work is required.
- Identify what vegetation should be removed.
- Provide an overall generic management plan for the trees and woody plants within CAAG. This plan should provide recommendations for remediation works that will ensure –
  - Preservation/ conservation of the specimens and;
  - Site safety (for managers and visitors)
- Prioritise and cost all remediation work.

## **2.15 Forestry infill of historic parkland**

*'The parkland at Castlewellan is largely of early 19<sup>th</sup> century Regency date though it incorporates both mid-18<sup>th</sup> century and later Victorian features. It was designed in the picturesque fashion, almost certainly by John Sutherland, the celebrated landscape gardener...'*<sup>64</sup>

During the 1900s numerous areas of heritage parkland were filled in with substantial tree planting including in many cases conifers.

The Board discussed should the forestry infill be removed when the time comes for harvesting or in some cases, should this be retained for heritage value. For example,

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<sup>64</sup> Terence Reeves-Smyth report, pp 237

conifers planted by Gerard Annesley in 1950s. The aim of this removal would be to return the landscape to the original 'parkland' design.

### 2.15.1 Recommendations

#### Low Priority

The Board recommends –

- The long-term priority should be to open up this landscape and restore it to what it once was;
- Felling should take place in line with FSNI Down Management Plan (no need for this to be advanced);
- An expert in heritage arboriculture should consider the harvesting plans and identify any important specimens before felling to ensure that they are preserved;
- When harvesting occurs within these areas, these should not be replanted.

### 2.16 Castlewellan Castle

Castlewellan Castle was designed by Scottish architect William Burn in a Scottish Baronial style using local Mourne granite. It is of architectural significance having been designated as B+ listing by DoE Historic Environment Division.

The Consarc Report<sup>65</sup> describes the current condition of the Castle as follows –

*“The castle is in fairly good condition, having been well maintained over the past number of years. However, some of the existing windows to the principle [sic] rooms are in need of restoration and the granite walls are showing signs of water ingress. There is evidence of water ingress to the internal fabric of the building with staining and damp patches on ceilings”.*

The building is currently leased from DARD (Forest Service NI) to Cloverlea Hall, a Christian organisation that provides accommodation (in 3 Christian Conference Centres through the UK) for Christian organisations to run residential programmes. The current lease is due to expire in 2024 and was issued in the 1970s. It is understood that the current leasees wish for the lease to continue.

TRS Report<sup>66</sup> suggests 3 options including –

- Extension of the lease to the present occupants; and,
- The development of a hotel

However, TRS recommends the following option *“..lease the building to a company for use as a commercial conference and wedding venue.... Under this option, some rooms in the Castle could be set aside for the use of wedding guests staying overnight.”*

A comparison was drawn with Brownlow House, Lurgan.

An extract from the Brownlow House website<sup>67</sup> describes the venue and product offering –

*“... This stunning venue, steeped in history and situated in historical Lurgan is a beautiful undiscovered gem and is the ideal venue for weddings, functions and conferences in Northern Ireland. The setting of Brownlow House is a recently restored 19th century mansion, located next to Lurgan Park. The beautiful building perfectly complements the*

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<sup>65</sup> Consarc Report, pp18

<sup>66</sup> Terence Reeves-Smyth Report, pp 234

<sup>67</sup> [www.brownlowhouse.com](http://www.brownlowhouse.com)

*exclusive service on offer to both corporate and private clients. Our aim is to exceed all our customers expectations and ensure their event is successful, enjoyable and most importantly, memorable, no matter how large or small."*

The Consarc Report identifies a series of 'Risks and Opportunities' and suggested mitigation within the Conservation Plan. This includes (in relation to the Castle)<sup>68</sup> –

Risk - "Castlewellan Castle remains not accessible to the public

*Mitigation: Liaising with the castle tenants to ascertain their medium and long term objectives for the building and its inclusion within the forest park and to develop a plan of action into increasing accessibility for visitors to the castle. This could include provision of café facilities and providing guided tours of the building."*

The report goes on to identify an opportunity –

*"Improved integration between the Castlewellan castle and the park, maintaining and enhancing the historical integrity of the site."*

The Board identified the importance of the Castle becoming an integral part of CAAG and an essential component of the development of

- a) A tourist attraction
- b) A community facility

#### **2.16.1 Recommendations**

##### High Priority

The Board recommends

- That consideration is given to public use of the Castle with the Castle linked into the Gardens (in some way) when the current lease expires;
- Negotiations commence asap between FSNI, Council and Cloverlea Hall regarding the future use of/ public access to the Castle.

#### **2.17 Satellite for other Botanic Garden(s)**

##### Medium Priority

The Board discussed and recommends –

- Consideration be given to CAAG becoming a satellite site for other prestigious Botanic Gardens such as Glasnevin, Edinburgh or Kew gardens. The current Board members have contacts within these spheres to initiate discussions/consider options.

#### **2.18 Management of Castlewellan Demesne**

TRS report states *"it must be recognized that the historic park, the gardens and arboretum, cannot be divorced from management of the woodlands and lake. All are closely interwoven into the one composition and any attempt to start dividing responsibilities for the property could spell long term disaster"*.

Currently DARD (FSNI) has in place with Council –

A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU);

Various license agreements for named facilities e.g. walk trails, play space etc.

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<sup>68</sup> Consarc report, pp23



These agreements clearly state that DARD retains overall management for the site and it is likely that this will remain the case for the medium to long term. The following is an extract from the FSNI 2009 publication, 'A Strategy to Develop the Recreational and Social Use of Our Forests'<sup>69</sup>, which sets out the principles for the development and management of recreational and social use facilities within NI forests –

*"We believe that working in partnership with others to develop and manage recreational and social use facilities in our forests will be critical to the success of this Strategy. Partnership working offers benefits to users in terms of improvements in practice and delivery... Our aim will be to encourage potential recreational providers to make use of Forest Service land under appropriate arrangements which will vary depending on the type and scale of the proposal, and its likely benefits in terms of economic return or value to the local community"*

The Board also considered staffing structures for the Demesne, however, it was agreed that this was an issue for FSNI and Council and not within the remit of the Board.

### **2.18.1 Recommendations**

#### High Priority

The Board recommends that –

- The development and management of recreational and social use facilities within the Demesne should be under one central management body, (in line with the parameters of the MoU, licence and lease arrangements);
- Negotiations commence asap between FSNI and Council regarding future development and management of recreational and social use facilities of the Demesne.

### **2.19 Staff Structure for CAAG**

There will be a range of staff required to manage and maintain the entire Castlewellan Demesne. Overall responsibility for all staff and management will be with the Castlewellan Demesne Manager. It is for Council to set up and agree the overall management structure for the entire Demesne. However, roles are likely to include -

Legal, finance, administration, marketing & events, HR, visitor services/ reception staff, cleaning, Recreation Management Staff including rangers, managing leases with private sector etc. Consideration also needs to be given to the role of the private sector and issuing tenders for their appointment (if applicable). Some or all of these roles could be provided by Council or an independent Trust or other management model could be established. More information is contained in the Consarc Report, Economic Appraisal.

In relation to the staff structure for CAAG, the Mourne Forest Manager prepared a handout titled 'Castlewellan Arboretum and Annesley Garden – Proposed Staffing Structure, November 2015'. This was circulated to the Board and a discussion took place. Subsequent revisions were made.

### **2.19.1 Recommendations**

#### High Priority

The Board recommends -

- The staff structure set out in Fig. 64, should be implemented. This sets out the proposed staffing structure for the management and maintenance of the

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<sup>69</sup> A strategy to develop the recreational and social use of our forests, Forest Service NI, DARD, 2009

horticultural elements only i.e. not for the wider Demesne or for visitor services within CAAG e.g. cleaning, reception, marketing duties etc.

- The Head Gardener should have control over their own operating budget and this should be in the region of £45- £50k annually<sup>70</sup>. This budget excludes staff costs.
- The horticultural staff should be based within the Bothy/ Frame Yard.
- Someone should live on site for security reasons. However, this does not necessarily need to be the Head Gardener.

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<sup>70</sup> Neil Porteous stated that Mount Stewart operates on a £45- £50k annual budget – this figure is used as a comparison.

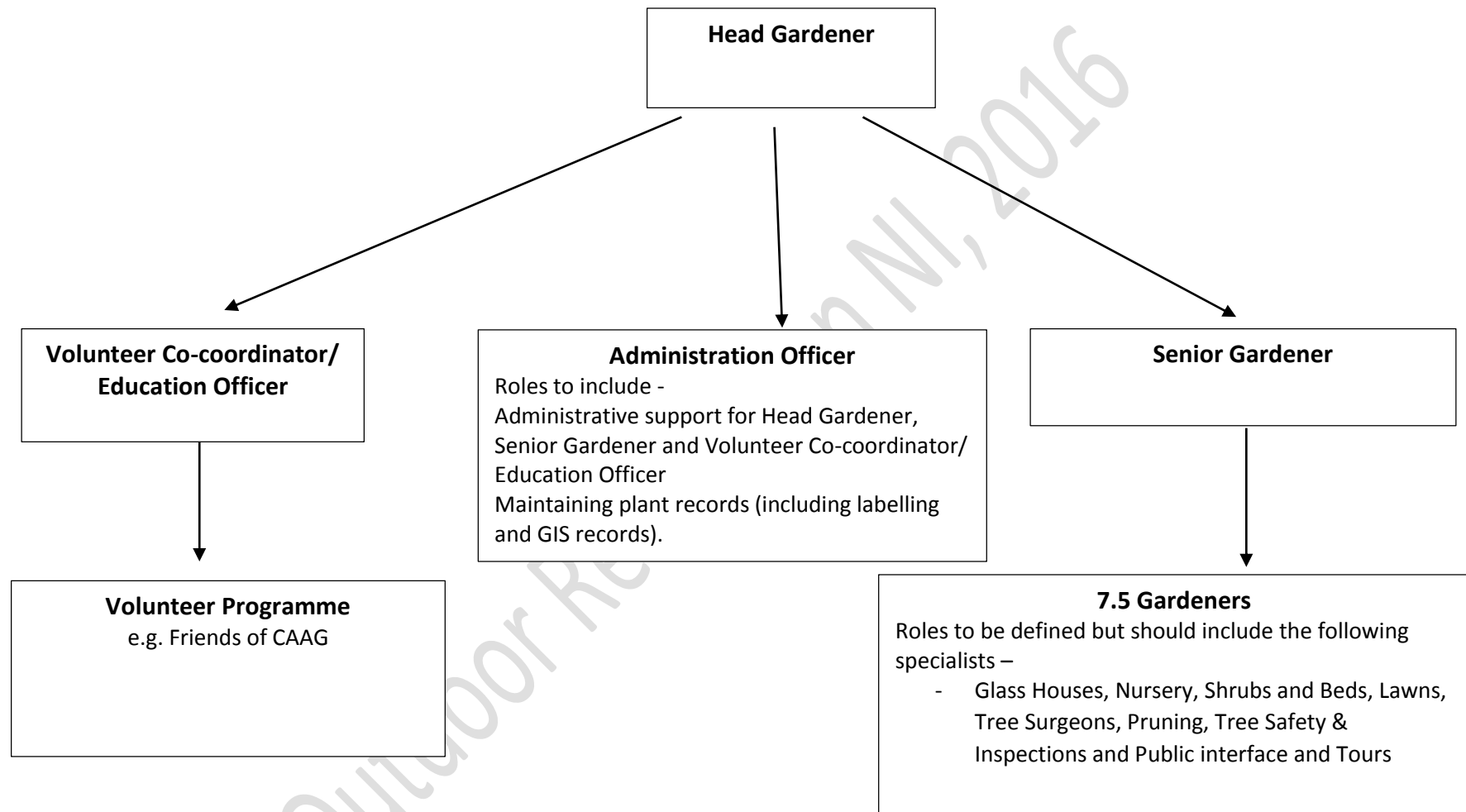


Fig. 64: Proposed staffing structure for CAAG (Dec. 15)



## 2.20 Friends of Castlewellan Arboretum and Annesley Garden

Volunteering is a major and essential part of any HLF bid and therefore the Board is keen that this should be a major part of the management of CAAG moving forward. This is reflected in the proposed staffing structure for the management and maintenance of the horticultural elements of CAAG as shown in Fig. 64.

The Board discussed the current volunteer programme and work delivered by Arboretum Regeneration Castlewellan (ARC).

ARC, formed in 2009, has been working to regenerate the Arboretum, heighten awareness of its botanical importance, and take steps to ensure its sustainability. The Board recognises the valuable and very productive work of ARC over the last 7 years.

The Board discussed several examples of best practice regarding 'Friends of' organisations. This included Westonbirt Arboretum, Gloucestershire.

The Friends of Westonbirt Arboretum is a charity that works in partnership with the Forestry Commission to ensure that Westonbirt is supported, cared for and enjoyed. The charity organises a range of fund raising events, information is provided on the friends of Westonbirt Arboretum website as shown in Fig. 65.



Fig. 65: Friends of Westonbirt Arboretum website

### 2.20.1 Recommendations

#### High Priority

The Board recommends that –

- Consideration be given to the establishment of a “Friends of Castlewellan Arboretum and Annesley Garden” charity.
- ARC should be considered as a base for this, provided that this is acceptable to ARC and the other organisations involved.

It was noted that ARC may need to develop and change to become “Friends of” and this would have to be a decision of the Board of ARC.

## **2.21 Education and learning**

It was highlighted to the Board that –

- Many heritage gardens have links with educational establishments that provide students who work in those gardens, on secondment or as part of a placement.
- Student bursaries are available e.g. Historic and Botanic Garden Bursary Training Programme provided 1 and 2-year student placements and the Pilgrim Trust which sponsors apprentices and cover 90% of student costs <sup>71</sup>.

In addition, the Board discussed the need for CAAG to reconnect with the wider plant network that exists between botanic and heritage gardens.

The College of Agriculture, Food and Rural Enterprise (CAFRE) has an established reputation in horticulture education and has provided full-time courses since 1924. The College’s Greenmount Campus, Co. Antrim is now recognised as the key provider of training in this field within Northern Ireland.

Courses<sup>72</sup> include –

- FdSc in Horticulture
- City & Guilds Level 3 Extended Diploma in Horticulture
- City & Guilds Level 3 Subsidiary Diploma in Horticulture - Landscape Maintenance
- City & Guilds Level 3 Subsidiary Diploma in Horticulture - Sports Turf Management
- City & Guilds Level 2 Diploma in Horticulture
- City & Guilds Level 2 Diploma in Work-based Horticulture (Parks, Gardens and Green Spaces)
- City & Guilds Level 2 Diploma in Work-based Horticulture (Sports Turf-Greenkeeper)

In relation to Castlewellan, FSNI and Greenmount staff traditionally met two times per annum until 2006 as part of an ‘Arboretum Committee’. The committee planned a programme for the winter months and then met in the springtime to discuss progress.

### **2.21.1 Recommendations**

The Board recommends that –

#### High Priority

- A representative from Greenmount should be invited to become a member of CAAB.

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<sup>71</sup> As stated by Neil Porteous

<sup>72</sup> Correct in 2016

- Links should be considered and where appropriate established with various education establishments within the UK and Europe. This should include Newcastle, SERC and Newry Tech regarding horticulture courses they run.
- Opportunities should be identified on site e.g. within the Bothy Yard, or at neighbouring/ partner locations for suitable places to store plants and grow them on.
- A visit by the RHS to CAAG should be facilitated by Council in partnership with CAAB and FSNI in 2016.

#### Medium Priority

- Research takes place to identify and secure suitable Bursary Training Programmes that could be delivered within CAAG.

### **2.22 Preservation and recording of specimens**

#### **2.22.1 Propagation project**

One of the priority projects that both ARC and CAAB identified was the preservation of up to 50 heritage trees within CAAB that are currently at risk. These trees are in the final stages of maturity and currently have no replacements. As such, there is risk that they could come down at any time and therefore be lost.

With the future management of CAAB to be decided, the Board recommended as a high priority that consideration be given to the preservation of genetic material from the heritage tree collection.

Although outside the remit of the Board, Outdoor Recreation NI took a lead in the development of this project as it was deemed essential –

- To preserve the heritage tree collection for the future and;
- To protect the asset for which HLF funding would be sought in the future.

The following extract from the proposal details the work that was proposed -

*“Outdoor Recreation NI will –*

- *Liaise with Duchy College, Cornwall regarding completing the micropropagation*
- *Create records relating to each specimen heritage tree*
- *Record each specimen on ArcMap GIS*
- *Be responsible for all finances relating to the project*
- *Write all editorial and gain approval from ARC and support organisations before submission to local papers*
- *Document and record the story*
- *Maintain records of and liaise with project donors*
- *Be responsible for all PR relating to the project*

*ARC will –*

- *Create tree fact sheets for all trees to be micro propagated*
- *Maintain records relating to each specimen tree*

*CAAB members will -*

- *Identify heritage trees at risk*
- *Take and package samples*
- *Advise Outdoor Recreation NI on how samples should be transported to Duchy College*
- *Aid in the ‘Open Day’ tour”*

The following work was completed in 2015 in relation to this project –

1. Outdoor Recreation NI in partnership with ARC developed the project proposal. This proposal is attached in Appendix E.
2. Outdoor Recreation NI submitted the proposal to FSNI for consideration.
3. Outdoor Recreation NI in partnership with ARC submitted a funding application to NIEL for the project. (Application declined August – due to high level of demand on limited funding).
4. Outdoor Recreation NI contacted Duchy College who agreed to complete the micro propagation of specimens.
5. Additional information was provided to FSNI regarding taking the project forward. This including list of specimens and biosecurity issues. Full details contained in Appendix E.
6. October – Board members<sup>73</sup> compiled a list of 30 heritage trees.

In December 2015, the Board was informed that the project would not be proceeding at this stage due to issues relating to the required license between Council and FSNI. Board members voiced their disappointment that the Propagation Project was not taken forward in 2015.

#### **2.22.2 Collation of records – Castlewellan Heritage Tree Collection**

In relation to CAAG, there are various sources of information on the heritage tree collection, but to date, this has not been collated in a strategic consistent format in one place. For example –

- It is known that some specimens were imported directly by the Annesley family
- There is evidence of trees coming from Glasnevin to Castlewellan in the 1880s and 90s.
- More recently, in the 1980s, Forest Service NI completed a survey of the collection<sup>74</sup>.
- The majority of trees are currently not labelled (original labels lost or missing).
- Field survey work was undertaken at Castlewellan in October 2015 by Aubrey Fennel on behalf of the Tree Council of Ireland and the Irish Tree Society in relation to the Tree Register of Ireland. 358 trees were recorded and measured.

The Tree Register of Ireland<sup>75</sup> is described on its website as follows -

*“The Tree Register of Ireland (TROI) was jointly initiated in 1999 by the Tree Council of Ireland and the Irish Tree Society and to date has generated over 11,000 records of champion trees. A ‘champion’ tree is defined as the tallest or oldest or most massive example of its species or kind in a given region. This project is to undertake field survey work to update and expand the Champion Tree Register of Ireland.*

*Currently the Register is expanding at a rate of about 1,000 trees each year.*

*In order to keep the Register reasonably up to date ideally 10% of the database should be re-measured every year. Currently (2016) we are behind in relation to updating the database of this valuable tree resource due to lack of funding”.*

<sup>73</sup> Board members included Sam Harrison, Seamus O’Brien and Neil Porteous with advice from Alwyn Sinnamon

<sup>74</sup> This was completed by Michael Lear, an employee of FSNI at the time

<sup>75</sup> [treecouncil.ie/tree-register/](http://treecouncil.ie/tree-register/)



In addition to the need to collate information in a strategic manner, the Board also identified that there is a risk that historic, heritage and botanical information will be lost if this information is not collated in the near future.

Finally, numerous mature trees have been identified by the Board as 'at risk' in terms of being lost in the near future through for example, storm damage or disease.

Castlewellan Futures, with funding from Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF), is currently finalising the Arboretum Tree Trail. This project includes the labelling of 26 trees within the Annesley Garden and the production of a guide. This project is due to be completed in March 2016.

A priority project identified by the Board was the 'Collation of records for the Castlewellan Heritage Tree Collection'. The aim of this project is to record the provenance of the important heritage specimens.

The project proposed by the Board, involves the following <sup>76</sup> -

1. Completing and agreeing a Terms of Reference for the project that includes the appointment of a researcher with arboricultural knowledge to –
  - Gather all known information on the collection
  - Document all sources of information
  - Collate this in a strategic and consistent format in line with best practice
  - Produce an outline report highlighting the scope and scale of the collection e.g. numbers of Champion Trees (in terms of height/ girth), age, historic, botanic and heritage value etc.
  - Produce a detailed report on a sample of trees which highlight the range and importance of the collection
2. Tender and appointment of suitably qualified person/ team
3. The purchase of protective clothing/equipment for up to 10 volunteers to aid the researcher e.g. to clear vegetation, identify locations etc.

### **2.22.3 Recommendations**

#### High Priority

The Board recommends that –

- The propagation project is taken forward as a matter of urgency (before any more specimens are lost). This may be in advance of an HLF application. Funding for this project be considered from 'Stanley Smith Horticulture UK' <sup>77</sup>.
- The project 'Collation of records – Castlewellan Heritage Tree Collection' is taken forward.
- The 2015 survey of heritage trees<sup>78</sup>, completed on behalf of the Tree Register of Ireland should –
  - Be taken into account when completing the propagation project;
  - Be taken into account when completing the collation of records project;
  - Form the basis of the botanical database and any subsequent publications.

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<sup>76</sup> An application was submitted by the Mourne Forests Manager to the NIEA Challenge Fund on 26<sup>th</sup> June 2015. This was unsuccessful due to the high level of demand on the limited funding

<sup>77</sup> Neil Porteous is the contact within the Board for Stanley Smyth Horticulture UK

<sup>78</sup> Survey completed by Aubrey Fennell, October 2015



Fig. 66: Aubrey Fennell - Heritage Tree Survey (Oct. 15)

Following completion of the above, the Board recommends the following –

#### High Priority

- A botanical database is established for CAAG that is accessible to the public and other institutions including online.
- The whole collection is relabelled. This is identified as one of the roles of the Administration Officer, as set out in Fig. 64.

#### Medium Priority

- Research be completed to compare old and new measurements and comparisons of growth.
- A Champion Tree Trail is developed.
- A Guide Book on CAAG is produced. To be available on sale within the Demesne and elsewhere (including online).

### **2.23 Tree disease**

The Board engaged in a detailed discussion regarding the problems of tree disease in CAAG. There was much concern about the seriousness of the situation in terms of the potential loss of a significant number of trees of heritage value, unless appropriate action is taken quickly.

FSNI reported the following -

*“Plant health is part of FSNI. Martin Porter, Field Plant Inspector has visited Castlewellan and taken samples from the Snake Barked Maples. These are suspected as having Phytophthora ramorum.*

*Other trees that are dead or diseased with Phytophthora lateralis do not have to be felled but the ground around the tree must not be disturbed nor any soil moved. Care must also be taken regarding water runoff as this can affect other trees. As this is a public area, there is a visual aspect and also issues of health and safety. FSNI is looking at removal of diseased/ dead trees for these reasons, but the ground still can't be disturbed. Trees may need to be fenced off and the grass left unmown. FSNI has brought in a new tree safety management regime that includes zoning forests into different risk zones. Inspections will then be carried*

*out by end of March 2016. FSNI is not expecting particular safety issues other than dead trees.”*

### **2.23.1 Recommendations**

Section 2.14 recommends as high priority that a tree/ woody plant survey is completed for CAAG. This should include a condition survey to establish what arboricultural work is required. This should identify specimens or areas with disease.

Specific recommendations relating to disease in the Spring Garden, Winter Garden and Dwarf Conifer Beds include –

#### High priority

- Winter Garden – This collection of predominantly hollies, should be replaced. Many existing specimens are diseased. Considered should be given to replacement of the hollies with a particular collection e.g. the Donard collection or the Augustine Henry collection.
- Rear of the Annesley Garden (adjacent to Winter Garden) – 2 Lawson Cypress are dead following infection from *Phytophthora ramorum* – these should be removed as soon as possible. If they fall they could knock down the wall.
- Dwarf Conifer Beds - *Coryneum Canker* has been identified by CAAB as present. Some trees including a cedar are dead and should be removed.

### 3 SITE SPECIFIC ISSUES

The following site specific issues were identified in Terence Reeves-Smyth's report and are deemed to be potentially controversial in terms of their landscape and horticultural impact. Therefore, these issues were selected by the Chair and Secretariat as priority for discussion. Each site was visited by the Board and subsequently discussed and agreement reached on –

- The required action
- Priority for action in terms of high, medium or low priority.

#### 3.1 Summary of specific recommendations

The following table summarises the specific (area based) recommendations contained within this report. These are all based on the recommendations contained with the Terence Reeves-Smyth report.

Item	Recommendation	Priority
The Lower Pleasure Ground/ Autumn Wood	Reinstate – <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Pleasure Ground and refer to this area as such</li> <li>- Croquet Lawn</li> <li>- Original paths</li> <li>- Shell House</li> <li>- Daffodil lawns</li> </ul>	High
The Castle Lawn	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Include Castle Lawn within revised boundary</li> </ul> Reinstate - <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Wooded areas at both sides of the entrance to the Castle</li> <li>- Portuguese laurel and yew trees on Lower Terrace</li> <li>- Wall to front on Lower Terrace</li> </ul>	High
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Bury telegraph poles</li> <li>- Put in place a succession of tree planting</li> <li>- Remove vegetation around Boat House – open up area as part of Pleasure Ground</li> </ul>	Medium
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Remove Lakeshore car park</li> </ul>	Low
Harrison Vista	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Integrate into the parkscape - remove straight conifer boundary, replace with stock proof fencing</li> </ul>	High
The Spring Garden	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Pedestrianise existing tarmac road (except for management/ maintenance staff)</li> </ul>	High
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Remove stump of large chestnut tree</li> </ul>	Low



Item	Recommendation	Priority
Dwarf Conifer Beds	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Complete survey and condition assessment</li> <li>- Complete major programme of renovation</li> </ul>	High
Rhododendron Wood	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Identify and reopen old paths</li> <li>- Reinstate miniature bridges and hillside revetments</li> </ul>	High
Entrance Avenue Great Clump	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Remove line of trees along south side of avenue</li> <li>- Recreate 'clump' planting</li> <li>- Restore planting in north clump, supplement with beech or oak</li> </ul>	High
Bicentennial Grove	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Complete research to identify specimens and names of American citizens associated with planting</li> <li>- Clear undergrowth, replace missing specimens and relabel</li> <li>- Install stock proof fencing</li> <li>- Create and implement management plan</li> </ul>	Medium
Allotments	Note - Development of allotments within CAAG in unacceptable	

Fig. 67: Summary of specific recommendations

### 3.2 The Lower Pleasure Ground/ Autumn Wood

This area is described in the Terence Reeves-Smyth report<sup>79</sup> as follows -

*“Triangular area of about nine acres bounded by the lake on the south, by the upper lake path on the north and by the castle lawn on the east. The area, which originated as the ornamental area around the Regency Cottage, is overlooked the castle and its terraces. It was redesigned in the 1860s as a typical mid-Victorian pleasure ground of lawns, dissected by a network of paths flanking specimen trees and shrubs. Principle access from the castle was via a grand flight of steps from the west end of the lower terrace. Until the 1970s there was no access to the grounds from the castle lawn on the east side. An iron fence delimited the garden’s eastern boundary with the castle lawn to keep out grazing animals. A path, the low lake path, flanks the lake along the south boundary of the garden, where there was a large boat house. At the garden’s centre was the croquet lawn, formerly the site of the Cottage, which was designed to be visible from the castle. On the whole the pleasure grounds survived largely intact until 1960s though it had already then become too crowded with trees.*

*In the 1970s the area was transformed into the ‘Autumn Wood’ with extensive planting of maples, hawthorn, oak, birch and a wide range of sorbus. Other open spaces, formerly*

<sup>79</sup> Terence Reeves-Smyth Report, pp 55

*lawns, were invaded by bamboos and other plants, creating a dark and somewhat claustrophobic effect, especially once the leaves are on the trees. Another unfortunate bi-product of the post 1960s planting has been that the Castle is no longer visible from the lake from the western side, while the views west from the castle terraces have likewise been blocked”.*

The photo in Fig. 68 (taken from the Terence Reeves-Smyth report) shows the Lower Pleasure Grounds from the drawing room window around 1800 with the box delimited croquet ground on the right (PRONI).

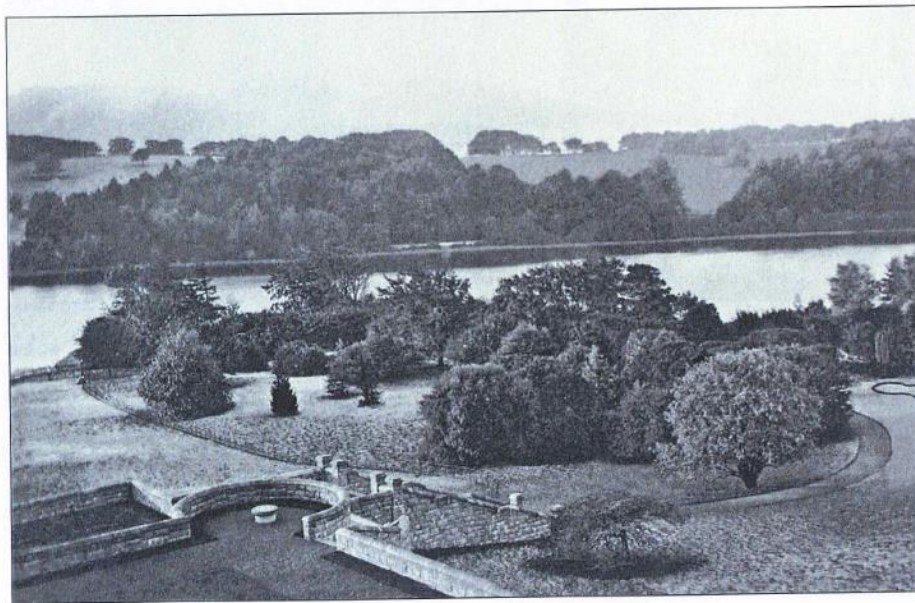


Fig. 68: The Lower Pleasure Grounds circa (1880)

The Board discussed the following questions -

- Should this area be reinstated as a Pleasure Ground with main undergrowth, bamboo, some birch and Sorbus removed?
- Are there significant trees to be retained and, if so, are there many of these?
- What other work is required?

#### High Priority

The Board recommends the following –

- This area should be reinstated as a Pleasure Ground and referred to as ‘The Pleasure Ground’.
- The croquet lawn (on site of former cottage) should be recreated and with clearance in this area, this will become more visible. The box hedging should be replaced with new.
- Original paths should be reinstated; research into the location of these is required. There is a very large and old cut-leaf beech, *Fagus sylvatica* ‘Asplenifolia’, to the east of the croquet lawn. This is in poor health and has substantial basal decay. There may be a risk to the public around this tree and consideration should be given to moving the path adjacent to this.

- The Shell House should be reinstated on the original site within this area with reference to a photo of the original. A similar shell house has been recreated in Ballymaloe, Middleton, Co. Cork, Ireland and this could be used as a case study.
- Reinstatement of daffodil lawns should be considered with reference to the 'Lady Annesley' daffodil variety. The Board suggested contacting Ringhaddy Daffodils to trace.

### 3.3 The Castle Lawn

This area is described in the Terence Reeves-Smyth report<sup>80</sup> as follows -

*"Open parkland area of about 30 acres to the west of the mid-eighteenth century Axial Avenue. Formerly, this was the core part of the Regency park designed in the first decade of the nineteenth century for the Cottage and subsequently in the 1860's became the lawn (from parkland meadow) of the castle. It was delimited on the west side by an iron railing (now removed) separating it from the Lower Castle Pleasure ground, while on the north it was delimited by the perimeter screen bounding the south site of the walled garden. When this park area was laid out in the early nineteenth century most of the former lime avenue was removed to allow views out onto the outer park, then used as a deer park; a sunken ditch or ha-ha, most probably filled with water, along the line of the straight avenue allowed for uninterrupted views without any bounding fence.*

*In the days when the Cottage was a functioning residence, this lawn was traversed by two avenues, namely a main avenue running across the areas east to west from the town and a secondary avenue running alongside the lake to the Grange Yard. After the cottage was demolished in the 1860s both these avenues were closed. This part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century park utilized the mid-18<sup>th</sup> century mill race as a small stream meandering through the lawn and into the outer park; its former line (now sunken below ground) is marked by the townland boundary. At the point where the mill race flowed from the lake a boathouse was built in the 1870s; it was simple rectangular structure, screened from the park by a clump of oak and beech trees with an area 0.18 acres.*

*In the 1970s the Forest Service installed paths (now paved with cement) alongside the south lake boundary and across the lawn to the Autumn Wood, alas the Lower Pleasure Ground. At the very east end of the lake a small but unsightly car park was permitted to develop each side of the newly installed routeway from the Grange. Since the 1950s only a few parkland trees have been added to the Castle Lawn".*

A range of issues were discussed in relation to this area and detailed below.

#### 3.3.1 Inclusion within CAAG

Much of this area is outside the current boundary of CAAG as shown in Fig. 7. The Board discussed if this should be included within a revised boundary.

#### 3.3.2 Telegraph poles

The Regency parkscape at Castletwellan has three separate interconnecting zones. One of these zones is the meadow between the castle and the lake called Castle Lawn. This is the core of the historic parkland.

Currently telegraph poles cross this area as highlighted in Fig. 69.

<sup>80</sup> Terence Reeves-Smyth Report, pp 55



Fig. 69: Telegraph poles – Castle Lawn

TRS recommends that these are placed underground as they cross the Lawn<sup>81</sup>.

### 3.3.3 Lakeshore Car Park

This public car park is well used –

- By those dropping off boats at the slipway
- For parking boat trailers and vehicles
- By Education and Library Board and other Centres e.g. Ardnabannon, Greenhill YMCA
- By private sector operators e.g. LIFE Adventure Centre
- For those of limited mobility wishing to access the Lake.

The Recreation Audit of Castlewellan Lake<sup>82</sup>, identified the following –

- Congestion in the lakeshore car park is a significant problem during peak periods, especially weekends and summer holidays, making it very difficult to manoeuvre and park buses with trailers. This is exacerbated by careless parking on the part of lake users and the general public. Access to the car park is only restricted to lake users on the busiest days.
- Congestion on the slipway is a significant problem during peak periods due to numerous canoe groups and anglers arriving to launch/land boats at the same time. This can cause a tailback of groups waiting to get on/off the water. The situation is exacerbated by lake users parking on the slipway itself to load and unload boats and equipment.

The Board discussed –

- Should the lake shore car park be removed;

<sup>81</sup> Terence Reeves-Smyth Report, pp237

<sup>82</sup> Recreation Audit of Castlewellan Lake, Outdoor Recreation NI, 2014



- Should screening, in the form of planting, be put in place to hide the car park from the Castle;
- Should a succession of tree planting be put in place on the lawn;
- Should conifers, rhododendron and other underplanting be removed from the area around the boat house;
- Are there any other areas within the Castle Lawn where vegetation clearance/ reinstatement or replanting is required;
- Any other issue relating to the Castle Lawn.

### **3.3.4 Recommendations for Castle Lawn**

The Board recommends -

#### High Priority

- The Castle Lawn should be included within a revised boundary. This is discussed more fully in Section 2.5.
- Wooded areas at both sides of the entrance to the Castle should be surveyed, scrub and low value trees should be removed and replaced with deciduous trees to recreate the parkland. The wood to the right hand side (largely conifers) was planted by Gerald Annesley.
- Lower Terrace –Existing Portuguese laurel should be replaced with new specimens. Existing 3 yews should be propagated and replaced in a new place (to avoid competition from old root systems).
- The wall to front of lower terrace needs to be repaired. Stone is falling out (and could be stolen), there is already a large hole going right through the wall. The wall may become unstable and stone may be difficult to replace if original stones are stolen/ removed.

#### Medium Priority

- A high priority should be to restore this parkscape and place the cables underground, however, the anticipated high cost, means this is recommended as medium rather than high priority.
- A succession of tree planting should be put in place on the Castle Lawn.

Trees are in keeping with the Park landscape. The Board also recommends that consideration should be given to reintroduction of a meadow rather than current land use as a mown lawn. This could be cost neutral as a farmer could mow once a year and take the hay. Visitor demand should be taken into account, as this is a popular recreation space for events, picnics, play etc.

- The area around the boat house should be opened up as part of the Pleasure Ground.

#### Low Priority

- In light of the current high level of use of the car park it is perceived that there would be a lot of opposition to its removal. Removal of the car park should not be considered in the near future. This should be reviewed in 2025.
- Screening of the car park should not take place as this is not appropriate to the landscape character of the area.

### 3.4 Harrison Vista

This area is described in the Terence Reeves-Smyth report<sup>83</sup> as follows -

*“Last extension to the arboretum of about twelve acres, lies at the east end of the Lower Walled Garden, bordered by the Axial Road and Drumbuck Wood. It was carved out of the outer park of the landscape park, planted in the mid to late 1970s and now often named after the arboretum curator of the time. Laid out around a wide grassy strip which extends south-east through the centre of the area towards the mountains. The collection here notably includes a wide range of oak and eucalyptus varieties. It is screened from the rest of the park on the south by straight tree lined boundaries”.*

The Board discussed –

- Should the straight boundary delimiting the area be modified through the gradual removal of boundary conifers?

This shelter belt may not actually be needed and the arboretum extension could be separated from main park by iron railing (rather than the conifers) to allow the area to integrate into the parkscape.

The Board recommends -

#### High Priority

- The straight conifer boundary is removed and replaced with ‘stock proof fencing’ to enable greater integration of this area into the parkscape.

### 3.5 The Spring Garden

This area is described in the Terence Reeves-Smyth report<sup>84</sup> as follows –

*“The Spring Garden was created by the Forest Service between 1972 and 1974 on the north side of the Lower Walled Garden covered just over two acres. It is delimited on the north side by the tarmacked roadway leading to the Frame Yard. Prior to 1969 the east side of the Spring Garden area was occupied by the gamekeeper’s house, yard, pheasant pens and kennels, all of which had become derelict by the late 1960s. It has served this function for a long period of time; on James Forsyth’s 1810 map of the demesne, the enclosed area was labelled kennels, a function it retained over the next few centuries..... The boundary of this former gamekeeper’s areas is today marked in the garden by a drop in levels with a dry stone wall and a circular flight of steps. The latter feature now lies in the centre of the Spring Garden ... “.*

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<sup>83</sup> Terence Reeves-Smyth Report, pp75

<sup>84</sup> Terence Reeves-Smyth Report, pp116



Fig. 70: Tarmac road through Spring Garden (Jan. 16)

The Board discussed –

Should the current tarmac road to the Bothy Yard that dissects CAAB be pedestrianised with the exception of traffic associated with the running of CAAB.

The Board recommends -

#### High Priority

- The existing tarmac road should be pedestrianised with the exception of management/ maintenance traffic. The Board stressed that this should not be the main entry/ exit to the car park.

#### Low Priority

- The stump of a large chestnut tree adjacent to the tarmac path, at east end of spring garden should be removed.

### **3.6 Dwarf Conifer Beds**

This area is described in the Terence Reeves-Smyth report<sup>85</sup> as follows –

*“At the time when the Forest Service undertook their expansion of the arboretum in the 1970s dwarf conifers were very popular, so this creation is very much a product of the time. The collection at Castlewellan assembled 1976-80, occupies four long curved beds and contains a large collection”.*

The Board discussed the contents and condition of the Dwarf Conifers. Of note is the fact that the majority of the plant material in this collection came from Blooms of Bressingham. This nursery is famous for its association with dwarf conifers. Therefore, the collection is of heritage value.

The Board recommends -

#### High Priority

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<sup>85</sup> Terence Reeves-Smyth Report, pp117

- A survey of the contents and a condition assessment is completed;
- A major programme of renovation is completed.

### 3.7 Rhododendron Wood

This area is described in the Terence Reeves-Smyth report<sup>86</sup> as follows –

*“The Rhododendron Wood occupies the areas of about five acres on mostly sloping ground, lying to the north of the Frame Yard Pond and the tarred access road leading to the Frame Yard. It was created in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century as a spring garden with a small stream passing through its western side; the area is dissected by narrow paths, many dating to the later nineteenth century and nearly all of which have become completely engulfed in vegetation. Although the area saw extensive planting of rhododendrons, azaleas and camellias in the 1970s, it was already home to exotic trees and today, mixed among the dense growth of rhododendrons can be found many important tree specimens, together with other mature conifers, beech, oak and pine.”*

The Board discussed and recommended -

#### High Priority

- The old paths should be identified and reopened including the reinstatement of miniature bridges and hillside revetments where possible.

### 3.8 Entrance Avenue Great Clump

This area is described in the Terence Reeves-Smyth report<sup>87</sup> as follows –

*“Large oval five acre parkland tree clump flanking the main avenue in to the demesne. The south side occupies about 2 ½ acres and the north 1 ½ acres. The clump was laid down in the early 1850s when the parkland was being modified to enhance the new castle. It is a typical piece of parkland design, in which the visitor is purposely brought in and out of the light as they approach their destination. The north clump survives intact, but in the 1970s the Forest Service altered the south clump by planting it with conifers, by removing a wide stretch of trees south of the avenue and then lining the avenue itself with evenly spaced standard trees. The south side of this same clump was enlarged to conceal the new caravan park.”*

The Board discussed and recommended –

#### High priority

- The line of trees along the south side of avenue should be removed and clump planting should be recreated.
- The planting in the north clump should be restored and supplemented with beech or oak.

### 3.9 Bicentennial Grove

In 1976, Forest Service, planned and delivered a commemoration of the American Bicentennial celebrations. This was done in a number of ways using the connections between the forests on the two countries.

In relation to Castlewellan Forest Park, this involved the planting of a commemorative grove consisting of American trees, each marked with a commemorative plaque.

<sup>86</sup> Terence Reeves-Smyth Report, pp118

<sup>87</sup> Terence Reeves-Smyth Report, pp136



A tree planting ceremony was held on 8<sup>th</sup> March 1976. In addition, containers were on sale for £1 for American citizens - either to plant on site or take away.

The photos in Fig. 71 show the Bicentennial Grove including a commemorative plaque.

There is little in the archives relating to the project other than a two-page document about the project and a memorandum for an order of trees.



Fig. 71: Bicentennial Grove (Mar. 16)

The Board discussed what should be done to reinstate this area and recommended -

Medium Priority

- Further research should be completed with the aim of identifying specimens planted and the names of the American citizens that they commemorated.

Following on from this -

- Undergrowth should to be cleared and missing specimens and labels replaced;
- A stock proof fence should be installed around this area to protect the collection from livestock;
- A Management Plan should be developed and implemented for what is left of the Bicentennial Grove.

### **3.10 Allotments**

The Board discussed proposals in a local newspaper regarding the potential development of allotments within the Demesne.<sup>88</sup>

The Board agreed that the development of allotments within CAAG is unacceptable as it would result in major damage to the heritage value of the area.

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<sup>88</sup> Down Recorder online, 22/07/15

#### **4 FINAL COMMENT**

The work of CAAB to date has led to substantial progress in terms of identifying the priorities for the redevelopment of Castlewellan Arboretum and Annesley Garden.

This report sets out the recommendations made by CAAB in relation to those issues that were discussed within the limited 6-month timeframe. i.e. June 2015 – Dec 2015.

There are however, still numerous outstanding issues discussed within both the Consarc and Terence Reeves-Smyth reports that have not been addressed to date by CAAB.

Many of these will impact on the development of CAAG, development of the wider Demesne, management options and any future HLF or other funding bids. Each document should be read in detail and issues considered by CAAB or, where relevant, other experts.

The development and management of CAAB cannot and should not take place in isolation of the development and management and the wider Demesne. Both will impact on the other and should take place through an integrated and strategic approach.

Finally, the author would like to thank members of CAAB and those other individuals who have given their time and commitment to this project to date.

## **5 APPENDIX A: SUMMARY OF WORK COMPLETED BY OUTDOOR RECREATION NI**

Outdoor Recreation NI has had a lead role in the redevelopment of Castlewellan Forest Park for over 10 years. This has taken place through a range of partnerships that include –

- Down District Council
- Newry and Mourne District Council
- Forest Service NI (DARD)
- NITB
- Rural Development Programme
- Sport NI
- Mourne Heritage Trust

During this time a range of research, product development and management has taken place including -

- Family Cycling Trail design and development- 2004
- Mountain Bike Trails (part of the MTB Mourne Project) design and development- 2012
- Recreation Assessment of Castlewellan Lake - 2012
- Walk Trails design and development– 2013
- Castlewellan Forest Park Scoping Study (with Tollymore and Donard Forests) – 2013
- Development of Mourne Forest Brand - 2014
- Nature Play design and development – 2014
- Enhancement of the Peace Maze – 2014
- Design of Mountain Bike Trails (Phase 2) - 2014
- Feasibility Study Tollymore and Castlewellan Forest Parks – 2015
- Establishment of Mourne Forest Office – 2015
- Management of facilities licenced to Council (exc. Mtb trails) – 2015-16
- Outdoor Recreation Development Plan Castlewellan Forest Park – 2016
- Mourne Forest Signage Strategy – 2016
- Management Plan Castlewellan Forest Park (for facilities licenced to Council) – 2016
- Visual Tree Inspections for walk trails and play space - 2016

This work was completed through agreement with DARD (FSNI) with a Memorandum of Understanding and subsequent Licences put in place to enable product development/ facility management.





**Name of group:** Castlewellan Arboretum Advisory Board (CAAB)

**Title:** Terms of Reference – 16<sup>th</sup> June 2015

**Background:** Outdoor Recreation NI through a Service Level Agreement (SLA) with Newry, Mourne and Down District Council is preparing reports on the potential for redevelopment of certain aspects of Castlewellan Forest Park.

To date development has included -

- Mountain Bike Trails, Pump Track and Bike Wash
- Walk Trails
- Elements of the Peace Maze
- Nature Play Space
- Counters (to record visitor numbers)
- Branded signage/ information

Future work contained within the SLA includes the redevelopment of Castlewellan Arboretum and Annesley Garden, The Grange and further enhancement of visitor facilities and services on site.

Following on from the merger of Councils in April 2015, Newry, Mourne and Down Council is considering a range of strategic projects within the new Council area and potential funding opportunities for these.

In order to inform this, Outdoor Recreation NI is working with Council to consider '*The redevelopment of Castlewellan Arboretum and Annesley Garden and the provision of support services within the Grange for the Arboretum and Gardens*'.

**Role of Castlewellan Arboretum Advisory Board (CAAB):**

The overall role of CAAB is to advise Outdoor Recreation NI on technical issues relating to the above project. The main output of the group is to identify priority capital works and programmes for this project based on the work completed by Consarc Design Group, March 2015 and DoE, Historic Environment Division, May 2015. Copies of the above reports will be provided to CAAB members at the first meeting.

Outdoor Recreation NI established CAAB in May 2015.

**Membership:**

Membership of the Board is made up of individuals with specific expertise relevant to the restoration and development of Castlewellan Arboretum and Annesley Garden. Board members are selected based on each individual's knowledge, experience and expertise in the following areas –

- Built Heritage
- Trees, shrubs and other plants
- Heritage Gardens and arboreta
- Community/ volunteer engagement

Members sit on the Board as individuals and do not represent the interests of wider organisations.

There may be occasions where a topic or issue arises where the Board does not think it has sufficient expertise within its own members to consider this fully. In these situations, the Board will seek the advice of recognised external experts in the particular field under consideration.

**Accountability:**

The Chair will be elected from the membership of the Board at Meeting 1.

Outdoor Recreation NI will act as Secretariat for CAAB and will have responsibility for

- Setting up and hosting all meetings
- Generating and circulating agendas
- Recording minutes of meetings
- Circulating papers/ other information
- Creating and circulating a monthly e-zine to other interested parties

Outdoor Recreation NI will report on a regular basis to –

- Newry, Mourne and Down Council
- A representative of Newry, Mourne and Down Council will attend meetings of CAAB

**Review:**

CAAB will meet/ liaise regularly until the output of the group has been achieved i.e. identification of priority capital works and programmes for this project.

**Working methods / ways of working:**

Board Meeting 1 - The Group will have an initial meeting in June 2015 in Castlewellan Forest Park. The purpose of this meeting will be to introduce the project, Board members and have a site walkover. Following on from this, communication will be via email where possible with additional site meetings held only when necessary.

**Declaration - Castlewellan Arboretum Advisory Board (CAAB)**

I \_\_\_\_\_ as a member of CAAB agree  
to the attached Terms of Reference.

I agree that any information disclosed to the Board will be treated as confidential unless otherwise agreed.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Outdoor Recreation

## 7 APPENDIX C: CAAB MEMBERS AND PROFILES

### **Chair - Dr Mark Johnston MBE, FCIHort, FICFor**

Mark is an independent scholar with over forty years experience in the greenspace industry, including working as a tree officer in local government, consultant in private practice, government adviser and university lecturer. In 2007, he was appointed MBE for services to trees and the urban environment and in 2009 he became the first British person to receive the prestigious *Award of Merit* from the International Society of Arboriculture. Mark has extensive experience in project development on major initiatives concerned with trees and landscape, including city-wide urban forestry projects in London, Dublin, Cardiff, Glasgow and Belfast. Mark's research interests now focus on the historical aspects of trees and landscape. His newly-published book entitled *Trees in Towns and Cities: A History of British Urban Arboriculture* explores the historical development of trees in urban parks, gardens, streets and other open spaces.

Throughout his career Mark has sat on or chaired various advisory boards and steering groups for projects concerned with trees and landscape. He has also been a trustee of some relevant charitable trusts, such as the Painhill Park Trust (historic landscape restoration), the Forest of London Trust (promoting trees and urban greening), and is currently a trustee of the Trees and Design Action Group (promoting cooperation between the natural and built environment sectors). Mark's interest in Castlewelling Arboretum dates back over twenty years as a regular visitor and for the past five years he has been working with others to secure its restoration.

Mark was born in London of Scottish descent and has been based in Belfast for the past twenty-four years.

### **Seamus O'Brien - Head Gardener, Kilmacurragh Botanic Gardens, Co. Wicklow, Ireland**

Seamus O'Brien is Ireland's leading authority on plants from the temperate regions of China. His travels in pursuit of plants have taken him across Nepal, China, California, Chile, New Zealand, Australia and Tasmania, effectively 'in the footsteps of Augustine Henry' on a number of expeditions. He has won several awards in recognition of his expertise, including two Christopher Brickell Prizes (for his reports *Autumn in the Eastern Himalaya* 1996, and *In the Footsteps of Augustine Henry – An Expedition to China*, 2004) and two awards granted by the RHS Bursary Committee. Many of his most recent introductions can be found in Irish gardens. Seamus is also a regular contributor to *The Irish Garden*, among other publications, and currently manages Kilmacurragh Botanic Gardens, an eighteenth century country estate belonging to the National Botanic Gardens, Glasnevin, near Dublin

### **Neil Porteous, Regional Gardens and Parks Advisor Northern Ireland, National Trust**

Neil was appointed National Trust head of gardens at Mount Stewart and regional gardens adviser in 2011.

When he left school, he had no idea what he wanted to do but in 1980, he got a job at Edinburgh Academy, followed by the city's Royal Botanic Garden, and gardening has been his life ever since.

He was previously employed by the Trust as gardens and parks adviser (north), but most recently worked for the Ballynatray Estate in Youghal, Cork, where he was estate manager and head gardener.

In January he planted 400 trees and shrubs, and to help, he employs eight full-time gardeners, assisted by some 35 long-term volunteers, some 15 work placements, four full-time students and apprentices and a host of visiting foreign horticultural students from Europe.



**Sam Harrison, former Arboreta Forester with Castlewellan Forest Park**

After the Forest Service opened the arboretum in 1969, Sam was headhunted from Gosford Forest Park. Sam then travelled all over Ireland, Scotland and England to gain experience. He worked as an arboretum forester for Forest Service from Castlewellan and from 1971 until 1990 when he was promoted to head forester for Castlewellan and Tollymore.

Sam retired in 2001 but still has a keen interest in the Arboretum and Gardens, advising the current gardener on a regular basis.

**Terence Reeves Smyth, Senior Inspector, Historic Environment (Built Heritage), Dept. of the Environment (DOENI), Belfast**

Archaeologist, architectural and garden historian and author, Terence's principal interests are in the history of the Irish landscape - its demesnes, houses, villages, agriculture, road systems, woodlands and gardens. Prior to university, he spent six years on archaeological excavations and projects working across Europe, particularly in France. He then studied prehistory with a special focus on Early Bronze Age Settlement in Ireland. In the mid-1980s his interests shifted to post-medieval studies, especially Irish architecture and garden design. He has undertaken extensive research into 16th/17th century Irish architecture, as well as Regency architecture and gardens, both the subject of forthcoming studies.

His publications include seven books and numerous papers, both academic and popular; he lectures widely across Ireland on a range of topics from garden/horticultural history, architectural history & industrial archaeology.

Currently he is completing a comprehensive *Dictionary of Gardeners, Horticulturalists, Nurserymen and Botanists of Ireland* (a by-product of his demesne studies) which will be published in Spring 2017. He works as a Senior Inspector (Historic Monuments & Buildings), Historic Environment Division, DOENI

**Aislinn O'Reilly - Chairperson, Arboretum Regeneration Castlewellan (ARC)**

Aislinn O'Reilly was born in Belfast and grew up in Castlewellan, County Down beside the Forest Park and the Castlewellan Arboretum and Annesley Garden. Following school, she attended Queen's University, Belfast, gaining an Honours Degree in English Language and Literature. Subsequent years have been spent working in the Health Service, bringing up a family and teaching English, at Our Lady's Grammar School, Newry. Aislinn retired from teaching in 2015. In June 2009, she established Arboretum Regeneration Castlewellan, (ARC), along with friends and colleagues, Fiona Barr and Geraldine Malone, and a group of dedicated volunteers. ARC has campaigned since that time to raise the profile of this magnificent place and to ensure its restoration as one of the foremost arboreta in Europe.

**DJ Morgan, Parks Officer, Newry, Mourne and Down District Council**

## 8 APPENDIX D: DEFINITION OF A CATEGORY ONE MULTI USE TRAIL

The following trail grade is taken from 'Principles and Standards for Trail Development in Northern Ireland', ORNI, 2012.

Category of Multi Use Trail	One
Accessible by	By any users including those with limited mobility At all times
Trail Width	Minimum 2.5m wide Maximum 3m wide
Trail Gradient	Maximum Average Gradients not more than 3% Maximum Absolute Gradients not more than 5% for not more that 30m in length.
Trail Surface	Sealed surfaces only, must be even and consistent throughout and can include asphalt and compacted gravel ensuring that users of limited mobility can use the trail
Line of Sight	Minimum of 40m
Trail Features	Flat or level trails with no trail features Any bridges should be not less than 2m wide with handrails throughout

## **9 APPENDIX E: PROPAGATION PROJECT**

This Appendix contains –

- The project proposal
- A list of specimens identified by the Board (Oct. 15)

Outdoor Recreation NL, 2016



## **Conservation of the heritage tree collection within Castlewellan Arboretum**

**August 2015**

### **Project background**

This project is a partnership between Outdoor Recreation NI and Arboretum Regeneration Castlewellan (ARC).

Outdoor Recreation NI through a Service Level Agreement (SLA) with Newry, Mourne and Down District Council is preparing reports on the potential for redevelopment of certain aspects of Castlewellan Forest Park.

Outdoor Recreation NI established Castlewellan Arboretum Advisory Board (CAAB) in May 15 with an advisory role on technical issues relating to the redevelopment of Castlewellan Arboretum and Annesley Garden. Board members include individuals with a range of expertise in relevant fields:

- Dr Mark Johnston, Chair
- Clare Jones, Outdoor Recreation NI, Secretariat
- Sam Harrison
- Neil Porteous
- Terence Reeves Smyth
- Seamus O'Brien
- Damien Morgan
- Aislinn O'Reilly

In addition, Mark Parker represents Forest Service NI at the meeting.

Over the past 6 years, ARC has been working, with support from Forest Service NI (FSNI), to aid in the maintenance of Castlewellan Arboretum and Annesley Gardens. The volunteer work programme has been hugely successful with over 15 volunteers attending each month. ARC continues to be committed to this practical work but would like to undertake this conservation project to preserve the future of this unique heritage tree collection.

One of the priority works that both ARC and CAAB have identified is the preservation of up to 50 heritage trees that are currently at risk, however, there may be more identified if this project proceeds. *These trees are in the final stages of maturity and currently have no replacements. As such, there is risk that they could come down at any time and therefore be lost.* As the future management of the Arboretum and Gardens is yet to be decided, it is critical that genetic material from the heritage tree collection is preserved now, so that new specimens can be micro propagated as and when required and available to plant at an appropriate time in the future.

With Outdoor Recreation NI, ARC, Council and DARD/ FSNI involvement, there is now an excellent opportunity to complete this micro propagation project and in doing so preserve the heritage tree collection for future generations before some of these trees are gone. This project will also create a good news story for the Arboretum and Gardens and for all those involved.

### **Project steps**

The following project steps are proposed -



1. Outdoor Recreation NI in partnership with ARC, make a formal request to FSNI/ DARD to complete -

*'Micropropagation of trees at risk within the heritage tree collection at Castlewellan Arboretum'.*

2. Permission obtained from FSNI/ DARD to proceed with project and project detail agreed.
3. The trees included in this project will then be selected by members of CAAB (along with FSNI staff, if appropriate) who will lead and supervise the collection of specimens at the appropriate time.
4. Letter of permission obtained from DARD to move material to Duchy College, Cornwall for the purposes of micro propagation. Duchy College has internationally recognized expertise in this.
5. Stage 1 - fundraising and small PR campaign - 'Conserve a heritage tree for the future'. The aims of this are:
  - To create positive/ good news story for project partners i.e. Outdoor Recreation NI and ARC
  - To create positive/ good news story for support organisations i.e. Forest Service NI/ DARD and Newry, Mourne and Down Council
  - To raise £4,200

This will involve -

- A press release (to local papers) to launch the project with photo opportunities for project partners and support organisations
  - Setting up a 'Just Giving' web page for donors to donate £10 or more to 'Conserve a heritage tree for the future'
6. Outdoor Recreation NI in partnership with ARC makes a request to Council for £1,000 towards project costs.
  7. Funding secured.
  8. Project proceeds with Duchy College, Cornwall completing micropropagation and storage of specimens.
  9. Documentation and recording of the story. This will be used to inform project donors and support organisations. However, it can also be used at a later stage for -
    - Educational purposes e.g. creation of a tree trail with fact sheets, tours, library exhibition, school visits/ projects etc.
    - Promotional purposes e.g. production of a book or documentary on the Arboretum and Gardens.
  10. Stage 2 - PR campaign - 'Conserve a heritage tree for the future'.
- Once the project is complete, this will involve -
- A press release (to local papers) with photo opportunities for project partners and support organisations
  - Distribution of a professionally designed fact sheet and certificate to donors with specific information on the heritage and micro propagation of the tree they helped to conserve.
  - An 'open day' – donors will be invited to attend an open day with tours of the gardens by suitable experts.
  - Distribution of a mini film about the project on social media.

## Project costs

It is estimated that the project will cost £6,100 as shown in Figure 1 below.

Item	Cost breakdown	Total
Propagation	£50 per tree X 50 trees	£2,500
	Postage/ carriage to Duchy College	£500
Recording the story and liaison with donors	Recording equipment/ production Photography Travel to Duchy College Promotional material – design and print of fact sheets and certificates for donors Postage of fact sheets to donors Recording on GIS	£2,500
Contingency	20% of project costs	£1,100
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>£6,600</b>

Figure 1: Estimated project costs

## Project timeline

Stage	Completion date
Approvals obtained	September 2015
Funding secured	October 2015
Samples taken	October 2015
Project complete	March 2016

Figure 2: Project timeline

## Project roles

Outdoor Recreation NI will lead in the project in partnership with ARC. CAAB will provide technical advice on the horticultural and arboricultural aspects of the project.

Outdoor Recreation NI will –

- Liaise with Duchy College regarding the project
- Create records relating to each specimen heritage tree
- Record each specimen on ArcMap GIS
- Be responsible for all finances relating to the project
- Write all editorial and gain approved from ARC and support organisations before submission to local papers
- Document and record the story
- Maintain records of and liaise with project donors
- Be responsible for all PR relating to the project

ARC will –

- Create tree fact sheets for all trees to be micro propagated
- Maintain records relating to each specimen tree

CAAB members will -

- Identify heritage trees at risk
- Take and package samples
- Advise Outdoor Recreation NI on how samples should be transported to Duchy College
- Aid in the 'Open Day' tour

For further information on the project please contact –

Clare Jones, Development Manager, Mourne Forests at [clare@outdoorrecreationni.com](mailto:clare@outdoorrecreationni.com)

Outdoor Recreation NI, 2016

**Prioritized micro-propagation list from Castlewellan Arboretum**

1. *Athrotaxis selaginoides*
2. *Athrotaxis cupressoides*
3. *Juniperus recurva*
4. *Juniperus recurva* 'Castlewellan'
5. *Torreya californica*
6. *Abies homolepis*
7. *Abies numidica*
8. *Cephalotaxus harringtonia* var. *drupacea*
9. *Cedrus deodara* 'Robusta Pendula'
10. *Cedrus deodara* 'Albospica'
11. *Podocarpus nubigenus*
12. *Sciadopitys verticillata*
13. *Dacrycarpus dacrudioides*
14. *Prumnopitys taxifolia*
15. *Dacrophyllum* aff. *suclarii*
16. *Podocarpus cunninghamii* 'Aurea'
17. *Podocarpus macrophyllus*
18. *Podocarpus acutifolius*
19. *Pseudowintera colorata* 'Marjorie Congreve'
20. *Saxegothea conspicua*
21. *Podocarpus totara*
22. *Arbutus menziesii*
23. *Calocedrus formosa*
24. *Chamaecyparis lawsoniana* 'Wisselii'
25. *Schima wallichii*



Outdoor Recreation NI, 2016