

News

Attention: Immediate
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Hundreds of voices set to ring out from iconic Shropshire hillfort at annual heritage hug



Hug 2015



Hug 2016



~Community prepares to send out big message about heritage & greenspace for Valentine's week~

Oswestry will be displaying its affection for local heritage and greenspace in a landmark initiative as part of annual celebrations devoted to Old Oswestry hillfort.

The town is aiming to encircle the 3,000 year old Iron Age monument with a 1 km long chain of people and string of hearts with messages of appreciation for the hillfort from all parts of the community.

The 'Hearts Around the Hillfort' project is set to provide an eye-catching focus to this year's hillfort hug on February 12, organised by the HOOOH Community Group.

"Red hearts are going out to schools, groups and organisations, as well as shops and public outlets," said HOOOH member, Kate Clarke. "We are hoping that as many individuals as possible, from young to old, will donate a heart-felt message about the hillfort for this super-long bunting."

She added: "It means that anyone unable to attend the hug in person can still play a part, especially older residents who may be less able to get out. Many of us have fond memories of the hillfort which this project aims to capture."

The group is also keen for hearts in support of local greenspace and heritage in general.

John Waine of HOOOH said: "As the ancient heart of the town, the hillfort is an outstanding attraction presiding over Oswestry's northern gateway. But it also forms part of a precious network of green environment, recreation fields and historical fabric vital to preserving Oswestry's character and quality of life for residents. The bunting is an opportunity to reflect the importance of all of these assets and the community's concerns that they are respected in local decision-making."

HOOOH estimates that around 650 people will be needed to form a complete human chain around the hillfort top. The group stresses that the event is being organised and stewarded with due care for the monument and people's safety.

Now in its third year, the hug is part of a weekend of events taking place February 11 and 12 celebrating one of the country's largest and best preserved hillforts. Old Oswestry has been acknowledged by eminent academics as the 'Stonehenge of the Iron Age' due to its importance to the archaeological understanding of Celtic Britain.

A full day's seminar will be held in Oswestry Memorial Hall on February 11 examining wider aspects of the hillfort's role, including its natural heritage and ecology. Family workshops with a wildlife theme and an evening of live performance are also planned at Hermon Chapel. Further events exploring the hillfort's flora and fauna are set to follow through 2017 under an educational initiative called the 'Hillfort Watch'.

Allied group, Artists Hugging the Hillfort (AHH!), is currently showing a retrospective of hillfort initiatives and art-work called 'Heritage Matters' at the Oswestry Heritage and Exhibition Centre. Running until the end of February, it traces HOOOH's evolution from campaign to community group working in the broadest interests of the hillfort.

Shops, outlet, groups and organisations who would like to participate in the 'Hearts around the Hillfort' initiative by making or collecting hearts should contact HOOOH on 01691 652918 or via its Facebook page (www.facebook.com/OldOswestryHillfort)

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About English Heritage:

- Within its portfolio, English Heritage is responsible for 60 prehistoric monuments. As well as Old Oswestry, these include the World Heritage Sites of Stonehenge and Avebury, Uffington Castle and Maiden Castle.
- Old Oswestry was first scheduled in 1934, and was later transferred by Lord Harlech into the guardianship of English Heritage.
- The collection of over 400 historic places managed by English Heritage started taking shape in 1882 when legislation was first passed to protect ancient monuments, administered under the remit of the government's Office of Works. An Act of Parliament passed in 1913 gave the Office new powers effectively to "make a collection of all the greatest sites and buildings that told the story of Britain".
- On 1 April 2015, English Heritage was split into two parts. The English Heritage Trust, is the charitable organisation which cares for over 400 historic monuments, buildings and sites – from world famous prehistoric sites to grand medieval castles, from Roman forts on the edges of empire to Cold War bunkers. Historic England champions the nation's wider heritage, providing policy advice to government, running the listing system, acting as statutory consultees on planning matters and giving grants.