

Frank Thomas Arnold for a Park or Recreation Ground

Arnold's Bequest Charity Board
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Meeting: Arnold's Bequest Charity Board

Date: 25 July 2023

Item: Grounds maintenance report

An assessment of Arnold's Bequest has recently been undertaken by Suffolk Wildlife Trust, who were asked by officers to give advice on what grounds maintenance and improvement works should be undertaken at the site.

The general opinion was that the land in its current natural condition offers a varied and biodiverse habitat for a number of different species.

The natural spring has created a marshy area within the woodland, which is attractive to several species of birds and insects. The Charity Board had previously considered attempting to create a pond in this location, but the marshy area in itself would be classed as a woodland pond of sorts and it is considered that any attempt to create a pond would not necessarily provide any additional benefit to the area and could create liabilities for the Charity Board.

Given the interesting environment of the site, it was suggested that the Charity Board may wish to engage with local nature enthusiasts, such as the Lowestoft Field Club, to assess the site and provide data which could be used to create information boards advising visitors of wildlife they may expect to see. This would also explain to visitors why the land is more 'wild' in its appearance than other public spaces in Lowestoft.

Felled tree branches provide excellent habitat, but it was recommended that some recently felled branches on the site are cut up and neatened. This work can be undertaken by Lowestoft Town Council's grounds maintenance team and cross-charged to the Charity Board.

It was noted that vegetation is overhanging the footpath and it was recommended this is cut to give a metre's clearance from the path. This work has been scheduled in with Lowestoft Town Council's grounds maintenance team and will be cross-charged to the Charity Board.

The representative from Suffolk Wildlife Trust will provide feedback on the plant species they identified during the visit, and will give advice on how these should be managed. One particular plant was understood to be a species of Helleborine, which is not a native species, and whilst not harmful can be prolific. This will need to be monitored to ensure it does not spread and start to impact other plants.

Brambles at the lower end of the land, near to the car park, provide a good habitat and natural barriers to prevent access and potential anti-social behaviour. It is recommended that the height of the brambles is reduced every other year, at the end of the summer season, which will also promote healthy growth. This work can be undertaken by Lowestoft Town Council grounds maintenance staff and cross-charged to the Charity Board.

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An ash tree at the lower end of the land was identified as requiring some attention. This has already been included in a schedule of works due to be undertaken by an Arborist.

Currently there are no signs to identify the land as Arnold's Bequest. Officers recommend working with local historians to create an information trail through the site with facts about Frank Thomas Arnold and the Bequest itself.