

2018

Gainsborough Drive 'Friends Of' Report



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19th September 2018

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Introduction

The ward councillors' for the Gunton area were keen to try and keep the Gainsborough Drive pond area a nice open area for the residents, public, water fowl and other inhabitants to the area. Local residents have been maintaining the area albeit perhaps not correctly as pond areas were not managed by Waveney District Council (WDC) in the past. Local residents have in the past carried out minor works and have approached Lowestoft Town Council (LTC) for their assistance since the asset transferred to them.

Initial scope

An initial meeting was set up by Cllr Barnard and Cllr Parker with local residents and the Facilities and Contracts Manager (FCM) on June 6th 2018 at the Annexe of Gunton St Peter's Church to Consider the Establishment of a Friends of Gainsborough Drive Pond Area.

David Briggs spoke about the formation of the Gunton Woodland Community Project and how a constitution and committee had been formed. He also spoke of how he had given advice to the Corton Wood group at their formation about the need for the constitution, a committee and insurance. He spoke about the insurance that the Gunton Woodland Community Project had for 3rd party, personal accident and public liability insurances. He spoke of the use of hand and power tools and the need for specialist training for the latter e.g. chain saws.

Pond Maintenance

Discussion about pond maintenance and the fact that none had been done for a long time by (WDC) see image 1 circa 2012. The (FCM) spoke of obtaining advice from an Internal Drainage Board and David Briggs mentioned Steve Aylward from the Suffolk Wildlife Trust as also being a source of advice on ponds. The wildlife possibly present in the pond was discussed e.g. great crested newts, dragonfly larvae and other amphibians and no maintenance could be considered until advice on how best to conserve this wildlife was received. The idea of reeds in the pond was not met with a positive response because of their invasive tendencies.

(WN) have more recently tidied up the area and felled trees see image 2. Many of the residents near the pond wanted it cleared of detritus, weed and better maintained. It was suggested that one weed in the pond was fairly new to the pond. Signage around the pond about deep water and no feeding of bread to the ducks was also suggested by several residents. The installation of a fence around the pond was discussed but the majority were opposed to this idea. Waste bins for the collection of materials as a result of the volunteers' work was discussed.

Friends' Group

David Siebert was willing to be chair of a friends group but none of the other residents present were willing to take on a role or were positive about the formation of a friends group, so it could not be taken further forward. Details of insurance possibilities and advice from Waveney Norse (WN) once a friends group was formed had been provided at the previous meeting, so without the formation of a friends' group these matters were left in abeyance.

Actions

Actions that arose from the meetings are as shown below:

- Initial survey to be completed with communications to residents.
- Invasive weeds removal.
- Keep felled trees and droplets maintained on a regular basis.
- Remove diseased tree.
- Signs perhaps one large for: Deep water – do not feed the ducks – ducks crossing.
- List of what can and can't be undertaken.

External Guidance

East Suffolk Internal Drainage Board were asked to look at the area and guide on what works would need to be completed in and around the pond itself. They carried out a site visit on 31st May 2018 and concluded that there are no inlet or outlet pipes and believe the pond to be clay lined. This on its own creates a few issues if desilting the pond to allow for more capacity or re-profiling it. Extra care would need to be taken not to damage the lining and allowing for diggers, road closures, ecologists, water pumps and soil testing the cost would be £28,685.00 excl. VAT. The (FCM) contacted both Essex and Suffolk Water and the Environment Agency asking specifically if they have any historical data that suggests flooding of properties as well as in their opinion would they consider desilting the pond as a necessity. Both parties did not have any data that suggests a history of flooding in the area but did not comment on the necessity of the desilting process.

Norse Countryside Services Team met Cllr Barnard, Cllr Parker and the (FCM) at the pond on 6th September 2018 facilitated by Richard Hackney of (WN). Various elements of the pond and the area were discussed with the countryside team. They suggested that rather than desilting the pond that we may be best to re-profile it by moving the silt to the perimeter rather than removing it (caution on the clay lining). They also suggested to eco-plug the existing stumps nearest to the Gainsborough Drive road see image 4 but leaving those to flourish adjacent to Raphael Walk see image 3. It was also noted that the willow tree closest to the Gainsborough Drive road had died and should be felled.

They suggested that we introduce Sedge in the margins, flag iris and king cup as a deep plant. Apparently a new weed has been introduced (Water mint). www.britishpondplants.co.uk

Considerations

Upon the Countryside Services visit a resident noticed our presence and popped over for an informal conversation. He eluded to the fact that the residents do not know what they are doing and could benefit from better understanding. The residents do want to make the area look nice at their own time and expense. They have recently removed some vegetation from the pond and left it to the side of the pond. (WN) on the day agreed to remove the vegetation at no additional cost. If a bag, bin or skip were to be supplied for the residents it could be means of others disposing of their own green waste (currently a paid service throughout the Waveney District). It is also clear to see that individuals have taken a dislike to certain trees in the area evidence of malicious intent can be seen in images 6, 7 and 8. Particular notice to the precision and intent of not being found out in the killing of the willow tree adjacent to the Gainsborough Drive road side. The method by which they carefully cut the bark in a square, removed it and then drilled a hole to the base of said tree presumably to insert pesticides and to cover it back up again without being noticed.

The benefits of 'Friends Of' groups are clear to see with others in the local area, however residents here are unwilling to set this up. Therefore LTC are in a position to consider

- Does it persist with a 'Friends Of' group insisting that no work by residents or others should be undertaken at this site without the knowledge of (LTC).
 - A flyer being hand delivered to local residents stating:
 - a) Are you aware that there is a tree preservation order (TPO) at the Open Space and pond area known locally as Gainsborough Drive pond.
 - b) It is an offence to carry out any works to trees in a TPO area.

Conclusion

- Letter drop – advising of what has actually happened with the pond and the trees, advice we have been given to the area and the plans for it. Volunteer work on the site must be completed under a constitution for insurance and legal purposes and a positive mutual relationship with LTC and residents. Also add the benefits of a 'Friends Group' and invite to a meeting on a specific date and time. In addition, no bin can be supplied on a long term basis unless works are:
 - a) Planned in advance
 - b) Agreed with LTC
 - c) On a specific day.
- If a friends group cannot be met, then LTC will have to consider its future options for the site.
- LTC to put together a scheme of works with plantations.

Visuals



Image 1 Circa 2012



Image 2 Taken 16th May 2018



Image 3 Taken 6th Sept 2018



Image 4 Taken 6th Sept 2018



Image 5 Taken 6th Sept 2018



Image 6 Taken 6th Sept 2018



Image 7 Taken 6th Sept 2018



Image 8 Taken 6th Sept 2018