

24/03/2023

To whom it may concern,

Suffolk Wildlife Trust met with a representative of Holton pits community group on Friday 17th February 2023 to discuss their vision for the Sandpits should they be successful in purchasing the land.

The value of the site for wildlife and people

Holton Sandpits is a County Wildlife Site, and in part designated as a geological Site of Special Scientific Interest. The County Wildlife Site includes two flooded pits forming large freshwater bodies (Priority Pond habitat) one currently used by anglers. Dense scrub and broad-leaved woodland (Priority Habitat) lies adjacent to the lakes at the bottom of the pit and provides suitable habitat for a variety of nesting birds. The nationally scarce mossy stonecrop can be found on the sparse, sandy acid grassland (Priority Habitat) along with sheep's sorrel and sheep's fescue. Over a hundred species of flowering plants have been recorded on this site. Furthermore, common lizard, a priority species is recorded here in good numbers. Other priority species recorded include brown long-eared bat, common toad, West European hedgehog, starling, house sparrow as well as lattice heath and cinnabar moths. Holton sand pits are therefore a valuable site for wildlife conservation.

The SSSI designated for its geological interest, on its last condition assessment in 2013 by Natural England it was judged to be in unfavourable condition and declining.

There are regularly walked routes through the site which are particularly valued by local residents. The walks are popular with dog walkers but more widely provide access to green space of natural beauty close to where they live. Holton sandpits provides an opportunity for people to connect with nature which is known to be beneficial to health and well-being. Holton Sandpits is within walking distance of Holton St Peter Primary School lending the opportunity for studies of land use as well as fauna and flora which could be integrated across the curriculum. An important statutory duty, under the NERC Act 2006, is to promote public enjoyment of the natural environment, as well as equal access to it. *

Importance of County Wildlife Sites as refuges and steppingstones for nature in the wider landscape

County Wildlife Sites are an important refuge for nature, in particular rare and scarce species such as mossy stone crop found here. County Wildlife Sites also provide steppingstones for mobile species across the wider landscape. For instance, brown long-eared bats roost in trees or buildings then hunt in the tree canopy and understory, they use vegetation linkages

for commuting between roosts and foraging grounds. Parcels of priority deciduous woodland habitat found at Holton Sandpits and nearby support mobile woodland species such as bats and woodland birds.

These important locally designated sites should be protected from development and other activities that would result in loss or degradation of their habitats.

We are supportive of any proposals that would protect and enhance valuable wildlife habitats within the County Wildlife Site.

Our conservation advisors offer advice on the management of County Wildlife Sites to community wildlife and environment groups and Parish Councils who manage green spaces such as Holton Sandpits.

* Natural England Research Report NERR 081