



Holton Pits Public Meeting
Holton & Blyford Village Hall
Sunday 19th May 2024 – 7.15pm

34 people present (28 public, 6 directors).

All directors present:

(Marion (Chair), Jamie (Treasurer), Rebecca (Secretary), Gaina, Rachel and John.

1) Welcome – MG (chair)

Marion opened the meeting with a welcome to all, our 5th public meeting. This meeting is to update you and explain what has been happening since the site sale went through at the end of last year. The focus has been on spending the money we got from Community Ownership Fund. We hope you have been enjoying the Pits in this nice weather. Nightingales, reed warblers, black cap, willow warblers have been heard last week in the Pits.

2) Finance – JL (Treasurer)

In response for people to donate 'price of a coffee' there have been 25 people setting up standing orders. Thank you.

Our previous bank, The Co-operative Bank have been difficult to deal with so we have successfully changed over to Lloyds bank. We have a current account and a linked savings account so we will get interest from this.

Van Dijk has agreed to be our local accountant.

Our public liability insurance is around £700 per year. In the beginning we needed income from a fishing club leasing the lake to cover this and the site costs. Holton Parish Council has kindly agreed to pay our insurance for the first year and potentially for the next 5 years. Applause from the audience and thanks to the Parish Council.

A member of the public asked a question about do we have money allocated for benches. Yes, we do. Also quite a few people have asked about donating a bench to the site. Directors will look into options and prices so that the benches suit the location and will update the public. Please email info@holtonpits.org with any suggestions of locations or styles for benches.

3) Website/new email address/setting up a business/Policies & Procedures - RH (Secretary)

Holton Pits was incorporated as a Community Interest Company in February 2023, therefore we are registered on Companies House and run as a business. We have to adhere to Companies House policies and procedures.

We have been setting up all we need to do to run Holton Pits CIC efficiently and legally. We have written our own policies; these include safeguarding, equality, fraud, finance etc.

We have to send reports and forms to Companies House, report to them and submit accounts. We are also liaising with the Community Ownership Fund and have to report to them. We have set up public liability insurance for the site. We have applied for grants to help fund further projects/needs.

In house we have made and designed a new website www.holtonpits.org.

We have created online storage for all files (Gaina will talk about this shortly). We have set up email – info@holtonpits.org

Please update your own records and use this email address for all contact (or the contact form via the website) or message our Facebook page www.facebook.com/HoltonPitsCIC

4) Google Drive – GD

As we have to run as a business, we have joined Google workspace to allow things to run smoothly. All documents and storage are on there. We have recently upgraded the plan to include email newsletters. This is cost effective at £10 per month as we can save money on separate mailing software. We are mindful to cut costs and make it efficient as we go.

5) Public – RK

Currently we have 260 people subscribed to our mailing list. We are fully in accordance with data protection (GDPR). We communicate with the public via Facebook (www.facebook.com/HoltonPitsCIC), website (www.holtonpits.org) and email address (info@holtonpits.org) .

5) Japanese Knotweed – JA

Japanese Knotweed is a Non-native invasive species, it has a lot of food reserves in its rhizomes and lies dormant for many years. We as land owners have to control it. It can be controlled in many ways, we have researched thoroughly and taken advice from experts. Cutting takes 10 years to kill. Many chemicals can be used but we don't want to ruin or damage the ecology of the site. The best way is to do stem injection. Throughout certain times of the year the stems are injected. This is a very controlled way of doing it.

It can take up to 5 years to kill Japanese Knotweed and it needs a regular treatment plan. We can't start until late Summer as you have to wait until the plant has flowered. Nettles are being cut/controlled at the moment to allow easy access to the Japanese Knotweed once we can inject it. It is possible to spray chemicals onto the leaves, but do not want to spray due to ecology and near water.

Public question about cutting/strimming. We are following professional advice and cutting is recommended to weaken the plants before treatment. The area is not being strimmed at all.

A fence has been erected around the Japanese Knotweed to try and contain and prevent its spread.

6) Noticeboard/Car park/Flytipping – JL

A local individual has kindly donated funds for a noticeboard (wooden with glass fronted doors). This is so notices and contact details can be put up. This was purchased and made by a local company and the wood is currently being treated before it is put on the site. Suggestions for location welcome and can be sent to (info@holtonpits.org).

The car park has been tidied, there have been some flytipping incidences – mostly landscaping waste. We have put signs up to try and prevent this. Please be our eyes and ears and report anything untoward.

We have plans to put down 4 or 5 inches of chippings and level the car park (Southwold Rd). Contractor in talks with us about this.

7) Fishing/Lake survey – lake subgroup

Woodbridge & District Angling Club have the licence until 31st May 2024. We had lots of talks with other local clubs about taking over the lease. One club in particular we started full discussions on the lease. They were a pro-active club, which was great as they were going to get stuck in replacing platforms etc.

However, there were certain things that did not align with the site and how it is currently used. The lake subgroup (and all directors) felt that we would be going from a very quiet site to the lake being used very regularly. The new club had regular fishing matches and the site would have lots of 'serious' fishing; using long poles which are expensive in the fishing community but would block access/paths. Driving on the site was also discussed and this was something we did not want. There were just too many conflicting needs between the local community and all users of the site and a pro-active and vibrant fishing club.

We are also in a more mindful state of where Holton Pits CIC is financially. We have decided to explore a more casual, gentle approach to fishing. More like it was 30+ years ago which a lot of local people talk about. We will explore and purchase our own platforms. Around 10 in total - of which 3 or 4 are large (for disabled access and school groups/other users besides fishing).

Please report any activity on or near the lake which is suspicious asap. Particularly over the next few months. Quickest is by messaging our Facebook page:
<https://www.facebook.com/HoltonPitsCIC>

We have been exploring options to find out what is below the water of the lake. A local scuba diving club, have agreed and will dive and see what is down there.

8) Ecology/Tree work – MG/RK

Dorothy Casey & Gill Perkins have completed some plant site surveys. No orchids at present, their advice is to control the brambles. Graham Hart (SWT and in charge of all County Wildlife Sites – over 700 in Suffolk) came and looked over Holton Pits. Good report from him on the ecology of the site (please ask if you'd like to see it). He is compiling a list on Suffolk Wildlife Sites that are owned by the community – Holton Pits are joining this list. They like the 'benign neglect' that the site has had. The site has naturally rewilded and his advice was to see what happens in the first year. Please show/tell us your finds or join an app that logs these nationally.

Hymenoptera – bees, wasps, ants etc – we are having a survey very shortly on these, this is particularly useful as it is to do with the sandy cliff face. We have lots of locals and experts that are doing surveys/records (many voluntarily).

Tree work – we have done emergency tree work (Alders, overhanging on footpath. Laying Elm hedge on Eastern side. Two more trees to do, check for nests on Silver Birch and then cut if no nests. One Willow still to do once it's out of leaf.

Hedge planting was a success. Graham Hart (SWT) and Dorothy Casey said to increase hedging wherever we can. Member of public said a few plants that we planted look like they are not taking, we will have a look, see which they are and replace as necessary.

9) Poo Bins – GD

Bin by Southwold Road, owned and paid by Holton Parish Council. We looked into getting another bin, not simple as have to go via council. £12 per collection of a wheelie bin, which could be once a month. However, in hot weather this will smell. We are keeping an eye and ask public to monitor and let us know if the current bin overflows so we can re-look into it.

Contact: info@holtonpits.org

10) Interpretation Boards – RK/MG

Very important to capture story of the site. Particularly useful to visitors. Topics include SSSI and it's geology and County Wildlife Site information. History including photos during its use as a working pit, Blyford Lane, and that it's a community open space.

11) Work/Skills – RH

Please send email to info@holtonpits.org with any skills/ways you could help with projects.

12) Other – JL/RH

We have had vehicles on site, we are installing posts to prevent this happening in future.

Vote of thanks and acknowledgment to Kevin, Caron and Colin for all their hard work as previous directors of Holton Pits CIC. They have helped lay the foundations towards Holton Pits safe future.

Open up to the to floor

Accessibility was mentioned in regards to paths and signs. RH replied:

We have looked into an all weather path in the past and will explore options. Please email info@holtonpits.org with suggestions on areas you would like to improve access. The new platforms on the lake will include better access – they are large and have handrails. We applied and received a grant for path signage, this can include rubbing posts for kids/visually impaired.

Another member of the public mentioned the stinging nettles and keeping pathways clear. Option to explore regular volunteer work parties, particularly the upper narrow paths up near the crossroads of Blyford Lane.

A question was raised about if we would become a charity. GD responded: This was looked into in the beginning, it is not an easy thing to set up. We are working well as a Community Interest Company (CIC) at the moment. Everything has to meet Government regulations of a charity – we don't quite fit their definition at the moment.

A member of the public raised the points of fires and defibrillators – prevention.

Perhaps have buckets – look into installation - we have water down the site in the lake but no means of transporting it if someone dropped a cigarette for example. Lake sub group will explore options of beaters and buckets and locations of these.

Defibrillators: Do need electric in winter (temperature fluctuation). Can now get with solar panel ones. Will investigate thoroughly asap.

Talk by the gentleman from the Scuba club – there is a shop in Leiston they train scuba divers. Happy to come and do a dive and see what's in the lake. Directors will discuss with them as this will give a good idea about vehicles, fishing tackle, contamination etc.