

Bothenhampton Nature Reserve - Pre Plan Consultation Feedback
June 2020

Headlines:

- **A well used and much loved nature reserve**
- **A source of peace and connection with nature**
- **The site demands sensitive management for wildlife**
- **A need for up to date surveys to inform the management plan**
- **Maintain paths/ steps and handrails**
- **Re establish a volunteer group and work parties**
- **Improved information about the site and what management is taking place**

What people like about Bothenhampton Nature Reserve:

A lovely place for birds, animals, trees and plants and should be kept that way. Sadly over the last few years it has been sadly neglected and now desperately needs professional care and management.

The peace and quiet in a protected environment which is easily accessed, clean and safe. It is well maintained too

Quietness, peace, unspoilt and natural, birdsong

the peace and tranquillity I feel when walking through there

The peace and tranquillity of the place is amazing. There is little light pollution.

I like the areas that have been wilded and are fairly inaccessible and full of life.

Flowers in the Spring

We enjoy the nature reserve for it's peace and quiet and like it just as it is.

We enjoyed the shade and birdsong - it was also very quiet, not many people - excellent for wildlife.

Dappled Light/ the canopy overhead, esp on hot, sunny days

I pleasant walk between Wych hill and the Church. I love the sense of peace it gives me.

We are lucky to have this reserve, we need to keep it and nurture it.
There use to be many orchids, all gone now.

I am glad to hear management of the reserve is back in local hands where its needs are understood.

Paths are clear but still wild.

Very peaceful.

Pleasantly cool on a hot day, especially for a dog.

At the top, a lovely view over West Bay.

Good variety of flora.

The larger animals such as deer, badger and fox. Smaller mammals, squirrel, rabbit, mice, rat. Birds we have counted at least 20+ different species. Insect life is also very rich and diverse - moths and butterflies etc

Many people use the footpath to take pleasure in this as well as using it as a thoroughfare to reach villages such as Burton Bradstock and West Bay. It gives access to many walks further afield.

Coming up the steep path to the ridge and seeing the view of the coast and sea and sky; it's a safe place to walk our dog off the lead and for him to socialise.

I like sitting on the bench and resting my knees before setting off back home. I like sitting on the ledge at the far end of the quarry, and listening to the birds. It would be lovely to have a couple of simple plank benches on the ledges there.

Peaceful wooded area with several paths available and links to other main footpaths. Lots of different birdsong and flowers.

Interesting traces of former quarry workings – rock face, cart tracks, lime kiln etc

“Natural” paths, (possibly the remains of old cart tracks?) that are admittedly a little uneven, but preferable to artificial surfaces. The steps that have been constructed out of wooden boarding and rock/ soil infill are easy and safe to use.

Lovely views when you emerge at the south end onto the ridge path (West Bay one way, and Bothen Hill the other).

Its proximity - The wild aspect and its contours - ie not manicured - Peaceful -Haven for wild life & birds - The presence of the Kiln - The framed descriptors.

The Nature Reserve is a wonderful resource for the local community and visitors to the area to enjoy.

During lockdown it has been busier than normal and has been discovered by many local walkers and dog walkers who have not in the past ventured this way as they have searched out local places to walk.

We love it just the way it is but also appreciate that the paths are maintained by a kind volunteer who cannot be expected to take on this responsibility alone.

It's a wild patch on the edge of bungalow-land, no need to stop paths getting muddy in winter

A place to walk with nature and a touch of local history

The quietness, the way it has been left to develop in nature's own way

The wildness. Please do not over tidy/ cultivate

Quiet solitude and distant views - all close by

It appears to be free from vandalism - It's quietness - That it is little known about outside Bothenhampton (not sure this is necessarily a good thing)

It's natural look and wonderful wildlife. A great place to walk in a peaceful + beautiful setting.

It provides us with birdsong and a cool place to walk in the heat of summer.

It's peaceful and tranquil and leads to wonderful views and walks.

A place of peace and quiet giving lots of pleasure because of natural ambience. We do not want a "public park" - it should be maintained as a "nature reserve"

We love the peace, and greenness and all the flowers. We love walking up to the bench + we love Pixie Hollow (aka. The quarry)

What are the issues/concerns the Management Plan needs to address?

General
Someone knowledgeable in charge who is knows what they are doing to supervise checking and maintenance of trees, management of paths, steps and rails.
The plan needs to be attentive to the local and specific context of Bothenhampton Nature Reserve. Recent management plans have either removed native plants or have not stopped others from doing so. - In general nature is capable of caring for itself without human intervention, and as we are still in the midst of a health crisis, money, time and resources should not be diverted towards unnecessary management plans.
We do realise some interventions maybe needed to enhance the area for wild life. We hope these interventions will not detract from the wildness of the areas as we feel has been the case on Allington Hill.
<p>First decide why it is a protected area and what it is exactly that needs to be protected. There is concern about the old man who is clearing a substantial area "to let light in, which must be good". He has removed native shade loving plants in the process, recovery of which is likely to be years if ever. He is also carefully tending invasive plants, carefully clipping bushes into a suburban style shape. Why is the ranger allowing this to happen? Who is the ranger? We need to know more about the rangers.</p> <p>It would be a mistake to spend money on the reserve after the pandemic, but removal of invasive plants would not be expensive and it would be beneficial for the health of the trees to be checked. A management plan needs to protect nature and let it develop on its own, so stop the old man turning it into a suburban garden. Let nature look after itself. Whatever happens to the reserve please remember this is the country and not suburbia yet.</p>
There are improvements we'd like to see but we love the nature reserve and wouldn't want it to change too much. The birds and other wildlife are a delight as are the wild flowers and the old quarry is beautiful
If the main interest here is to improve biodiversity then I would suggest that you do not over-manage the reserve and put in things like seats and bins and more pathways, which will encourage dog walkers etc.
<p>A wood is already established with a functioning eco-system. If care and thought had been given when the quarry was abandoned then it could have been so different. Quarry sites are usually kept open as much as possible because the nutrient poor soils and the lack of competition usually leads to an establishment of very rare species, most of them protected. However, the site is so advanced in its succession that probably the management of plants should have been enforced 50 years ago. Now there is humus and proper soil and even trees, so restoring it back will be difficult.</p> <p>Little money should be spent on this project now after the pandemic. However, allowing the old man who is working on clearing an area is probably costing more in the long run as he is damaging the environment and making it into a garden landscape and this will cost to rectify. The ranger should be accountable and we need to know his qualifications as he has allowed this to happen.</p>
It should widely be left as it is now - keeping the paths clear but natural with a few improvements around steps and maybe a few more benches to sit on.
Managing to maintain it's natural look by NOT gentrifying it. Please don't spoil it's charm and peaceful setting.
The key here is Improved Management.

Volunteer Working Group
In 2014 the council posted an appeal for volunteers to come and help every last Friday in the month and it was well attended. As with most things when the ranger in charge was moved on, it lost its momentum- but I'm sure with correct leadership it could be re-established.
Set up a local working party (under supervision) to help maintain the reserve on a voluntary basis – this use to happen,
Resurrecting/ or supporting a volunteer maintenance task force.
When we moved here 8 years ago we were volunteers with the rangers and would like to become involved again
You could establish a group of volunteers for regular maintenance who report to someone with suitable experience.
The Reserve was a real joy when there was a warden and volunteers looking after it. Hopefully this will happen again
If a group of volunteers was to be arranged we would be happy to volunteer on an occasional basis.
The quarry area beyond the lime kiln that was cleared was then attacked by an elderly man, pruning everything he could reach, who seemed to be trying to turn it into a garden/park.
The Reserve needs some new blood and of a younger age group to be volunteers - or an active chairperson who can pull in help when needed

Wildlife Enhancements
Would it be possible to have a species survey done by someone, to show us what is actually there? For example, I have never seen an owl and never hear one at night, although there used to be owls around here until a few years ago. Could a couple of boxes be put up for little or tawny owls
Creation of Glades to allow light through to the woodland floor
Tree management is something else we would like to see, there are so many saplings shooting up, we find hundreds in our garden!
The necessary tree clearance to encourage bird life etc.
Trees: a lot of ash in the Reserve, and not all of them in good health. What replanting would we do if die-back spreads?
The whole area needs professional assessment for tree maintenance and to identify those which are potentially dangerous. As locals who use it frequently it would be good to have it made clear who we should contact in event of fallen branches
Removal of much of the very invasive ivy, that chokes everything it comes into contact with and is currently running amok
Think about how you could put in a small pond - these are wonderful microsystems which will improve diversity of insects and small mammals, and maybe create one or 2 more open glades, which might allow native flowers more light.
Vegetation is very overgrown in places – masking potholes etc? The natural look is great, but there might be hidden dangers. Large area with dense nettles and also what I think is Hogweed
Personally I'd like to be rid of the grey squirrels - trap and remove them to somewhere else - but I don't suppose that will go down well with people. The combination of grey squirrels and the large number of magpies and a couple of jays indicate that small nesting birds have a hard time here
The track that goes left near the top of the wooden steps and runs parallel below the ridge has a large number of lovely old ash trees. Does anyone keep an eye on their health? (I expect they do!
Allow nature to take its course in certain areas where the community cannot reach thus helping to keep a diverse and rich environment for wildlife to use.
Leave the central part of the Reserve untouched in the name of wilding. I mean the part above the path through the woods that skirts the field below.
Occasional issues with branches/ trees falling across paths need to be communicated to someone - for action to be taken.

Infra structure Improvements
Seasonal cutting of the dense bramble shrub, to open up the path width. This has been a big issue during the ' Lockdown', the nature reserve has been extremely popular. It has been impossible, in many places to stand two metres apart from other walkers
Over the last 2/3 years little has been done to maintain the footpaths, steps have disappeared and handrails broken and they obviously need to be repaired. Footpaths have become very overgrown with carex pendula and brambles so some management of these would be desirable
I'd appreciate evening out of some of the steeper paths – perhaps some gravel that will help in wet, muddy times.
The lower track through the Reserve leading to Quarry Lane was partly washed out by floods over the winter and perhaps need lightly re-making?
Work to the path up to the nature reserve from Quarry Lane - this is a running stream in winter. The drainage could do with much improvement.
Keeping main footpaths clear for pedestrian use, but do not open any other or new footpaths. Keep the steps and handrails in good order.
Paths need clearing- now quite overgrown in places. Steps down into Reserve from Valley Road need attention to make it safer. Wooden handrail needs replacing.
Repair or replace the wooden railings leading down the steps from Valley Rd to the Lime kiln. Install or lay all weather paths where they are currently badly affected by rain and become muddy quagmires
A bit more handrail where there is a gap going up the steps please.
Just maintenance - keeping steps safe for example.
Upkeep of the many steps around the reserve that are in constant need of maintenance
The track that goes right to the lime kiln and quarry gets very slippery in wet weather and could do with a bit of surfacing-nothing fancy.
More connecting paths – more access to the middle (high) sections
Repair to the gate leading to the nature reserve & reservoir from Wych Hill should be carried out as a matter of urgency by the council or Wessex Water ?
Repair to the entrance gate, which was rammed open in March 2020. Also, by improvements to footpaths in the quarry which become very muddy in winter (but avoid making it too urban)
Some seating where the information is
A bench in the quarry but mainly we love it as it is.
Perhaps seats or tree trunks alongside the paths, or picnic benches in the hollow where the sides of the old quarry can be seen
I miss the seat that used to be just past the Wessex Water compound.
The clearing beyond the lime kiln could incorporate a wooden bench and a simple rope/tree logs adventure playground structure for children to play on
A programme of reviewing fencing and tree management needs consideration as well as a general maintenance programme to encourage the bio diversity of the area and maintain the resources for all to enjoy.
All the fencing needs an overhaul and the steps need checking over.

Information & Interpretation
Installing clear signage at top and bottom of main path saying "BOTHENHAMPTON NATURE RESERVE RESPECT THE COUNTRYSIDE, FOLLOW THE COUNTRY CODE, Bothenhampton and Walditch Parish Council".
Additional or clearer signs to explain the site and enhance the experience!
Updating the information board – (There are no Nightingales!)
The lime kiln looks unhappy and half derelict / half repaired. Maybe it's worth restoring it a bit more and putting up an information board about the rail track to Duck Lane and what went on in the village?
Perhaps a nature trail with numbered markers.
Dogs
We feel care should be taken not to promote the reserve as a dog walking area as, on the whole dogs and wildlife do not mix.
The main issue is dog walkers not picking up or leaving bags in the bushes. There is no dog poo bin in the reserve (difficult to access for collection) but there could be a bin at more accessible points. A bin could be positioned along quarry lane away from residential properties - for example next to the telegraph pole near the river on the RHS as you approach the reserve on Quarry Lane at the end of the field. Perhaps another one could be positioned at the top of the steps to Valley Road for those who use the reserve from Valley road end. Perhaps more signs to ask people to pick up.
Please can a dog poo bins be located at the quarry lane end and at the top of the path to encourage dog owners to clear up after their dogs. Recently the path has been pretty disgusting to negotiate due to owners letting their dogs foul on the path.
It needs no improvement - maybe a small notice to remind dog owners to clean up after their dogs.
Install 3 dog poo bins - at the top path entrance (near the reservoir) at the bottom entrance by the gate and somewhere in the middle. It's great when dog owners pick up their dogs poo and put in a plastic bag, but then they have to carry it home as there are no bins to drop it in, some idiots just leave the bags on the paths or in hedges and bushes!
A dog waste bin in the Quarry Lane and/or one on the exit to Wych Ridge.
During nesting season dogs and noisy people can disturb nesting birds and animals etc. A few polite signs to remind people that its not a park and animals are nesting and bringing up young. educating families in this respect would help vulnerable wildlife without affect the pleasure it can give to all.
Banning dog walking and cycle riding.
New Ideas
A Children's nature trail – Maps for kids with their names for areas...Signs in the woods
Opportunities for tree swings or climbing

Other Comments

The request to provide thoughts about the future management plan was only received 6 days before the deadline. I hope that the next stage of consultation July-August will provide more time to ensure that providing feedback is accessible to everyone. Consultation programmes must be accessible to all local residents otherwise the proposed process is simply paying lip service, and the process will remain top-down and exclusionary.

I am not pleased that I received notification about all this only two days ago, giving me just 6 days to reply. More thought should be put into communication with the local residents and also make sure all the local residents have been notified. Setting out details of what you intend to do may look good but if you don't fulfill these intentions then the whole process is a failure.

Ensuring illegal use such as camping and motorcycling is prohibited - we have seen both on occasion but relatively rare.

Parking - there is an unclear sign (easily missed) at the top of Quarry lane in the village that indicates no parking down the lane - however a few regulars (dog walkers) do park on the verge near the gate into the reserve for shortish period to walk dogs. The area is used as a turning area for cars that mistakenly take a wrong turn and delivery vehicles - parked cars obstruct the ability to turn as well as more vitally impede access for emergency vehicles. Perhaps a no parking sign in the verge would alleviate this problem