

THURSTON PARISH COUNCIL

Parish Council Office

New Green Avenue

Thurston IP31 3TG

Tel: 01359 232854

e-mail: info@thurstonparishcouncil.gov.uk

website: <http://thurston.suffolk.cloud>



The following paper was submitted by the Clerk to the Parish Council at its meeting of 6th September 2023

Agenda Item 11e – Paper 8 - To consider the proposal to improve the wildlife area on New Green

Background Information:

Under their remit to manage the open space and recreational areas of New Green, the Leisure and Environment Committee (under delegated powers from the Parish Council) drew up a renovation proposal which was put to the New Green Trust for their consideration. It is understood that a verbal presentation of these plans was reported to the New Green Trustees at their meeting held on 20th July by John Thurlbourn who was present at the meeting held by the Leisure and Environment Committee on 19th July.

Current situation

The Wildlife area was developed in the 1980's by a group of villagers looking to support the biodiversity of the village. A large pond was dug out and lined and planting included numerous wildflowers. The garden was maintained by this group of villagers until such times as their physical fitness restricted them. Since then, due to its seclusion the garden has become a popular spot for antisocial behaviour. The pond liner is no longer watertight and poses a safety hazard for people and wildlife alike. Trees and shrubbery are overgrown and require cutting back and/or removal.

Proposal for works to the wildlife area.

After confirmation from a representative of New Green Trustee that the Trustees would be amenable to improvements, the Parish Council sought advice from Natural England and Suffolk Wildlife Trust to better understand the options available to them ([Conservation Advisor report can be downloaded here](#)).

The committee have drawn up the following proposals which were submitted to and discussed by New Green Community Trust in July. The Chair of the New Green Community Trust has indicated the Trust's approval for the proposed works to be carried out.

- Remove the liner of the pond – although it has been noted that this would be a cumbersome and expensive task and would need a digger.
- As an alternative, the liner would be pierced and slashed to enable drainage.
- Current plans are to undertake the latter and if that proves unsuccessful, to then look into full removal. Removal or piercing of the liner to be undertaken when the water levels in the pond are minimal – this is normally in August and September.
- Add subsoil (as opposed to topsoil as it would be too nutritious for the planned planting) over the slashed liner, whilst keeping the dip and shape of the pond to achieve a microclimate and an interesting topography to the garden.
- Following a soil texture and PH test, wildflower and meadow land planting will be added.
- Seeds and/or plugs to be sourced from local gardens, churchyard and the seed bank held by the biodiversity team at Mid Suffolk to ensure plants are both native to the area and likely to successfully establish.
- Any grass growth that could undermine the wildflower and meadow style planting will be cut and all cuttings removed, which will also help to keep the soil fertility low.
- Blackthorn scrub at the entrance to the garden are overgrown and block the sightline in to the garden. These are to be cut to ground level and managed as small bushes. The larger trees may also benefit from some coppicing, but that decision will be made once the Blackthorn has been removed.

- The intention is to open the garden entrances up, so that the garden is more visible to users and passersby, to let light in the garden, and it will have a more spacious and open feel to it. By removing the seclusion it will reduce the likelihood of antisocial behaviour.
- Further Blackthorn and Dogwood suckers that have become invasive throughout the garden will be cut to ground level.
- Similarly, the Buddleia and other large shrubs which have been allowed to grow, now require some extensive cutting back.
- 'Wildlife Garden' signs will be erected at both entrances welcoming visitors to the garden.
- A lectern style board will be erected inside the garden to detail the history of the garden (in recognition of the original residents that created it) and to inform visitors of the type of flora and fauna they can expect to see at particular times of the year.
- More benches and seating areas will be installed to give residents the contemplation areas and quiet relaxing spaces that they asked for when surveyed in 2022 (Future Leisure and Recreational Facilities in Thurston Survey).

Moving forward

The intention is to set up a working group to include Parish Councillors, New Green Trustees and willing villagers.

During the Summer holidays, a Duke of Edinburgh student, who is currently carrying out a biodiversity study in the garden as part of their voluntary commitment, undertook an analysis of the flora and fauna that could be located in and around the Bug Hotel.

The ATC have been approached to establish whether they would be keen to help out when and where necessary.

Recommendation 1: that the Parish Council approves the overall proposal from the Leisure and Environment Committee for the works as outlined above.

Costings: "Gardening" works will be expected to be funded from the CIL bid for the Wildlife Area in the sum of £2,000 as well as volunteer time. Benches, signs and a lectern style board to be funded via a CIL bid in the sum of £2,000 with a further £400 from the Pride in Your Place Project funded by MSDC. Costings will be finalised once formal quotations have been sourced and a formal CIL bid submitted.

Recommendation 2: Due to the need to attend to the pond liner before the winter weather starts to increase the water table and therefore the pond levels, and to carry out works to the trees and shrubs before birds and wildlife start to build their nests, initial works would need to start within the next 6 weeks. Approval is sought to undertake this work as soon as practically possible to avoid a further 12-month delay.

Recommendation 3: Delegated powers be given to the Clerk in conjunction with the Chair of the LEC to issue appropriate orders to contractors and volunteers for the above works to be carried out in accordance with Council's financial regulations mindful at all times of risk aversion policies.