



GIFT TO NATURE

TOWN COUNCIL MEETING

REPORT 7/21

11 JANUARY 2021

The purpose of this Report is for Members to receive the Annual Report of Gift to Nature..

No. DETAILS

1) BACKGROUND

- a) The Island 2000 Trust began in 1997 as a partnership between 10 organisations: Isle of Wight Council, Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Unit, Rural Community Council, National Trust, National Farmers Union, Country Land and Business Association, Environment Agency, Countryside Commission, Association of Town and Parish Councils and Southern Water.
- b) It registered as a Charity on 8 November 2000 having secured a Millennium Commission grant of £3m.
- c) In February 2016 the Island 2000 Trust charity took on the management of most of the Isle of Wight Council's countryside estate. This project is run under the name of Gift to Nature as a 20-year agreement to reinvigorate 25 Isle of Council sites, covering an area in excess of 170 hectares.

2) VENTNOR AREAS

- a) Three of Ventnor's landscape areas: Rew Down, Nansen Down and the Landslip are included in the Gift to Nature project.
- b) The Town Council meeting of 10 December 2018 considered a request for funding for this work and a donation of £540 from the Green Ventnor Budget line was agreed.
- c) Its Annual Report for has been provided and is attached to this Report.



Ventnor Reserves Interim Report

April – September 2020

Produced for Ventnor Town Council



Report

All Gift to Nature sites have remained open throughout this period. The circumstances caused by the coronavirus have highlighted how important our portfolio of sites is to local people as an outlet for free and informal recreation, quiet contemplation and enjoying nature.

During April we were in lock down and the site was visited for basic checks and litter collection only. The usual site checks and work regime was reinstated the week beginning May 18.

Rew Down

There was one visit in May for checks, litter collection and for cutting all paths and entrances.

In July there was one visit for site checks, litter collection, strimming of all entrances, clearing vegetation from fences and clearing around the upper trough. During August there was one visit for checks, litter collection and to trim paths.

During September there were two visits for site checks, litter collection, clearing vegetation from the fence lines, a tree inspection and brush cutting at the eastern end.

The site also features on the Gift To Nature website:

<https://gifttonature.org.uk/discover/out-in-the-country/rew-down-lnr/>

Nansen Hill

There was one visit in May for checks and litter collection.

During July there were two visits for site checks, litter collection, checking fences, some clearance of fence lines, post replacement and wire tensioning and repair.

In August there were two visits for checks, litter collection, clearing fence lines, repairing some lower sections of fence, inspected a dead ash tree close to Leeson's Road for a price for removing..

During September there was one visit for checks and litter collection. The National Trust brought four cattle onto the hill for autumn/winter grazing.

The site also features on the Gift To Nature website:

<https://gifttonature.org.uk/discover/out-in-the-country/nansen-hill/>

Bonchurch Landslip

There was one visit in May for checks, litter collection, removing rubbish from a camp area, cutting back overhanging vegetation from path

In July there were two visits for checks, litter collection, felling a dead tree by a path, clearing overhead deadwood.

During August there were four visits for site checks, litter collection, repairing a step handrail, fitting new steps on the footpath down from Bonchurch Shute, tree contractor inspecting ash tree at the Chink steps and cutting back a fallen tree on a path near Smugglers Haven.

In September there was one visit for site checks, litter collection, and for further step installation on the Bonchurch Shute path.

The site also features on the Gift To Nature website:

<https://gifttonature.org.uk/discover/out-in-the-country/bonchurch-landslip/>

Issues and Opportunities

Rew Down

Some replacement fence posts (3) needed on southern boundary with the Right of Way. Part of the northern fence has collapsed which needs clearance of vegetation and repair with several new posts required.

There are a few ash trees around the site most notably along the southern right of way on boundaries with properties below. There are signs of some ash dieback. We feel this is not our direct responsibility as it is outside the fenced area. We periodically inspect as part of walking the perimeter of the site and if necessary would report any concerns seen to the Isle of Wight Council. The Rights of Way team periodically walk this route and cut once or twice during the summer.

Nansen Hill

There have been several complaints from dog walkers regarding the cattle on the hill. The National Trust have been kept informed and have observed and inspected on several occasions with no concerning behaviour of the cattle seen. We will continue to monitor this situation and take action if considered appropriate. The cattle grazing is of ecological value.

Bonchurch Landslip

There are several ash trees within the site, mostly towards the Leeson Road car park end. There are signs of ash dieback in the area and we feel there is some work required to remove some trees close to paths. At this end of the site many of the ash trees have grown tall and thin due to crowding so some thinning would be of benefit, selecting the most affected and poor specimens. This will require a Tree Preservation Order application as part of this area is covered by a TPO.

Planned Activities 2020/21

Rew Down

Further clearance of fence lines and repairs to fences. Brush cutting when possible.

Nansen Hill

Once the grazing is complete we would like to start cutting and treating the buddleia invading the down. The grazing will help to clear tall vegetation around the plants and make working easier. We wished to do this last season but were stopped by the lock down.

Bonchurch Landslip

Installation of two-way marker posts to direct walkers along the coastal path. Preparation of a TPO application for implementation 2020/21. Possible further work on the ash tree above the Chink steps.

Activity 2021/22

Rew Down

Continuing fence repairs and fence line clearance of vegetation

Nansen Hill

Replacement of top left corner post and associated fencing. This has been temporarily repaired but will need reconstruction for the following season of grazing.

At present the Town Council do not contribute to the work undertaken on the three sites in the Ventnor area. This is funded by IW Council and private donations. We would be happy to establish a more formal arrangement, similar to the ones in place in other part of the Island.

We are seeking to expand our network of sites and are interested to discuss any thoughts you may have with regards to this.

Please note that a full annual report for 2020/1 will be sent in April 2021.

Gallery

Bonchurch Landslip



New steps on slopes



Retaining boards to enable levelling/widening of path and reduce erosion



Step route before remedial work



Step route after remedial work