

Public Question Time

Statement and questions from Geldeston Parish Council on the proposed sale of the Locks copse, Geldeston

Geldeston Parish Council and local people have taken a strong interest in plans by the Authority to sell land it owns in Geldeston, as shown by previous correspondence and record of meetings.

The Parish Council welcomes publication of the report showing all the bids.

Previously, the Parish Council strongly regretted the Authority's decision to sell the copse potentially losing it from public ownership. It has repeatedly emphasised the need to maintain public access and keep this area as a natural, wet woodland which is enjoyed by people and wildlife alike. For this reason, the Parish Council welcomed the involvement of the River Waveney Trust and its bid to purchase the wood.

Although we supported the decision to include the right to public access in the details of sale, the Parish Council still has serious concerns, if it passes into private ownership, that this area will not be maintained in its natural state as a public amenity which the public are not only able to access but would wish to do so.

Any activities that take place in the wood as a result of change of ownership must be compatible with public enjoyment of a natural environment. It is often the case that well intentioned statements of intent become eroded over time with changes of personnel and ownership, increasing commercial pressures and changes in planning policy.

Questions

We therefore ask will the Authority commit unambiguously to safeguard the copse as a public amenity in perpetuity as a natural wet woodland and to ensure this is legally binding?

Further, will the Authority publicly undertake to monitor the area on a regular basis?

The Authority's response will be reported at the meeting and read out by the Chairman.