

Visit to Holton Pits 30 October 2025



Originally scheduled for 23 October, this visit was postponed by one week due to the impacts of Storm Benjamin. Fortunately, the weather on the day of our visit was one of glorious autumnal sunshine. Our group of 10 included attendees from Beccles to the north, Swiland to the south, and points in between and beyond, plus two lovely well behaved dogs at this dog-friendly site.

We were welcomed by three of the Directors of Holton Pits CIC, Gaina Dunsire, Rebecca Horton and Jamie Leverett who all kindly gave up their morning to show us around and tell us about the project and the story of how the community mobilised and took the opportunity when it arose to secure the land for the amenity of the community.

Background

Holton Pits comprises about 8 ha (20 ac) which had been operated by the large multinational building materials company Cemex as a quarry pit of sand and gravel from the 1940s to the 1960s, and is located about 2 km east of the centre of Halesworth.

Since the large multinational building materials company Cemex ceased operations, the site has been in continuous use by the local community and had rewilded naturally over that time.

When Cemex gave notice of their intention to sell the land in August 2022, with just one month notice of sale, concerns were flagged about the potential for public access to the land to become restricted if it had become a holiday park, for example.



Securing the site

Cemex had indicated willingness to sell the land to the community if the money could be raised.

This led to the formation of a Community Interest Company, who set about raising the money necessary to purchase the land; meanwhile, the CIC worked with East Suffolk Council to register the site as an Asset of Community Value, a status which secured 6 months of “breathing space” during which to raise the money required to make a bid to purchase the site. [Community Right to Bid » East Suffolk Council](#) .

Being able to demonstrate the volume of regular use of the site by members of the community, including walkers, anglers, and families, was key to demonstrating evidence of its value to the community and thus securing this status.

About half of the money was raised via donations from the local community, with the rest coming from private loans or government grants, including from the [Community Ownership Fund](#) (please note, this fund from central government is now closed).



Once the site was secured, the CIC has kept interventions on the site minimal, mainly to ensure that a safe environment is provided for users for example with the provision of lifebuoys and new viewing/angling platforms on the edge of the large lake, and emergency tree work as and when required.

The CIC were pleased to support local charity [Street Forge Workshop](#) in Thornham, who work with adults with disabilities through activities with purpose, to produce the new benches, made from British sweet chestnut, thanks to funding from [Adnams Community Trust – Adnams PLC](#).

On the northern edge of the site, elm has been lain to provide a boundary of hedges. In essence therefore, most of the site remains much as it was during the decades between the end of quarrying in the 1960s and the final departure of Cemex in 2023, as does the way in which the community continues to use the site.



Cemex had maintained a licence scheme with the local fishing club, stocking the large lake with roach and carp for the anglers to catch. Holton Pits CIC has subsequently taken over the licence, ensuring continuity of this use of the site.

Whilst some of the anglers initially objected to the CIC's intention to leave the dead tree in the large lake in situ, they engaged actively with the angling club, and with the Environment Agency and the Anglers Trust, whose advice was to leave the tree to benefit the aquatic community in the lake, and the anglers accepted this outcome. In addition to the life under the water, the lake also supports birds including kingfishers, herons, and cormorants.

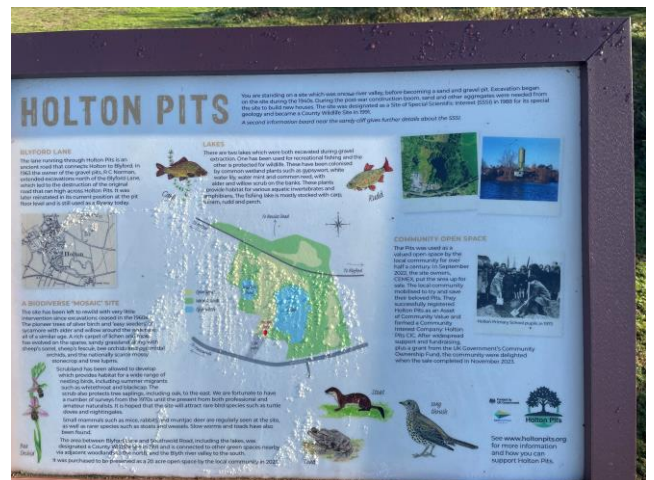


Elsewhere on the site, a mosaic of scrub habitat supports species including the song thrush and turtle dove.

The site also includes a Site of Special Scientific Interest for its geological interest, where a fault line runs at the edge of the cliff on the northern boundary. The cliff is also home to solitary digger wasps. Significant recent tree planting on the land beyond the northern boundary of Holton Pits, will with time help to restore connectivity of habitat between Upper Holton and the River Blyth.

In addition to the large lake, there is also a smaller body of water on the site, which is much harder for people to access and as such acts as a quiet refuge for wildlife including warblers amongst the dense reeds.

Surveys of the wildlife on the site have been conducted, which have been valuable in collating evidence of the rich biodiversity on the site (including 9 species of bats!) which in turn helps when applying for grants for further funding. You can read the findings of their surveys here: [Surveys | Holton Pits](#)



Connecting with Holton Pits CIC

The Directors of Holton Pits CIC are always pleased to engage with others elsewhere who may be interested in benefiting from their experience in securing Holton Pits for the benefit of the community and nature. You are welcome to contact them via:

Email info@holtonpits.org

On the web <https://holtonpits.org/>

You can also follow Holton Pits CIC on Facebook [Facebook](#)

