

Railway Gardens Review July 2016 (Summary)

Background

Bradpole Parish Council is the registered owner of the land at Caley Way which was previously part of the Maiden Newton to Bridport Branch Line. Arising from ownership the Council has various *duties of care*. The Council also has a *fiduciary duty* to ensure that land it owns is put to the best effective use in the interests of the residents/ council tax payers of Bradpole Civil Parish.

The land provides both an amenity area (Railway Gardens) and allotments. Railway Gardens has local heritage items thereon in the form of a Railway Crossing Gates ensemble together with two other “railway” pedestrian gates all of which is maintained by the Parish Council.

At the July Parish Council meeting it was agreed that we should review “Railway Gardens” to see if there is scope for making improvements to the planting scheme.

A visit was made to the site on Monday 11th July by Cllr Baker together with the gardening group co-ordinator of the Bridport Community Orchard Group.

An initial review showed the trees to be generally healthy but there was a considerable amount of mature ivy growing up several trunks which needs removing. See example:



A number of trees require some light maintenance pruning including the need to raise the lower branches to above head height particularly along the path and around the seating areas. This would also facilitate the regular mowing of the Gardens. See example:



The hedge to the rear of the gardens is privately owned and since our visit an annual pruning has much improved the appearance.

The Gardens are generally low maintenance. We discussed the possibility of additional planting but any additional flower beds / troughs etc. would require regular maintenance. There was also a concern that they could be damaged.

It was felt that there was little more that needed to be done other than to keep the Gardens in good order.

We did notice one small area where there had once been a tree/shrub. This area now requires digging over and clearing before either the re-seeding or planting of low maintenance shrub(s):



We did look at the feasibility of a fence along the roadside at the rear of the gardens but it was felt that this could easily be damaged by vehicles accessing the various properties there. At present there is just grass sloping down to the road and it should remain as that:



Other thoughts

The path that runs through the Gardens is reasonably OK but will at some time require edge clearance as has recently been undertaken at The Gore.

The two benches are in good order but would benefit from a clean.

Whilst we were there the litter/dog poo bin was emptied. There are pros and cons as to whether it is best placed near to the bench.

There is no water supply on site to facilitate maintenance of flower borders, troughs, etc.

The open area provides space should we wish to have a drop-in event there in the future.

Railway Gardens, the Crossing Gates and the allotments have been put forward for Green Space/Heritage designation in the evolving Neighbourhood Plan.

Summary

Railway Gardens is appreciated as an amenity & heritage green space by young and old alike. Whilst there is scope for additional planting etc. it would require a committed volunteer community group to take it on board. If agreed any additional planting would need to be carefully located to avoid creating obstacles to mowing. Some maintenance pruning and ivy removal is now required.

The responsibility for the Parish Council is to maintain the Railway Gardens amenity & heritage area to an acceptable and safe standard at a sustainable cost for the benefit of residents in the present and the future. In line with NALC: LTN 41 (June 2016) our *duties of care & fiduciary duties* are currently being met.

Bradpole Parish Council July 2016

Update

The complete report was presented at the **Parish Council meeting on August 4** and was adopted in full.

Councillors agreed that the maintenance required would have to be undertaken by qualified tree professionals not least of all because one of the trees that requires maintenance belongs to a neighbour who has kindly agreed that some careful maintenance pruning may be undertaken.

In accordance with our financial controls we shall be obtaining a full quote for the work before proceeding but would hope that the work will be completed by the Autumn.