

Section 4 -PONDS

4.1 Summary

This section draws heavily on the advice and comments contained in a report prepared by Dr Lee Brady dated 10 May 2016. See appendix 2.2 This report was prepared after a site visit attended by Steve Budden, Ian Marshall and Stephen Lacey. The terms of reference (see appendix 2.1) for the consultancy was to examine both invasive and native plants, tree cover and marginal vegetation and review amphibian populations and any threats from other wildlife resident in the ponds. In addition an assessment would be made on the viability and advisability of creating new ponds.

Treating Brighton Lake within the definition and characteristics of a pond there are four on Tunbridge Wells Common and five on Rusthall Common. Many ponds were used in former times by grazing animals. Many were filled in during the second half of the 19th century. Most retain their water throughout the year.

Generally speaking Lee Brady was pleased with the progress made on managing the ponds since his earlier report of completed in conjunction with a colleague from The Kent Wildlife Trust in 2004. It may be worth commenting on the fact that all the ponds on the Commons were either created or substantially restored over the last 25 years.

4.2 Recommendations

4.2.1

Conduct regular audits of all ponds. A template for conducting the audit is given in appendix 2.3. Once completed the report should indicate evaluate previous work and list any maintenance requirements. Estimates for these should then be sought and submitted to the Conservators for approval of the budget. Work types likely to come within this programmed maintenance are clearance marginal vegetation and overhanging trees, selective removal of plants and clearing any blocked ditches and pipes. This will be the responsibility of the warden.

4.2.2

On a more frequent basis (quarterly) all the ponds should be checked for rubbish and all litter removed. The edges and drainage ditches should also be checked for damage or silting up. Any required actions should be added to the most recent audit report.

4.2.3

In the event of leakage remedial the necessary action should be taken to restore the integrity on the pond. Bracken Cottage Pond, though it has retained sufficient water for the wildlife, has a leak in the vicinity of the outflow pipe. It was noted that this required immediate attention.

4.2.4

The process of silting up over time is inevitable. The question is when any excess silt is removed and how much at one time. Though to be formerly signed off the likely amount to be removed is in the region of one third of surface area. The spoil should be piled adjacent to the pond to allow as much as possible of the wildlife to make its way back to the water. The date of the action should be noted on the latest of the audit reports for the pond. The dates for the second and third phase of the desilting should also noted on the audit report.

4.2.5

The removal of invasive and alien species should follow a similar methodology to that for removal of silt. It may be possible and appropriate to conduct both actions at the same time.

4.2.6

As attractive sites and opportunity to view wildlife consideration should be given to providing “information packs” on the Conservators’ web site. In addition the scheduling of regular accompanied walks to see specific pond species – for example nocturnal newt spotting.

4.2.7

Consideration was given to creating further ponds on both commons. Two sites have been identified for consideration. These are located to the north of Romanoff Lodge on Castle Road TW Common and north of the cricket pavilion on Rusthall Common. At present there is no strong feeling in favour of creating a new pond at either site.

4.2.8

No recommendations were made relating to the safety aspect for ponds. Should consideration be given to putting up deep water warning notices and providing life lines?

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