

Winterbourne Parish Council – Climate and Nature Committee Pond Management Plan

Formal Guidance for Parish Council Stewardship of Flaxpits Pond Ecosystems

Introduction

Ponds represent valued ecological and community assets within parish boundaries. Effective stewardship by the parish council supports local biodiversity, enhances amenity value, and demonstrates responsible land management. This Pond Management Plan for the Winterbourne Duck pond, situated on Flaxpits Lane provides guidance for council members, outlining clear responsibilities, best practices, and opportunities for community engagement at parish-managed pond sites.

1. Objectives of Pond Management Plan

Develop a sustainable, multi-use pond environment that supports recreational activities (notably angling), promotes biodiversity, and provides a safe, accessible space for community engagement.

Environmental points to consider :

- Maintain and improve water quality and visual clarity
- Protect and enrich local biodiversity, providing habitat for native species
- Prevent, monitor, and respond to invasive species
- Safeguard the structural condition of pond banks and infrastructure
- Ensure the pond is accessible, safe, and valued by residents and visitors

2. Roles and Responsibilities

The Parish Council is considered responsible for:

- Overseeing routine assessments and maintenance schedules
- Appointing or coordinating contractors and volunteers as required
- Ensuring compliance with relevant legislation and environmental standards
- Engaging local residents in care and appreciation of the pond
- Maintaining accurate records of management activities

3. Assessment and Monitoring

Pond Assessment (Initial Survey)

Before any intervention, assess the current condition:

1. **Water Quality Testing:** pH, temperature, dissolved oxygen, turbidity, nutrients (nitrates, phosphates).
2. **Wildlife Inventory:** Birds, amphibians, insects, aquatic plants, and fish.
3. **Bathymetric Survey:** Determine pond depth and sedimentation.

4. **Shoreline Stability:** Erosion risks and vegetation.
5. **Access Points:** Entry points, paths, parking, safety hazards. (consideration for anglers and wheelchair users)

Recurring monitoring should occur at least twice yearly (spring and autumn), reporting findings to the parish council and community as appropriate.

- Water quality testing (pH, nutrients, dissolved oxygen), with results shared at council meetings
- Vegetation surveys (aquatic and marginal), with findings documented for future reference
- Wildlife recording, ideally in collaboration with local nature groups or schools
- Inspection of pond banks and infrastructure for safety and maintenance needs
- Regular checks for invasive species and algal overgrowth

4. Water Quality Management

Healthy water is essential for both fish and wildlife.

Important elements to consider for water quality.

Buffer Zones: Maintain and plant additional native grasses, shrubs, and trees around the pond to filter runoff and prevent erosion.

Nutrient Control: Work with the local community to limit fertilizer use nearby to prevent algae blooms.

Aeration: Install additional and maintain existing aerators or fountains to maintain oxygen levels.

Sediment Removal: Dredge if necessary to restore depth and reduce nutrient load.

Consider alternative water quality improvement measures and implement as required

5. Vegetation Management

Encourage a balance of native aquatic and marginal plant species to benefit wildlife and stabilise banks.

Undertake targeted removal of overabundant plants (e.g., reeds, duckweed) in accordance with ecological advice.

Manage bordering trees and shrubs to prevent excessive shading and leaf fall into the water.

Remove invasive non-native plants promptly, following legal disposal requirements

Maintain diverse pond margins and water depths to benefit amphibians, birds, and invertebrates

Install natural features (logs, stones) for basking and habitat and add hedgehog houses, bug houses etc. as relevant.

Avoid using herbicides, pesticides, and other chemicals in or near the pond

8. Structural Maintenance

- Inspect banks, footpaths, and inflow/outflow structures regularly for safety and integrity
- Repair erosion and damage using natural, sustainable materials where possible
- Maintain safe access for maintenance and public enjoyment, installing signage as needed

9. Community Engagement and Education

- Organise or support volunteer workdays for pond maintenance and wildlife surveys
- Provide information boards or digital updates to inform residents about pond wildlife and the council's stewardship
- Facilitate educational activities with local schools and interest groups
- Access to pond

10. Record Keeping and Review

- Maintain detailed records of management actions, monitoring results, and community engagement
- Present annual updates to the parish council and, where possible, share highlights with residents
- Review and update this plan annually, incorporating feedback and new information

11. Annual Management Tasks: Summary Schedule

Month	Task
March–April	Spring assessment, selective vegetation clearance, water quality testing
May–July	Invasive species checks, wildlife surveys, community activities
August–September	Algae management, further vegetation work if necessary
October–November	Autumn assessment, debris removal, structural checks
December–February	Review and update plan, record keeping, minimal intervention

Conclusion

By following this plan, the parish council can ensure the pond remains a thriving, safe, and attractive feature for the environment and the community. Ongoing commitment to good practices and local involvement will deliver lasting benefits for people and wildlife alike.