

Westham Pond Working Group Meeting 10-06-23 – Notes

Present at the pond, - Fiona Durling Chairperson, Evan Jones (Ecologist), John Hayward (Councillor. Civil engineering technician), Jane Jones. Retired teacher, Apologies from Mark Fairweather councillor.

The water quality has improved this has been proved by a recent pond survey. There is an increase in the BMWP score. Many residents have commented that they enjoy visiting the pond and have thanked the Pond Working Group for looking after it and improving the appearance and wildlife. People admire the water lillies which have been nurtured by the WPWG, A few have questioned the reason for WPC advice to feed the wildfowl. When we explain the detrimental effects on ducks and pond quality from too much bird poo in the pond water most people understand this and stop. Many people love the lush green vegetation and flowers round the pond. A few others some times find parts of it scruffy. When the importance of vegetation is explained most people understand. The WPC Plan advocates ongoing management of the vegetation to promote the need for Beauty, Amenities and Biodiversity.

The BMWP (Biological Monitoring Working Party Score), this allocates points for each type of little animal found in the water during a timed net sample. Some score low because they can live in polluted water. Others are high as they need cleaner water. The final score describes both water quality and biodiversity.

2016 the council employed a pond advisor who assessed a score of 56 = moderate conservation quality, 2018 - the pond by then had deteriorated drastically,

2019 Just after commencement of WPWG score 15 = Polluted or impacted.

2021 score 94. 2023 WPWG score 94 = slightly lower but good quality.

Water quality and its impact is crucial for people visiting the pond.

VEGETATION MANAGEMENT-

Viewing areas near seating- Plants are cut down to around knee height by volunteers to enable viewing from the seats. This was done again today. Vegetation should be retained around the pond bank to reduce the risk of children rushing into the water dangerously. At present there is some detrimental algae in the water near the North seating area. This is evidence of high Nitrate levels resulting from wildfowl feeding.

Plants on the bank surrounding the pond- Volunteers to cut some tall plants selectively to minimise reseeding, some important species to be left to flower. A work party will be arranged in the next 2 to 3 weeks.

Meadow area- to be cut by contractors at the end of the flowering season.

Hedge by foot path- to be trimmed by volunteers.

Area behind WPC notice board- Some vegetation to be cut back by volunteers.

Reeds- There are several native species present. There have been reeds present in the pond for many years. They are important for pond health. They shade the water to minimise water loss from evaporation. The leaves may lose water through transpiration. But there is no overall water loss detriment. Reeds and water weed break down deep toxic silt and remove pollution. Plants improve oxygenation. Reeds are needed for the swans to nest, the ducklings hide in them when the swans are chasing them. Vegetation also sequesters carbon to help minimise the expensive and dangerous effects of climate change.

As planned some reeds will need to be cut or pulled out at the end of summer when the Swans will probably leave. An experienced contractor is needed for this.

Recommendation WPC to contact Pete the Pond's Company who have worked for WPC before.

Evan Jones and Fiona Durling to carry out a site visit with him to clarify works needed before the WPC chooses an appropriate contractor.

Tree works around pond needed over the winter- Fiona Durling and Evan Jones to view the trees soon. WPC liaison with contractors for winter works.

LIFE BELT SIGNS- the Royal Society for Prevention of Accidents recommended signs stating- In Emergency Phone 999. In December 2021 a supplier was identified our excellent clerk tried to order these but there was some difficulty authorising payment from the WPC bank account. Since then bank accounts have been reviewed and altered. Covid health effects and other stresses continued. We have a reminder from a resident and we will request the clerk to order metal signs which can be screwed to the support posts.

Life belt housing- a resident is concerned that this is dirty. There is some lichen on 2 of the housings. A volunteer is needed to clean them.

Weekly monitoring of life belts-

A resident who overlooks the pond has been monitoring weekly and recording in diaries. Other residents also check. In the week of 17-6-22 one was reported stolen . WPC ordered and installed a replacement.

EDUCATION - NOTICE BOARDS PROPOSED

WPC clerk has confirmed that designs and details are needed then costings can be submitted to the council. 2 of A1 size small lectern signs would be useful, similar to those at Pevensey Castle. Evan Jones will submit designs in the next few weeks . Content will concern the wild life and history of the pond . A QR code is important to direct mobile phone users to the WPC website for more information.

The **Website** needs more pond information . The excellent Parish Pump, Westham pond articles need to be loaded on to the site . We have some important photographs which need to be put on the site. WPC Clerk to be requested to facilitate this.

Seasonal information-

The pond is likely to dry up with exposed mud again this summer this is normal and not a cause for concern. Mud provides for a " Draw down zone" for a range of plants and creatures.

In contrast in 2019 the exposed silt contained heavily polluted wildfowl poo some , of which was removed at vast expense to a previous council. The current WPC Management plan has now cost effectively reduced the risk of reoccurrence.

Many thanks are extended to residents and the practical WPWG team or around 15 volunteers. If any Councillors and friends would like a guided stroll around the pond please let us know.

