

# Ponds



## Description

This category includes natural and man-made waters less than 2ha in size, including ponds, ditches, springs and canals. They are generally very rich in wildlife, supporting all our amphibians, Dragonflies and many other aquatic insects and regionally scarce plants such as Autumnal Water Starwort, Frogbit, Whorled Water Milfoil, Hair-like Pondweed, the nationally scarce Sweet Flag and the well-known Marsh Marigold.

Bottom-dwelling invertebrates such as Snails, Dragonflies and Water Beetles are abundant and some sites may support fish and Eel. Amphibians, including the protected Great Crested Newt and Grass Snake are often present.

Mammals such as Water Vole, Daubenton's Bat and Soprano Pipistrelle are all heavily dependent on larger ponds and canals. The surrounding banks and adjacent areas can provide hunting grounds for Barn Owl.

## National Status

Local significance only, but extremely important in that context. This habitat often supports a large range of flora and fauna, often not rare but locally important.

## Local Status

The 1980 Phase I Habitat Survey of Barnsley identified 57 sites of significant value, including eight lengths of canal, 12 ditches, 35 Ponds and numerous springs. Some 12 of these sites are included in the Natural Heritage Site (NHS) register. There is no data for garden and farm Ponds, which must number in the hundreds.

## Legal Status

Under the Environment Act, 1995, the Environment Agency has a duty generally to promote the conservation of aquatic flora and fauna. Water Companies, Internal Drainage Boards, British Waterways and Local Authorities also have statutory duties towards nature conservation.

Under the Wildlife and Countryside Act, 1981, some species are protected from damage and disturbance. There are various statutes covering water pollution and control to ensure that all surface waters have good ecological status and that there is no deterioration in water quality.

Sites included in the Unitary Development Plan (UDP) as Natural Heritage Sites (NHS) have a presumption against development, but are not protected against operations which do not require planning consent.

## Links with other Action Plans

SAP2	Bats
SAP3	Water Vole
SAP10	Barn Owl
SAP14	Great Crested Newt

### **Current Factors Causing Loss or Decline**

- Run off of organic and inorganic fertilisers can cause nutrient enrichment (eutrophication) of the water.
- Changes in land cover can increase the risk of pollution and of siltation, exacerbated by the removal of waterside vegetation and reedswamp, which are effective barriers.
- Ground subsidence and inappropriate excavation works in man-made structures such as canals, small dams etc. can result in leaking and drying out.
- The introduction of fish, the removal of predators, and the manipulation of existing fish stocks for recreational fishing leads to the loss of natural fish populations and may affect plant and invertebrate communities.
- Heavy stocking of bottom-feeding fish such as Carp can cause turbidity and enrichment.

- Use of canals for recreational and sporting purposes may create disturbance, trampling of marginal vegetation and stirring up sediment, resulting in enrichment and growth of algae.
- Loss of small Ponds to development and, where Ponds are retained, they can be cut off from appropriate surrounding habitats ie. grasslands, hedgerows etc. important to the Great Crested Newt, and can suffer biological isolation from other Ponds.
- Infilling of small Ponds for safety reasons. Small farm Ponds may cease to have a role and fall into disuse and neglect.

### **Current Local Action**

- Several new Ponds and Pond complexes have been created on sites in the Dearne Valley, particularly RSPB Old Moor.
- Annual survey of amphibians in Ponds and canals.

### **Proposed Local Action**

- Monitor the development of fisheries to ensure that nature conservation issues are given full consideration.
- Encourage participation among farmers in Environmental Stewardship and Countryside Stewardship Schemes.
- Survey Ponds, canals and other areas of standing water for the presence of Water Shrew, Eel, Toad and Grass Snake and advise appropriate management.
- Seek opportunities to create new areas of standing water which can be managed to promote biodiversity and link with the Million Pounds Project being run by Pond Conservation and Natural England.
- Work with Barnsley MBC to create a Local Development Framework (LDF) supplementary planning document on Biodiversity and Waterfront Development and Management, including the expectation that opportunities will be sought to improve and create habitat for species such as Water Vole and Otter, rather than just slow the loss of habitat. A proactive planning approach should be adopted to retain native bank side cover, including dense brambles and scrub, and control invasive plants when brown field sites are redeveloped.

### **BMBC Planning Policy Actions**

- Include habitat and species protection policies in development plans and/or supplementary guidance.
- Encourage the creation of new habitat through the requirement made under Planning Policy Statement (PPS) 9, to incorporate biodiversity enhancements into development wherever possible.
- Identify priority non-designated sites for elevation to Natural Heritage Sites (NHS) or Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) status.

- Identify all key and best representative open standing water habitat types.
- Produce, adopt and apply supplementary planning guidance. Ensure developers are made aware of the importance of Ponds.
- Ensure that all development plans, including mineral and waste plans, contain specific reference to the protection and enhancement of water courses, their corridors and floodplains. These should include general and site-specific policies on issues such as sustainable urban drainage, opening up culverts and the need to retain or create undeveloped buffer zones or river corridors on both banks.

### **BMBC Development Control Actions**

- Discuss protection, mitigation and conservation of Ponds on development sites prior to submission of planning applications.
- Ensure that built development does not result in the loss of bank side habitats.
- Seek habitat enhancement for all development proposals in the vicinity of watercourses.

### **BMBC Land Ownership and Management Actions**

- Produce and adopt management plans in conjunction with landowners.
- Manage Barnsley MBC countryside sites with regard to HAP15 Ponds targets and, where appropriate, so as to contribute to them.