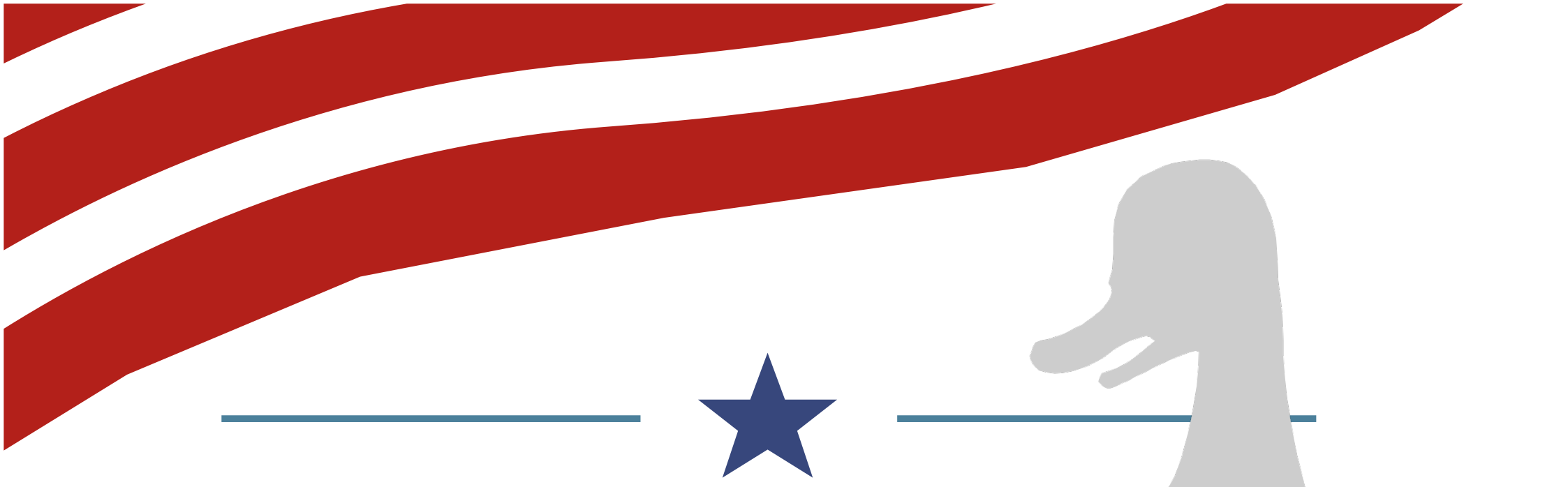




SAVE OUR POND

Boughton Pond Maintenance Project

After the very dry winter and summer last year, Boughton Pond almost completely dried out. What can we do?

Boughton Parish Council is proposing remedial and preventative work on the pond to improve its condition and lessen the impact of future dry periods. Funding permitting.

The Current Situation

Boughton Pond is a valued local asset used for landscape character, biodiversity and community amenity.

The pond is a roughly elliptical c. 5,000 m² **pingo** (a clay-lined depression formed following glacial retreat). It is fed by rainfall and surface runoff (i.e., there is no permanent stream inflow), and it discharges via an overflow/outfall when water levels reach a maximum.

Over time, sediment and organic material (e.g., fine soils, decaying vegetation and leaf litter) can accumulate.



In addition, the pond supports a large population of ducks and other waterfowl; their droppings can contribute nutrients and organic loading that accelerate silt build-up and increase the risk of algal growth, odour and low-oxygen conditions.

Currently, we note the following detrimental impacts:

- **Siltation/reduced depth:** historic silt build up has reduced the water depth by 0.5m, a significant reduction in an already shallow pond. Shallow areas warm more quickly, increasing algal growth risk. As at April 2026 the pond water level is still below its normal level despite 12 inches of rain in November through February following the drying event in 2025.
- **Water quality:** the pond has seen increased turbidity, seasonal algal blooms, and fish stress events (re-oxygenation measures have been taken in previous years), fish now believed lost.
- **Nutrient/organic loading from waterfowl:** duck and waterfowl droppings (and any supplementary feeding) can increase nutrient levels, encourage algal blooms, and add organic matter that becomes part of the sediment layer.
- **Biodiversity balance:** loss of open-water habitat; dominance of reeds/flag irises in some areas; reduced oxygen levels in summer.
- **Amenity and appearance:** reduced visual appeal and access; perception of neglect; increased litter snagging and stagnation.
- **Maintenance burden:** reactive vegetation control and clearance will become more frequent and less effective without addressing underlying sediment.

The Parish Council has been active in pond maintenance over the years, see notes on Option 1.

Proposed Project Objectives

- Restore pond depth and open-water area to a sustainable condition.
- Improve water quality and reduce likelihood of summer algal blooms/odour.
- Improve biodiversity outcomes through a better balance of open water and marginal habitats; re-introduce fish.
- Maintain and enhance the pond's amenity value for residents and visitors.
- Deliver works legally and safely, minimising disruption and protecting wildlife.
- Put in place a realistic long-term maintenance plan to reduce repeat dredging need.



Potential Environmental Benefits

Silt removal (with ecological mitigation and prevention measures) is expected to deliver the following environmental benefits at Boughton Pond:

- **Improved water quality:** removal of organic-rich sediments can reduce internal nutrient recycling, helping to reduce algal blooms, odours and low-oxygen events.
- **More resilient pond ecology:** reinstating a varied depth profile supports a healthier balance of open water and marginal vegetation, benefiting a wider range of plants and animals.
- **Better habitat for aquatic life:** deeper refuge areas can help aquatic invertebrates, amphibians and fish (if pond restocked) during hot/dry periods. We will be able to re-introduce fish once the ecology has stabilised, which will have many environmental and community benefits.
- **Reduced long-term disturbance:** combining dredging with runoff/erosion controls and sensible management of supplementary waterfowl feeding by members of the public helps slow re-siltation, reducing the need for future intrusive works.
- **Enhanced biodiversity value:** targeted replanting and habitat features as part of reinstatement can increase structural diversity around the margins.

Community Benefits

A targeted improvement project in Boughton will benefit not just the village, but further afield.

- **The local community.** Boughton is the pond, and the pond is Boughton; everyone loves it. The reprofiling and replanting will tidy areas that some feel to be unsightly, whilst maintaining environmental and visual benefits.
- **The fishing community.** If the pond is re-stocked with fish it will become possible, once again, to allow some fishing.
- **The wider community.** People come from miles around to sit by the pond, have picnics and bring their children to the playground. This will project will improve the amenity for thousands of people in the area.



Option Appraisal Criteria

Each option for Boughton Pond remediation is assessed according to a number of factors as described below:

Criterion	What “good” looks like
Effectiveness	Restores depth/open water and measurably improves water quality/amenity.
Deliverability	Achievable access, consents, contractor availability, realistic programme.
Cost and affordability	Capital cost proportionate; manageable ongoing maintenance.
Environmental impact	Protects habitats/species; avoids pollution; improves ecological condition.
Community impact	Clear benefits; disruption mitigated; strong local support.
Whole-life value	Reduces likelihood of repeat dredging.

Option 0 – Do Nothing

Description: Continue ad-hoc maintenance only when problems become acute.

- **Pros:** no immediate capital cost; no construction disruption.
- **Cons:** ongoing deterioration; higher risk of water-quality incidents; continued complaints; may increase future cost as more material accumulates.
- **Suitability:** not recommended unless evidence shows sediment levels are acceptable.

It would be possible to defer any action to a later date or indeed indefinitely. It is true that the pond did not dry out completely in 2025 and has subsequently refilled.

The pond was last dredged in 1977 after the long hot Summer of 1976. An area on the Western side of the pond was excavated, and evidence of that dredging was evident in the dry spell.

However, the current water levels have not yet reached normal levels even after a wet winter, silt will continue to accumulate, and the pond will be at risk of future extreme weather events.

Option 1 — Enhanced routine maintenance (no dredging)

Description: Increase frequency of marginal vegetation management, remove floating weed/litter, manage leaf litter inputs where practical, and introduce small-scale runoff controls if possible (e.g., shallow silt traps/sumps at key runoff entry points). Continue chalk (Siltex) treatment to breakdown silt. As waterfowl nutrient loading is significant, consider complementary measures such as public information/signage to discourage feeding and targeted planting/buffer management to intercept nutrients.

- **Pros:** lower cost than dredging; can be phased; may slow future siltation.
- **Cons:** does not restore depth/capacity; limited impact as sediment is already excessive; requires ongoing revenue budget and volunteers/contractor availability.
- **Suitability:** appropriate as a complement to dredging, or as an interim measure pending surveys/funding.

The Parish Council have taken measures to maintain the pond over the years, most recently:

- **Oxygenation:** built a water pump platform with generator to aid in replacing oxygen during a period of 'inversion' where fish were seen to asphyxiate.
- **Water Control:** Removing dead fish and clearing outfall blockages.
- **Algae Control:** regularly adding barley straw extract to control nutrient levels and discourage algal blooms.
- **Flora Control:** applying approved herbicide to reed beds to control spread but retain wildlife habitats. Removing saplings and other undesirable growth from pond margins.
- **Silt Management:** treating areas of the pond with Siltex to improve water clarity and quality.



These measures, while beneficial, have not had an impact on the water depth, nor do they protect against future drying events.

Option 2 — Targeted dredging with on-site silt retention

Description: Dredge priority areas (Eastern end of the pond, up to 30m) to improve overall depth profile, while retaining some shallow shelves elsewhere for ecology. Combine with containment of arisings on site and minor bank repairs as required. The removed silt to be deposited behind a silt fence, before levelling and replanting when dry. A full dredge is considered unnecessary and prohibitively expensive and not explored further.

- **Pros:** addresses the main cause (sediment) at moderate cost; can focus on worst-affected zones; shorter programme than full dredge.
- **Cons:** will leave some areas shallow; still requires consents, access, and silt testing; may need repeat sooner than a full dredge depending on catchment inputs.
- **Suitability:** often the best value where budgets are limited and surveys show variable silt depths.



This option may be affordable, with grant funding, and the benefits are likely to last over 50 years, which is how long ago the western half was last dredged, and will provide long term ecological and amenity benefits.

This route will make the pond smaller in area but will increase the clear water capacity of the pond by removing much suspended silt. There may a short period during dredging when there may be a smell in the air, but the long-term benefits will be worthwhile.

This preferred option is described in more detail in a later section.

Option 3 — Targeted dredging with off-site silt disposal

Description: Dredge priority areas (Eastern end of the pond, up to 30m) to improve overall depth profile. Combine with removal of arisings to a land amelioration project by a waste contractor.

- **Pros:** addresses the main cause (sediment); can focus on worst-affected zones; shorter programme than full dredge.
- **Cons:** will leave some areas shallow; still requires consents, access, and silt testing; very expensive to include transport costs. Silt needs to be spread on the pond bank to dry before being removed.
- **Suitability:** affordable only for smaller amounts of waste to control costs.

This option is prohibitively expensive as we will have to pay environment agency fees as well as transport costs. It may be possible to get funding from various bodies such as Natural England, but the strings attached could be restrictive, should we be successful.

Option 4 — Targeted dredging with local silt disposal

Description: Dredge priority areas (Eastern end of the pond, up to 30m) to improve overall depth profile. Combine with removal of arisings by trailer to local arable fields.

- **Pros:** addresses the main cause (sediment); can focus on worst-affected zones; shorter programme than full dredge. Low cost if volunteer labour used and local farmer accepts the arisings
- **Cons:** Silt will be wet when removed, transportation may be difficult. Amount of arisings may be excessive for spreading on fields (600m³ ~ 1000tons).
- **Suitability:** explicitly prohibited by regulation.

There is no provision for this seeming logical approach in the EA Waste regulations, and we would be breaking the law if we did so.

Note that amount of material to be removed would require approximately 50 lorry loads.

Preferred Option Proposal

Subject to relevant support, permissions and funding a project for Option 2a above, a partial dredge with silt retained on-site, is described below.

1. Create a permanent bund inside the perimeter of the pond to hold excavated silt whilst it dries; then level and seed with grass. We may have to tailor the scheme to suit the available budget, as costs of the proposal here will be about £35,000.
2. Once the bund is constructed it can be filled by removing silt directly from the pond. There are a number of techniques for achieving this: pumping the silt directly to the bund, using a silt pusher to move the silt to the bund and an excavator to lift it over the fence, or excavate directly. The latter option requires the pond to be at least as dry as it was last year, which may not happen for a few years; this may have cost implications, and the process itself may be more damaging than the alternatives that are best done when there is water in the pond and timing is less critical.

The advantages of the bund include making the pond smaller to reduce evapotranspiration, which also means the runoff from the catchment will be deeper, concentrated into a smaller area raising the water level. However, the visual effect will be more industrial and less rural. This could be softened by dredging silt up to the face of the bund.



The bund will be 100m long, made from Nicospan (or similar). Nicospan is a product for vertical bank protection. It can provide a high-quality and very economical form of erosion control. It is a prefabricated, double weave revetment fabric made from strong UV stabilised monofilament yarns that are heat sealed to form a series of open pockets so that posts can be placed into them.

Bund Location

The proposed bund will be 100m long positioned at the Eastern end of the pond. While the precise profile is yet to be determined, including how the bund will meet the South bank, it will need to be placed 9m from the bank at its furthest point.

For information the pond is approximately 100m West to East and 65m North to South.



The removed silt will be placed behind the bund, on top of the flag irises and will be piled somewhat higher than the top of the bund initially to allow for shrinkage as the silt dries out.

Once dried out the silt will form part of a new bank that can then be levelled and grass re-seeded.

Scope of Works

The project scope requires finalising, but in general the scope will be along the following lines:

- **Pre-works surveys:** depth survey (done); ecology survey (protected species); tree/bank condition; silt sampling and laboratory testing to confirm disposal route (done).
- **Consents and permissions:** planning permission(s); any required environmental permits/consents; traffic/access approvals if plant movements affect highways/footpaths.
- **Site setup and access:** temporary fencing, signage, welfare, access matting, protection of verges/paths.
- **Dredging method:** [excavator from bank / amphibious excavator / suction dredge] depending on access, depth and ecological constraints.
- **Handling and dewatering:** silt placed in a bunded area or geotextile bags to drain; water returned to pond under controls.
- **Disposal/use of arisings:** reuse on-site in line with waste rules and test results.
- **Reinstatement:** bank repairs, reseeding, habitat planting, and post-works monitoring.

Note that after dredging the water level will initially be lower than before and may take several years to refill to normal levels

Costs and Funding Routes

Discussions with potential contractors indicate that the proposed project would have a cost of approximately £35,000.

There are two sources of grant funding available to the Parish Council as at April 2026. These are:

- **CIL: Community Infrastructure Levy.** A planning charge used by local authorities in England and Wales to raise funds from developers for new building projects. It helps pay for essential infrastructure—such as schools, transport improvements, health facilities, and parks—needed to support new development and growth in local communities.
- **FCC: Community Action Fund.** Provides grants to not-for-profit organisations for amenity projects sited within 10 miles of an eligible FCC Environment waste facility.

The grant conditions may specify a community contribution. (In the case of FCC it is 10.75%), so the village may need to raise some funds from council reserves, increased council tax precept, resident donations or fund-raising events.

Project Constraints

The Parish Council has to consider a number of implications across a number of areas. These are summarised in the table below.

<i>Area</i>	<i>Comment</i>
Ecology	Ecological survey to be conducted prior to project final approval.
Legal	We must get a D1 exemption from the EA to deposit the dredgings on the edge of the pond. We have had the sludge analysed and it is free of contamination. The licence for this is £420.
Planning	Planning permission may be required. Enquiries underway to establish the need and raise an application if needed.
Risks	There may be deep water nearer the edge of the pond The dredgings will be unstable until dried out.
Financial	Depending on funding routes available, an anticipated one-off expenditure to the council (max £4000) will have no long-term implications if funded by precept. In some funding scenarios this may be reduced.
Time scale	Late Summer 2026 or as water levels allow.
Stakeholders	Some disruption to nearby residents – noise and plant movements over a two- to four-week period. There may be some short-term odour issues as the silt is dredged and dries out, but it is expected that this would pass within a week. Pond water levels will initially be lower and may take several years to refill to normal levels depending on the weather.
Contracts	Three quotes will be needed for the dredging.
Crime and Disorder	N/A
Biodiversity	Significant gains over many years
Privacy Impact	N/A
Equality and Diversity	N/A

Frequently Asked Questions

Are you experts in this?

Absolutely not. The Parish Council do not claim to be. That is why we have consulted with and depend on agencies better qualified to provide advice and guidance. These include the Environment Agency, Natural England, the local Internal Drainage Board, Mick George Ltd, and contractors with a history of successful projects of this type.

What about the flag irises and reeds?

We will take the opportunity to control the reeds on the North bank and reduce the spread on the South bank. We need to be sensitive to the role the reeds play in providing wildlife shelter and habitat.

The irises are a divisive topic, with some villages loving them and others wishing them gone. We will be covering the irises at the Eastern end of the pond but retaining those on the North bank. They provide wildlife support and prevent bank erosion.

Why can't we do what (other council) did?

We know that some local councils (Wereham, South Wootton and others) have dredged their ponds for various reasons including to prevent flooding and to prevent drying out.

Each location is different. In our case, we do not have sufficient space to lay out 1000 tons of silt to dry before taking it away. We have more material to move than could be readily handled by tractor and trailer, even it was legal for us to do it.

Why not dredge more or less of the pond?

We have tried to balance the scope of the project with the expected benefits and costs. The selected area of 1200m² we believe is a good compromise, providing a reasonable area of pond with increased depth while keeping the silt quantity manageable and costs under control.

How can I help?

Firstly, please read and understand this material. If you have any questions, ask. We need to demonstrate public engagement and support, so send your questions, messages of support or otherwise, to clerk@boughton-pc.gov.uk or any councillor. If you wish, you may leave comments in the notebook placed in the church.

Secondly, you could volunteer to help with our maintenance tasks.

Finally, you can make a donation towards the costs.