

Minutes of the Public Meeting

held on Monday 13th April 2026 at 7pm in All Saints Church, Boughton

Presentation and consultation on maintenance options for the village pond

Facilitated by Boughton Parish Council

Present:

Parish Councillors: Cllrs Neil Matthew, Sue Pogmore, Tam Payne, Sarah Miller, Phil Boyle

Parish clerk: Jo Lloyd

Members of the public: 50-55

Meeting opened at 19.00

1. Introduction by Chair of the Parish Council

Cllr Matthew opened the meeting and explained that this was a Public Meeting rather than a Parish Council Meeting. He introduced the Councillors and clerk, and the purpose of the meeting.

The Parish Council have been exploring options to reduce silt in the pond, prompted by concern from residents over the pond drying up in summer 2025. The PC received communication from members of the public and were aware of discussions on social media asking what could be done to prevent this happening again.

The PC have explored a number of options, but do not want to do anything without the support of the village. The PC can apply for funding to help with this work and will need to show evidence of engagement for this. Cllr Matthew explained that binding decisions will not be made at this meeting.

2. Election of chairperson for the meeting

As a Public Meeting, Cllr Matthew asked for a member of the public to volunteer to be Chairperson. Mrs Christine Matthew volunteered.

3. Presentation of pond maintenance options

The PC prepared some displays showing 4 pond maintenance options, which had been available in the Church for a few days prior and would be left for others to view after the meeting. Cllr Payne summarised the background and proposals:

The pond last dried up in 1976, apparently completely. Local farmers took silt away to local fields. When the pond dried in 2025 the evidence showed that this dredging had worked, as the dredged part of the pond was visibly deeper. The PC hope that if work is done now it would last another 50+ yrs.

Environment Agency regulations now mean that wet silt cannot be disposed of on nearby farmland as it is considered waste. This is despite the silt having been tested and found not to be contaminated.

Dry silt could be taken to landfill (cost £10-20 per tonne, approx. 1,000 tonnes), but there is not enough space around Boughton pond to spread it while it dries.

The PC proposed alternative is to store the silt behind a barrier in the pond, which would prevent having to take it away. The silt fence or “bund” could be up to 100m long, costs would be approx. £140/m. It would be a complex operation, hence the cost. Silt could be moved behind the barrier in a few ways, but the better option is thought to be a “silt-pusher” boat which would transfer the silt to the edge of the pond where it could be loaded behind the bund. This would minimise damage which could be caused by an excavator entering the pond.

Once the silt was dry, the area of land could be grassed over. Approx. 600 cubic metres of silt would be moved, with the bund being 9m from the edge of the pond. The process would reduce the size of the pond by an estimated 19% There might be advantages to this in terms of pond surface area and rate of evaporation.

More detail on all options is available in the Public Meeting Materials.

4. Questions and discussion

There followed a very productive dialogue with members of the public. An ecologist was present with an expertise in ponds who was able to offer some valuable insights.

Questions, answers and discussion points are summarised below:

- *How would procurement be organised, are competitive quotes being sought?*
PC have approached 3 contractors and have quotes for comparison of best value.
- *What would the bund material be? Woven polypropylene.*
What is the life expectancy and would it need replacing? Once the silt had stabilised the full strength of the material might not be needed.
- Point was made that last year was a drought similar to 1976. East Anglian borehole data shows that other brooks and chalk streams in the area followed the same pattern as Boughton.

- Point was made that silting up is a natural part of a pond cycle.
- Discussion around whether Boughton pond is only fed by rain. PC understand that this is the case and it is a pingo pond. Ecologist present said that this might have been the case historically but it is not now a functioning pingo. The monoculture of grass & different fauna/flora including presence of ducks changes the ecology.
- It was suggested that experts such as a hydrologist and geologist would be needed to assess the pond and help decide the best course of action.
- First need to know what people want: a pond with natural ecology or an amenity pond with grass and ducks.
- Silt removal is a regular part of pond management and is more difficult and expensive than in the past. It was noted that the PC have done some work over the last few years to try to improve water quality. Siltex has been used for the last couple of years, which helps bacteria to digest the silt. It is not clear how much difference this has made, maybe due to the pH of the silt.
- There is an option to do nothing and let the pond dry up at times. It is likely that this will increase due to climate change and scenes like 2025 will be more frequent.
- Discussion of other villages and measures they have taken to address this issue, including spreading silt on neighbouring farms. *Have the PC approached these parishes for advice?* Yes. Some parishes have had permission due to flooding issues. Some parishes have a larger area of land beside the pond so silt can be dried on site before disposal or left on site. In some cases the size of the pond and quantity of silt was lower than Boughton, so exemption was allowed.
- It was noted that some farms have waste licenses. The PC explained that their first choice had been to take the silt to farmland, but they had been blocked repeatedly by legislation. Removing silt to dry on the side of the pond is also a good solution, but no space in Boughton.
- Ecologist offered to help the PC to explore other options, including the possibility of an alternative exemption to spread the silt on farmland for agricultural and ecological benefit.
- *If a large quantity of silt was removed, and pond volume reduced, would it refill completely?* Yes, in time, though the pond has not completely refilled from last

year yet.

- *How much funding is available?* PC could get up to £50,000 in funding; depending on funding body they might have to raise a contribution of £3-4,000. The Borough Councillor has given her support.
- *Are there deadlines for funding?* Some of the funding opportunities have deadlines in May. It is possible for the PC to apply “in principle” and only claim the funding if the work goes ahead. Further funding opens later in the year.
- *Is there a risk of damaging the pond lining by dredging?* PC do not believe so. The clay appears to go down around 50m. A silt pusher would not dredge the bottom.
- *How deep is the silt?* Estimated 0.5m.
- *Will the work cause a smell?* It is possible but not for very long.
- *Could a smaller pond make flooding more likely?* This is not thought to be likely as there is an overflow.
- *Are there any health and safety considerations? Would the bund lead to a sharp pond edge rather than the current shallow edges?* This would need to be looked at and addressed.
- Comment that a reduction in pond size would be bad for the village and concern that at a future date the same thing could happen and it could be reduced further.
- Point made that it would be helpful to know the advantages and consequences of each option, including no action. *If no action is taken how many years could it be before the pond does not recover from drying up?*
- Suggestion of survey to all residents find out what sort of pond people in the village want.
- Option to wait and observe the pond for a couple of years.
- *Query over whether the pond samples taken were mapped?* They were taken from around the edge and there was no evidence of contamination.

- Request for more time for the village to consider the possibilities.
- Request for the consultation documents to be put onto the PC website.
- Request for a further meeting.
- The PC were thanked for their work on this matter.

5. Conclusion

The Chair noted that there does not seem to be strong support at present for the proposed option of a silt bund. Residents suggested they would need more information before they could support.

The PC stressed there is no rush to do this work and nothing will be done without the support of the village. In the meantime, other issues can be addressed, e.g. control of irises and/or other flora.

Documents will be uploaded onto the PC website. The PC would appreciate feedback, and a book was provided for comments. A survey can be carried out to collect residents' views and their priorities for the pond.

It was suggested that a working party could be set up, using the expertise in the village. The option of silt extraction will be explored further, with the possibility of exemption to spread on farmland for agricultural and ecological reasons.

Another meeting will be arranged to update residents.

Meeting closed at 20.10