

PROPOSAL FOR GROUND WORKS

PROPOSAL OVERVIEW

To undertake small scale improvement works to the village pond.

The scope of the work is:

- To create a new gently sloping margin inside the current edge moving the existing iris inwards, at the same level, and backfilling with excavated silt.
- Build a backward facing ledge using existing gravelly base. Consolidate.
- Cover with silt to match current iris level. Relocate iris. If possible, move remaining marginal plants inwards, to be buried by the silt.
- Excavate sufficient silt to create the new gently sloping margin profile.

Work to be carried out using a heavy wheeled or tracked excavator, operated by qualified personnel, subject to accepted risk assessment and method statements.

SITE PLAN

The plan below shows the approximate location of the intended shallow margin created by relocated irises, marked in red. The area to the North and East to be backfilled with excavated silt to create a gently sloping bank.

The areas marked in black are existing bank areas targeted for additional treatment with sand and silt to raise the level and address its tendency to become boggy.



RATIONALE

INITIAL CONCERNS

The dry summers of 2025 and 2026 have left the pond almost entirely without water. While this a natural feature of our type of pond, the effect of the margins has been dramatic. For a number of years the pond has not fully refilled after the winter and this has allowed the flag irises in particular to encroach further and further inward. As the pond basin has dried, the outermost irises have died and several invasive terrestrial species have dominated the margin behind them.

Residents have expressed concerns about the state of the water level, the effect on wildlife and the poor aesthetics of what is a central feature of the village, especially with large banks of bindweed and thistles.

CONSIDERED OPTIONS

At a public meeting in April 2026 several options for managing the pond were presented. These largely centred on the concept of dredging silt from the pond to increase its water-holding capacity in an attempt to prevent excessive drying out in future years.

Due to EA regulations and financial constraints dredging the pond and removing the silt from site was eventually deemed prohibitively expensive.

The council's preferred option (Option 2) was to relocate some of silt build-up behind a barrier, or bund, on the Eastern side of the pond. This would increase the capacity of the pond, but also reduce its surface area.

The meeting was concerned about the appearance of a bund and the need to reduce the pond surface area and the council was asked to undertake further research before embarking on works. A local hydrologist offered to help the council to come to a better understanding of the pond's behaviour and prepare a sustainable strategy.

FURTHER RESEARCH

The option of removing silt from the pond was explored further, including the testing of the material for contaminants, and identifying local farm land to receive it. Despite many communications with the Environment Agency a suitable path to meeting this goal could not be found. At least ten organisations and contractors were consulted during this process.

A comprehensive report from the local hydrologist strongly supported the contention that the pond is influenced by local groundwater sources, and that its water level mirrors those of local chalk streams. This, and the fact that the pond was not refilling over winter leads to the conclusion that large scale dredging would not in fact have improved the water level, and not prevented drying out.

AMENDED APPROACH

The present proposal is therefore an amendment to the original Option 2, informed by the results of research performed and reports received. In place of an artificial bund, a new pond margin limit is created with relocated irises and backfilled with excavated silt to create a gently sloping bank. Existing invasive planting to be removed and buried under slit. The new banks to be reseeded with grass and marginal plants. These banks would be amenable to inundation should the pond water level recover to

previous levels. In this way the historic limits of the pond basin are preserved and the pond becomes more resilient to water recession. Note that this work should not be interpreted as a means of maintaining water levels nor of preventing future drought recession.

TIME FRAME

The current spell of hot, dry weather presents an unprecedented opportunity. In April the council were considering methods of silt relocation using drag lines, silt pushers or long-arm excavators while the pond was full of water. Now the pond has dried out to such an extent that the bed can support the weight of a heavy wheeled or tracked excavator within the basin itself.

Performing this work at this time represents a very large cost saving. The original Option 2 excavation may have cost £20,000-£35,000. The amended Option 2 works described here may be undertaken for under £2000.

NEXT STEPS

These works prepare the pond margins, but do not create either the varied habitats desired or the maintenance plan that will be required. Therefore, it will remain imperative for the council to hold further consultations with the village in order to act with the clearest possible consensus of residents' opinions. A public meeting will be held in September to begin this process.

In the meantime, the council proposes to utilise the current narrow window of opportunity in order to begin works that are already in line both with the broad range of feedback already received from residents, as well as with expert advice.

RESOLUTION

That this council resolve to perform the works proposed herein, using funds from the council budget ring-fenced for pond maintenance without delay.