# MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF EASTRY PARISH COUNCIL ALLOTMENTS AND LEISURE FIELD COMMITTEE HELD ON MONDAY 21st JANUARY 2008 AT THE PARISH ROOM AT 7.00pm

**Present:** Councillors Sam Shevde, Sandra Hooper, Sheila Smith, Ann Wiles, Nick Kenton, Margret Pemble

## 1. APOLOGIES

## 2. ALLOTMENT

The Clerk reported that she had let the very overgrown allotments on the school side. (Numbers 19a & 20a). In recognition of the extremely overgrown state of the plots she had agreed with the tenant that it would be rent free for two years and had waived the normal key and tap deposit fee.

## 3. POND

Cllr Hooper had organised a site meeting with Josie Newman of the white Cliffs Country Side project, PC Wayne Wright, Bob Priestly and Mr Trevor Burton to discuses the pond management scheme produced by White Cliffs Countryside. See appendix A.

Miss Newman believes it will take about five years to undertake all the work outlined in the scheme, the first stages of the work were discussed and agreed. See appendix B. It was felt that the work to reduce the number of self sown Willows and Willow suckers could take place before the end of February, and the rest of the work in the autumn. Mr Burton felt that a small group of 4 or 5 people, one with a chain saw could achieve a lot in a few hours.

After some discussion it was agreed by the committee that the pond would cease to be a local amenity and wildlife attraction unless the intervention outlined in the management scheme was undertaken. It was therefore decided that he Pond Management Scheme and initial work programme should be adopted by the Council. It was also agreed that Mr Burton should be given the authority to undertake, with a team of volunteers of his choosing, any and all work agreed outlined in the scheme. The member felt that Mr Burton was well qualified to undertake this work following his many year working for the rivers authority/environment agency.

It was proposed by Cllr Kenton and seconded by Cllr Hooper that a budget of £250, be allowed for the work to be undertaken by the end of February. This was agreed by all present. It was felt that grant money should them be sort to fund the next stage of the work that would need the use of more expensive equipment.

To ensure that members of the public were kept informed of the work it was agreed that the Pond management Scheme and work programme should be put on the Parish Council Web Site.

The meeting closed at 7.25pm

**Appendix A**

## BUTTSOLE POND MANAGEMENT PLAN

Buttsole pond is located alongside Lower Street to the South of Eastry. The area in question is approximately 2000sqm. This brief report is concerned with improving the pond for the benefit of wildlife and the local community.

### Site Description

Buttsole pond is dominated by common reedmace (*Typha latifolia*) with invasive species Australian swamp stonecrop (*Crassula helmsii*) and parrot's feather (*Myriophyllum aquaticum*) present. While there is some open water to the south it appears that the abundance of common reedmace has significantly dried out the pond. On visiting in August and October in 2007 the northern half of the pond was boggy but there was no standing water. The pond margins particularly to the south and along the road side are becoming choked with willow suckers and bramble has begun to colonise some areas. The concrete culvert offering drainage to Lower Street has become crowded with vegetation.

Bogbean (*Menyanthes trifoliata*) is found here and is of particular note as this plant only occurs in ten tetrads in Kent. Aside from this no notable species have been recorded. The name of the pond suggests that the pond may be of considerable age; "sole" is a common name place element meaning muddy or watery place.

However, it should be stressed that, other than for water vole, no survey of wildlife populations has been carried out. The site is likely to have species of reptiles and amphibians present and will certainly have invertebrates present. The willows provide nesting and food for birds, although it is believed that wildfowl are significantly less active than in previous years. During the October visit rats (*Rattus norvegicus*) were very active with half a dozen clearly visible at any one time. The survey carried out in August found no water vole signs and the presence of other mammals is unknown at present.

### Objective 1: Eradicate Australian swamp stonecrop and parrot's feather

Australian swamp stonecrop and parrot's feather are invasive plants which landowners have a duty to prevent from spreading. The plants are easily spread by people and other animals as they can propagate from very small fragments of roots or leaves; this also makes it difficult to eradicate either species. If left unchecked it is likely that these two species will spread to all areas of the pond and become dominant. This would not only dramatically reduce the wildlife value of the pond it would also eventually dry out the pond.

### Prescription to achieve objective 1

The action needed is the same for both species. It is unlikely that these plants can be eradicated from site within one year. Therefore, the following recommended actions will need to be repeated each year until the site is free from these invasive plants.

Dig out plants and bury on site under 20 cm of soil. This course of action is unlikely to be wholly successful on its own as fragments of the plants are likely to remain in the soil. The affected area may need to be treated with dichobenil (a herbicide). This substance is applied in granular form to the area of the pond that has been cleared of vegetation. However, further advice should be sought on this matter as this may have implications for the whole pond. All herbicides must be applied by somebody with the relevant certification and consent will have to be obtained from the Environment Agency. The WCCP can provide details of a suitable contractor.

***Note:***Unfortunately the area where Australian swamp stonecrop occurs is the area where bogbean grows and it is likely that the colony will be adversely affected in carrying out the prescriptions outlined in this plan.

**Objective 2: Reduce rat population**

The rats have a very visible presence at Buttsole Pond. It is likely that this has contributed to the decline in recreational use of the area and has already created a barrier to one group of prospective volunteers. Care needs to be taken when working in areas occupied by rats, as a serious disease (leprospirosis or Weil's disease) can be contracted by people. Precautions such as covering cuts and ensuring that gloves are worn at all times need to be implemented for people working on sites known to be occupies by rats.

**Prescriptions to achieve objective 2**

Advice should be sought from an expert on how to control the rat population. Due to the expanse of farmland directly adjacent to the site it is unlikely that the rat population will be eradicated. For any action taken to have most effect it should be carried out when the adjacent field is bare.

**Objective 3: Reduce cover of Typha**

Common reedmace will continue to reduce the water level of the pond and is also likely to spread. However, it should be noted that this plant does have some value to wildlife, particularly for invertebrates and should not be removed all together.

**Prescriptions to achieve objective 3**

Ideally, the cover of reedmace should not be more than 30%. The reedmace can be removed by pulling when the water level is low. The pulled material should be left on the bank of the pond for a day to allow invertebrates to return to the pond. The material can then be burnt if required.

The first years should concentrate on pulling the common reedmace in the northern end of the site to attempt to restore areas of open water. It would be sensible not to remove the common reedmace surrounding the Australian swamp stonecrop and parrot's feather as the common reedmace appears to be acting as a barrier preventing these plants from spreading throughout the whole pond.

**IMPORTANT PROVISOS REGARDING PRESCRIPTIONS FOR 3 & 4:**

- Caution is advised when burning wet or damp material as a large amount of smoke is likely to be created. Burning should only take place when the prevailing wind will direct smoke away from the village and more importantly from the road. The fire brigade should be informed that you are carrying out works involving a controlled fire.

- Management works should **not** be carried out between February and September.

- It is also important not to carry out too much work at any one time, as it can be hard for some pond species to adapt to change. As a general rule only one third of the pond should be managed each year.

**Objective 4: Reduce bank side willows**

Left unchecked the willow on the banks of the pond will continue to expand. Willow species are an invasive plant in wet conditions and as the plants dominance of an area grows the area tends to dry out significantly. Leaves from the willow and other trees fall into the pond filling the pond and the rotting leaves reduce the oxygen in the water available for wetland wildlife. The willow has already begun to dry out Buttsole pond and will continue to do so unless controlled. It is important to retain some of the willows as this species has been present on the banks of the pond for some years and the trees provide food and shelter to many species.

**Appendix A**

**Prescriptions to achieve objective 4**

The mature willow trees should be retained for wildlife value and to protect the character of the pond. The willow suckers and other young willows should be targeted for cutting. Some of the mature trees should be regularly pruned where they over hang the pond to reduce the amount of dead plant matter that accumulates there, however, it is not necessary to remove over hanging limbs all together as they offer value for wildlife. The cut material can be left stacked on site **on dry land** as cut willow will take root and grow again if left on boggy ground. If there is not enough room on dry land then burning will be necessary. Please see appendix one for further guidance on scrub clearance and bonfires.

The willow alongside the road should be targeted as a priority the suckers are most abundant here. Otherwise the trees and brambles around the southern end of the pond should also be thinned to create a more open feel.

*This report has been complied by the White Cliffs Countryside Project for Eastry Parish Council.*

**Appendix B**

**BUTTSOLE POND**
**Work Plan 2008**

A precise schedule cannot be defined as the exact order of work will depend on the amount and type of volunteers available, the weather and water level and available funds. This plan merely seeks to reiterate the priorities and possibilities for the year and should be used in conjunction with the management plan.

**As stressed in the plan work should only be carried out between October and the end of February and no more than one third of the pond should be managed each year.**

The three priorities for this year are:

CONTROL CRASSULA AND PARROTS FEATHER – as mentioned in the plan this must be handled carefully. Dig out the plants when the water level is low and carefully dispose of the material in a pre dug hole. As suggested at the site meeting there is a suitable spot by the fence for a trench to be dug and the plant material could be buried there. It must (by law) be covered by at least 20cm of soil. Do not leave uncovered when you leave site or undertake this work on a windy day. These plants must not be burned or left on the bank and cannot leave the site unless removed by a licensed contractor. These conditions may seem onerous but these plants can and do dominate vast areas and are spread to sites by tiny fragments. In addition these non-native plants are incredibly difficult to remove all together once they are present only in a very few sites have they been successfully eradicated.

REDUCTION OF WILLOW – this is straight forward as outlined in the management plan. It is sensible to start on the roadside first, if practical, as this area has the youngest and most vigorous growth. Clearing the island of willow could also be tackled this year. Stump treating the willow with a herbicide should also be considered but this must be carried out be somebody holding a valid licence.

REDUCTION OF THE COVER OF COMMON REED MACE AND PUDDING GRASS - These plants are dominating and drying out the pond. Ideally a machine to drag out these plants at the roots should be used. However, this has cost implications and depends on the water level being low enough. The plants could be dug out by hand or pulled if necessary. This method is time consuming and hard work but can still be of use. Even if hand pulling doesn't get down to the roots it will be of benefit as it removes the vegetation matter from the pond. The reeds directly surrounding the area contaminated with Crassula and Parrots feather should be left to help prevent the spread of these plants into the rest of the pond.