

Pond Restoration at the Playing Field, Abbotsley

Abbotsley Parish Council wants to improve the ecology. We have taken advice from The Wildlife Trust for Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire & Northamptonshire. The Wildlife Trust has accepted the pond onto its District Level Pond Licensing Scheme, enabling specialist support to help restore this important habitat.

We want to share our plans with you.

Why is the work needed? - We need to allow more light into the pond and reduce leaf drop.

Over time, the pond has become heavily shaded and overloaded with leaf litter. As leaves rot, they reduce oxygen levels in the water, making it difficult for aquatic plants and wildlife to thrive. Dense, self-sown scrub bushes and trees and multi-stemmed willow growth around the western and southern banks are all contributing to these problems.

What is planned? - On the advice of The Wildlife Trust, we have applied to HDC to:

- Remove the scrub of self-sown bushes and trees at the north of the pond edge around to the west, up to the field maple tree at the southern side. The field maple will be kept.
- The large willow on the western bank needs to be cut back to ground level, retaining three stems trimmed to 1m high for future manageable growth.
- Work will not be carried out to trees to the east of the overhead power cables.
- Any suitable logs will be kept and used to create log piles nearby to benefit wildlife. These boost habitats for insects such as beetles, woodlice, centipedes and solitary bees who all use decaying wood. These insects then support birds, bats and hedgehogs. The piles can also provide shelter for small mammals and amphibians.

What are the next steps for the pond? - Once the tree work is complete, The Wildlife Trust will return with their contractor to confirm the best approach for the pond itself. The current plan includes:

- Removing the deep build-up of silt and leaf litter.
- Slightly deepening the pond to around 1.5m at its deepest point.
- Creating a gentle slope at the northern end.
- Keeping the pond's overall shape largely unchanged.

Why does it matter? - Restoring oxygen levels, encouraging aquatic plants, and improving water quality aren't just nice to have - they directly change how the whole ecosystem functions.

- **Healthy water systems** — Oxygen-rich water supports fish, amphibians, insects and micro-organisms. Without it, ponds can become stagnant and dominated by algae.
- **Healthier pond plants** — Aquatic plants stabilise water banks, filter pollutants, provide shelter and create breeding spaces.
- **More wildlife diversity** — Birds, bats, dragonflies, frogs and small mammals all rely on healthy ponds. Better habitat increases species richness.
- **Natural pest control** — Bats, dragonflies and amphibians help reduce mosquitoes and midges naturally.
- **Climate resilience** — Healthy wetlands store carbon, buffer flooding and cope better with heatwaves and droughts.

In summary - These improvements will help restore oxygen levels, encourage aquatic plants, and biodiversity, and make the pond a healthier, more attractive habitat for local wildlife - and us all!