

# Mere Pond

## RBBC's Revised Plan

by D Larner, Chair, Pond sub-comm.

24th September 2025

# Walton on the Hill Village Forum

Interim Chairman: George Curry

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### 1. INTRODUCTION

- A. RBBC issued a 5-year Plan for Mere Pond in March 2025.
- B. I issued a Report in March recommending enhancements to it.
- C. RBBC recently issued an updated version of their 5-year Plan.
- D. This Report comments on the updated Plan.

### 2. SUGGESTIONS

- A. Add a date to the new Plan to distinguish it from other versions.
- B. Get permission, if needed, from the Surrey History Centre and add a credit to the photo on the cover page of the Plan.

### 3. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thanks to RBBC for:

- A. Making a revised plan and sending it to me.
- B. Making some amendments to the original Plan to accommodate some items in my Report.
- C. Shuffling contents into categories similar to my report.



- D. Incorporating several pictures from my Report.
- E. Posting temporary “keep out” and “no fish dumping” signs at Mere, during the recent event of low water and fish distress, as requested by me.

### 4. BACKGROUND

The Pond has been relatively healthy since the 2022 drought, but this summer experienced low water and fish distress. Whilst not as serious as 2022, this turned attention back onto fish and silt, in addition to other outstanding aspects.

### 5. LAYOUT OF THIS REPORT

The Plan is summarised in a table under heading 6 on the next page.

I have added topics of Silt Removal, Fish, Amphibians, Bullrushes and Tree Surgery under headings 7 to 11 on pages 3 and 4.

My summary is given under heading 12 on page 4.

Then the entire body of the Plan is given as an appendix on pages 5 to 9 with insertions of (a) my pictures and (b) my comments in red.

## 6. TABLE SUMMARISING THE PLAN

The Plan is summarised in this table. Columns have been added for (a) tasks already done by me and (b) a column for RBBC to add their achievements to date.

Red entries are for tasks due this year.

			Done by me (DCL)	Done by RBBC
<b>1. TREES and TERRESTRIAL</b>				
1.1	Manage Willow spread	Nov - Mar, starting 2024/25		
1.2	Create deadwood piles	When logs become available		
1.3	Survey trees	Summer 2025		
1.4	Remove non-native plants	Identify 2025, implement 2026		
<b>2. AQUATIC FAUNA and FLORA</b>				
		Investigate 2025		
2.1	Improve diversity	2025/6/7		
2.2	Monitor fish and terrapins	Summer	Done by DCL	
2.3	Duck house, move	2025 or 26		
2.4	Control Bogbean	Sep to Dec 2025	Needed ?	
2.5	Bullrush control	Annually in autumn or winter		
<b>3. DRAINAGE</b>				
3.1	Monitor outflow grate	Annually Sep -Dec 2025	Done all m'ths by DCL	
3.2A	Improve inflow, Withybed	Investigate 2025, implement 2026	Looks ok	
3.2B	Improve inflow, Sandlands	Investigate 2025, implement 2026	Partly done by DCL	
3.2B	Make silt traps	Investigate 2025, implement 2026		
<b>4. MONITORING &amp; RECORDING</b>				
4.1	Build profile of wildlife and flora	3 times every summer		
4.2	Monitor water level and condition	Every summer starting 2025	Done by DCL	
4.3	Understand water chemistry	Monthly Mar - Sept, start 2025	Partly done by DCL	
4.4	Monitor silt level	Annually		
4.5	Record data	Annually	Partly done by DCL	
<b>5. SIGNAGE</b>				
5.1	Instal noticeboards	Investigate 2025/6, implement 2026/7		

## 7. SILT REMOVAL

The Plan speaks of monitoring or surveying silt level (at point 4.4). My comments are:

- A. How can silt be monitored and surveyed other than in my long-outstanding recommendation in B below?
- B. I continue to recommend having silt surveyed for volume and chemistry by professional firms at modest costs of about £2000 because:
  - a. There might be a small volume of silt easily removed versus a large volume causing difficulties with removal
  - b. Silt might be of good quality suitable for horticulture versus a having a toxic chemistry making it expensive and hazardous to remove.
- C. £500,000 of CIL funding was reserved for silt removal in 5 borough ponds in 2022. The agenda for the 19/6/25 Executive Meeting at RBBC, with Councillor Ben Green as attendee, said £500,000 CIL funding for silt removal in 5 of the Borough's ponds was being expanded to 7 ponds. In case removal is justified by low water events and by points B.a and B.b, I recommend funds continue to be reserved for removal.
- D. By copy to Ben Green, I ask him to comment and to warn if these funds might expire if not spent in a certain period of time.
- E. I will alert the Council if any "keep out of dangerous silt" warning notices are needed in future.
- F. Most important, can RBBC please consult with WVF on surveys and proposals.

## 8. FISH

The Plan mentions at point 2.2 (a) *monitor and record fish and terrapins sightings (being done by me)* (b) *explore removal* (c) *at low water* (d) *by charity* (e) *surveys* (f) *electro fishing* and (g) *Environment Agency*.

Authorities say Mere is unsuitable for fish-keeping, but they arrive by nature and dumping. Few have been sighted in recent times, and only 2 during the last low water. I haven't been able to get any interest in removal from angling clubs. My recommendations continue to be:

- A. Most importantly, erect a sign forbidding dumping.
- B. I will continue to report sightings.
- C. I will raise the alarm if distress is seen, implement first aid measures, and report to the council about more drastic measures e.g. removal by a licenced contractor.

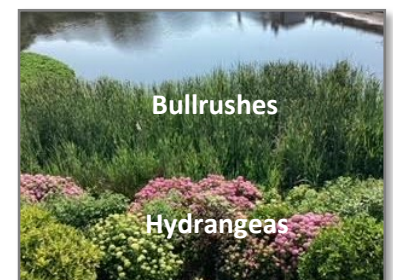
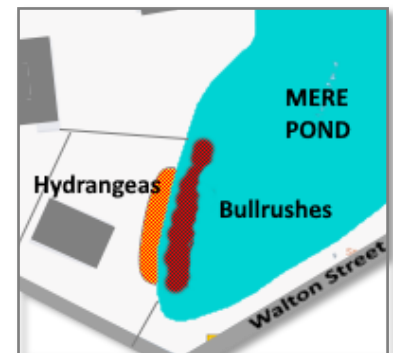
## 9. AMPHIBIANS (new item)

The local "Toad Patrol" recently asked the council to remove fish to promote amphibians, but I have advised only a few fish (or perhaps none) are present, so a wholesale removal exercise is not currently justified. In any case, if removal becomes justified, it is more easily done at low water.

## 10. BULLRUSHES

The Plan says at point 2.5 *manage Bullrushes by cutting or digging out by hand, create 2 island features with a moat in between, promote Yellow Flag Irises, improve the sight of Hydrangeas, and investigate other plants.*

This recent plan shows Bullrushes. I cannot see how islands of bullrushes could be established with a moat between them. In any case (a) this area of the Pond dries out first and fish migrate to the other end of the Pond during low water so the idea of a "moat" is doubtful and (b) an 'island' of Bog Bean and Withies is already established here to provide refuge for wildlife.



Bullrushes have multiplied threefold every year over the past few years. So if a small population is left, it will soon expand to a troublesome size. Surely, it is better to remove **all** bulrushes from this part of the Pond to re-establish the beautiful view of Hydrangeas, and to plant Yellow Flags Iris. See note E on page 9.

Then, if Bulrushes are desired, a few could be transplanted to another area where they won't block any view e.g. at the Withybed end.

Meanwhile an ex RBBC Countryside Officer agreed I should try to control the spread by removing seedpods, and I will continue.

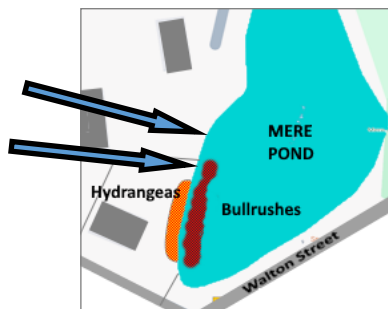
## 11. TREE SURGERY

The Plan says at points 1.2 and 1.3 *leave decaying standing wood and branches if possible.*

A. I continue to recommend removal of this lone dead tree, which is out of place in a cultivated urban area.



B. My Report brought attention to trees on the western bank (marked with arrows) because of their long straggly growth, which has not been pruned for many years.



The Plan identifies tree surveying but doesn't mention this area. I continue to recommend early attention to promote health whilst preserving the beautiful vista from Walton Street.

I am trying to get advice from a Tree Consultant, and will let RBBC know of any result.

## 12. SUMMARY

Readers need to study my additional comments as inserted in the body of the Plan on the next 5 pages.

I am only aware of small progress made under the original Plan, namely tree surgery near the Cottages on the north west bank and tidying-up near the junction of Sandlands Road and Walton Street.

Much more work was scheduled for 2025, so I am concerned that it might not be achieved in the next 3 months.

Whilst I am doing some monitoring report, I am not aware of any further monitoring by the Council. I was hoping for feedback in the form of critique of my work and copies of the Council's own work but none has arrived.

"Monitoring silt" surveying it and deciding on removal are major aspects, so I would particularly welcome dialogue with RBBC, per point 7.F.

I have offered to:

- A. Do more work if requested
- B. Help find contractors e.g. to survey silt volume and chemistry
- C. Provide hospitality (toilet and drinks) to Council contractors whilst they are working on Mere.

Moreover, I continue to invite RBBC's Green Spaces people to visit me at the Pond to discuss all aspects.



## **APPENDIX - THE BODY OF THE PLAN REPRODUCED IN BLUE,**

With my comments inserted in red, and with my photos inserted.

### **Mere Pond Management Plan 2025-2030**

#### **INTRODUCTION**

This document is designed to inform and identify key management tasks and actions for the next 5 years that have been identified as high priority for nature conservation and amenity value. Priorities have been pulled together and updated from existing site-specific documents and issues raised by interested third parties. This document will lay out actions and timeframes required in a single format with accompanying diagrams.

For additional in-depth information regarding Mere Pond and the management tasks please refer to the 2018 Surrey Wildlife Trust Ecological Services Habitat Management Plan Project Number 3192 and the Mere Pond Hydrological Report, produced for the Walton Village Forum by David C Beale MSc November 2022.

#### **5-year Works Programme**

The Works Programme below outlines the high priority tasks required to ensure continued improvement and protection of Mere Pond from 2025 through to 2030. The programme is split into 5 sections

1. Trees.
2. Aquatic Fauna and Flora.
3. Drainage.
4. Monitoring and Recording.
5. Signage and Interpretation.

#### **Appendices**

Appendices 1 shows the site features and areas associated with the vegetation management works.

Appendices 2 shows the Inflow areas to be maintained and enhanced through silt trap construction and planting. Location of water quality sampling at high and low water level points.

Appendices 3 shows the form to be used for data capture.

Appendices 4 shows marginal vegetation

Appendices 5 Water level datum information

#### **Footnote**

This document is intended to be a 'live document' and as such will be added too as works progress and further information from surveys, monitoring and works completed come available.

### **Works Programme 2025 - 2030**

#### **1.TREES & TERRESTRIAL PLANTS**

##### **1.1 OBJECTIVE: Manage Willow spread**

TASK: Selectively manage emerging willow sapling spread on the north east and west side of pond. Coppice saplings at lowest point possible in a phased regime to provide a varied height and age mosaic of vegetation. Phased areas shown on Appendices 1.

TIMESCALE: November – March starting in 2024/2025 following appendices 1 timing

RESPONSIBILITY: RBBC Tree team

**1.2 OBJECTIVE: Create dead wood piles** at various locations around the site to increase and enhance fungal and invertebrate diversity. Leave standing dead wood in situ unless found to be a safety risk.

TASK: Identify small discrete areas for tidy log and brush piles, some in shaded areas, others in full sun. Leave Decaying standing wood and branches if possible. During the cutting back and coppicing cyclical works around 20% of the resulting branches and larger brash should be retained and placed under the trees. Decaying floating wood to be secured bankside to enhance habitat. Leaning trees over the water to be retained for habitat

TIMESCALE: As logs become available and coppicing works begin. Ongoing

RESPONSIBILITY: Greenspaces Team/Countryside Officer

##### **1.3 OBJECTIVE: Tree Survey to reduce risk from trees**

TASK: Survey whole site on an 18-month cyclical programme and pass works to Tree Team to action.

Standing dead wood to be retained if safe to do so.

**TIMESCALE:** Identify in 2025 and arrange to remove in 2026

**RESPONSIBILITY:** Countryside Officer and WVF

Willows to be monitored for splits and south west corner trees growing over Sandlands Roads to be monitored.

Ash to the north of the site is believed to be not on RBBC land. **Can RBBC please comment on the plan in my Report showing these trees to be outside private gardens, identify the alleged owner, and include them in their tree survey.**

**TIMESCALE:** Cyclical starting summer 2025

## **2. AQUATIC FAUNA AND FOR A (plants & animals)**

### **2.1 OBJECTIVE: Improve aquatic and marginal flora diversity**

**TASK:** Replant identified areas with aquatic plants on Appendices 1. Interplant between Bogbean plants 20-30% of area in the north and west of the pond. Use emergent native aquatic plants such as Purple Loosestrife, Water Mint, Marsh Marigold, Water Plantain, Flowering-rush, Floating Sweet-grass, Reed Sweet-grass, Gipsywort, Amphibious Bistort, Common Water Crowfoot, Lesser Spearwort, Celery-leaved Buttercup and Brooklime. On the edges plant up with marginal plants 10-20% area such as Hemp Agrimony Meadow-sweet, Sharp Flowered Rush, Hard Rush, Ragged Robin, Water Figwort and Marsh Woundwort.

**TIMESCALE:** Determine locations and water depths to optimise planting success Investigate new areas that would benefit from aquatic planting in 2025/6. Start planting in 2026/.7 Investigate approved suppliers of aquatic plants to ensure biosecurity and limit the potential to introduce invasive species.

**RESPONSIBILITY:** Countryside Officer and Greenspaces Team

### **2.2 OBJECTIVE: Monitor and record any terrapins or fish sightings**

**TASK:** Monitor and record fish and terrapin sightings. Explore costs for removal by specialist provider or charity for Terrapins. Investigate costs for electro fishing survey and removal procedures with EA for low water level event. Recording form in Appendices 3

**TIMESCALE:** In summer months when water level is lower. To be investigated in 2025.

**RESPONSIBILITY:** Countryside Officer to organise. Low water event procedure. WVF to monitor and record sightings.

**I am looking out for fish sightings (and terrapins if I ever see them) and reporting to authorities. See also the heading 8 on page 3.**

### **2.3 OBJECTIVE: Duck house**

**TASK:** Newly repaired duck house to be towed back to swan island

**TIMING:** To be investigated in 2025/6

**RESPONSIBILITY:** Greenspaces

### **2.4 OBJECTIVE: Control spread of Bogbean**

**TASK:** Annual review and removal of up to 20% of Bogbean or as required. Ensure the pond always has an acceptable coverage of Bogbean as it provides refuge for waterfowl and invertebrates.

**See page 9.**

**TIMESCALE:** September – December annually starting in 2025

**RESPONSIBILITY:** Rangers and Greenspaces

### **2.5 OBJECTIVE: Bullrush Control**

**See heading 10 on page 3 and item B on page 9.**

**TASK:** Selective Bullrushes will be dug out or cut by hand. To establish island features of Bullrushes with a moat between the islands and bank to prevent access from predators, increase the perimeter and promote Yellow Flag Iris and Hydrangeas. Planting of other marginal aquatic species to be investigated. See Appendices 4

**TIMESCALE:** Annually on rotation. Autumn/Winter

**RESPONSIBILITY:** RBBC.

## **3. DRAINAGE**

### **3.1 OBJECTIVE: Monitor outflow pipe**

**TASK:** Monitor outflow grate to ensure it does not inhibit output of water volume in winter months.

**TIMESCALE:** September – December. Annually starting in 2025.

**RESPONSIBILITY:** Countryside Officer and RBBC Engineer.

**This needs to be done throughout the entire year (not stopping in December) to catch any problem with outflow, especially in winter. I am already doing this and reporting to RBBC.**



### 3.2 OBJECTIVE: Inflow pipe maintenance and improvement

TASK: Three inflow pipes are located on Mere Pond. See Appendices 2.

**Inflow 1** to be maintained free of debris (Withybed end).



**This pipe carries water into the Pond at the Withybed end**

I have been keeping an eye on this pipe for several years, have never seen a problem, and will continue to monitor.

**Inflow 2** which takes water from Sandlands Road to be cleared of low vegetation to expose the inflow area. Mature trees to be protected.



**This pipe carries water into the Pond at the Sandlands end**

It is a good idea to clear this area and create a Silt Trap as explained below. Recognising the pipe has been blocked in the past, and water has been wasted, I check it regularly to ensure it carries water off Sandlands Road and into the Pond.

A silt trap to be constructed at point of entry measuring approx. 4 to 5m square. Silt trap area to be planted with reed to aid in water quality as runoff enters the pond. Reed to be cut and arisings removed every 3 years.

**Inflow 3** this smaller inflow pipe the is located opposite the Dean Lane junction runs over the beach area into the pond. This area to be kept clear of woody growth to allow flow. Reed bed planting to be planted here, approx. 4m square area of reed to aid in water quality and chemical uptake. Reed to be cut down to the base every 3 years. Area of planting to be protected with aesthetically pleasing barrier whilst reed establishes.

TIMESCALE: Investigate in 2025 and implementation in 2026

RESPONSIBILITY: RBBC Engineer

### **4. MONITORING AND RECORDING**

#### **4.1 OBJECTIVE: Build profile of wildlife and flora on site**

TASK: Carry out annual pond dipping at three different locations around the pond, waterfowl counts and flora surveys of the whole site. Build on information previously provided on the Surrey Wildlife Trust Ecological Services Habitat Management Plan Project Number 3192. Store data on a central location and add to the Management plan as available.

TIMESCALE: 3 times over the summer annually

Has pond dipping been done during summer 2025 by RBBC, and can I please have the results? Alternatively please explain how to do this and I will try to do it.

RESPONSIBILITY: Countryside Officer and WVF

#### **4.2 OBJECTIVE: Water level and condition monitoring**

TASK: Engage with Walton Village Forum and Community Groups to record and monitor water levels throughout the year and more frequently during periods of dry and hot weather. Level monitoring to follow datums used on the Mere Pond Hydrological Report, produced for the Walton Village Forum by David C Beale. If access is allowed monitor and record water level at the new attenuation pond north of Mere Pond located on the new estate.

Monitor and record Mere Pond for Algae blooms including blue green during hot weather.

I have been doing this and reporting to the council, and will continue.

See Appendices 3.

TIMESCALE: Summer (June – September). Annually starting 2025

RESPONSIBILITY: Countryside Officer and Walton Village Forum

#### 4.3 OBJECTIVE: Improve and understand water quality and chemistry of the site

TASK: Measure and record results at the same location.

O 2 , temperature, pH, NH 4, NH 2 (means NO 2 ?), NO 3 and Phosphates. See Appendix 2 and 3.

TIMESCALE: Monthly March to September. Annually starting 2025 and report back results to Village Forum

RESPONSIBILITY: Countryside Officer and WVF

I started doing this several years ago and resumed in March 2025, with reporting to RBBC and others, but with no feedback from RBBC despite requests and no help measuring ammonia and phosphate missing in the table.

The table shows BRRC proposals alongside my work.

Can RBBC please copy their results to me.

I am only testing at 1 location. If they want further tests by me, please let me know.

	Common name	Requested by RBBC	Being done by me
O2	oxygen	Yes	Yes
Temperature		Yes	Yes
Ph		Yes	Yes
NH 4	ammonia	Yes	
NO 2	nitrite	Yes	Yes
NO 3	nitrate	Yes	yes
Phosphates		Yes	
Chlorine			Yes
Hardness			Yes
Carbonate			Yes

#### 4.4 OBJECTIVE: Monitor and record silt levels

TASK: Where access allows

TIMESCALE: Annually

RESPONSIBILITY: Countryside Officer / RBBC Engineer

See heading 7 on page 3.

#### 4.5 OBJECTIVE: Record monitoring and survey data in a centralised location allow for review of tasks and information to steer future management of site. See heading 9.

TASK: Create additional appendices with information collected and update interested parties as required.

TIMESCALE: Annually

RESPONSIBILITY: Countryside Officer

#### 5. SIGNAGE AND INTERPRETATION

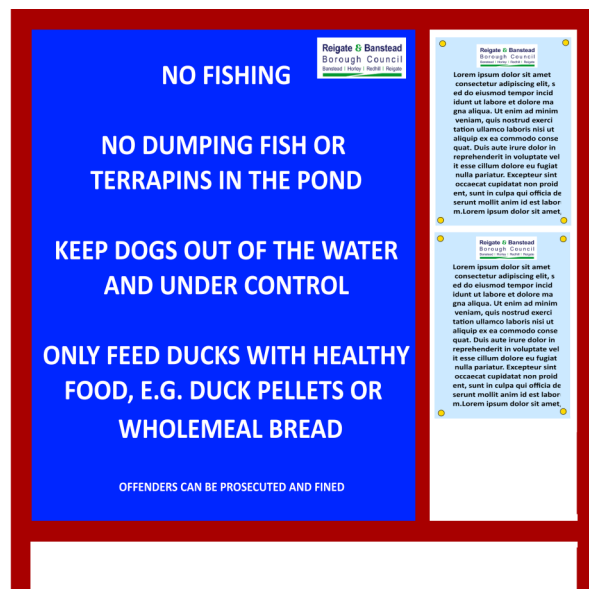
##### 5.1 OBJECTIVE: Install information boards for education and site history. Signage to also alert owners to stop dogs entering the water and for visitors to not feed wildlife including giving bread to waterfowl.

TASK: Countryside Officer to work with Village Forum identify locations, design and content to be displayed.

TIMESCALE: Investigate and design in financial year 2025/6. Implement in 2026/7

RESPONSIBILITY: Countryside Officer and Village Forum

A new notice board should warn against dumping per point 8.A on page 3. My Report recommended this design, but I haven't heard from RBBC. Is this design ok with them or what do they propose?





This is RBBC's plan of Mere marked with:

- Areas of yearly willow coppicing in **red**
- Areas of proposed Bog Bean control in **green**
- The beach area in **yellow**
- The main area of tree survey in **blue**



My comments are:

**A.** As shown in the next photo, Bog Bean looks ok in this green-marked area, without any need for control at this time.



**B.** I don't think Bog Bean control is needed in this green-marked area, because the area is dominated by Bull-rushes, see the next photo. See also heading 10 on page 3.



**C.** The only significant area of Bog Bean is marked here. It doesn't look like it needs control at the moment.

**D.** The tree survey area in blue should be extended to the trees identified in points 11.A and 11.B on page 4, and to the Ash on page 6.

**E.** Continued from heading 10 on page 3. If Bullrushes are selectively removed by hand digging in this area, remaining ones and Bog Bean will spread. Surely better to remove all Bullrushes and all Bog Bean in one hit e.g. by Truxtor machine (2 days hire with an operator costs about £2000).