

Padworth Gravel Pit – Outline Management Plan

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Background

The disused gravel workings at Aldermarston Wharf have developed into an excellent wildlife site, notably for birds, and members of the Berkshire Ornithological Club (BOC) have been working with the owner, the site operator and West Berkshire Council on its conservation. This draft sets out a plan for managing the site as a nature reserve operated by a local trust (or some other body yet to be determined).

Site description

The site occupies approximately 40 hectares between the River Kennet and the Kennet & Avon Canal to the east of Aldermarston Wharf (SU6067). It comprises a lake on the site of recently discontinued (about 2008) gravel workings and approximately 10 hectares of flooded woodland on the site of earlier gravel extraction. The woodland contains Willow and Alder, with Poplar and some Oak on the drier areas. The lake is fringed with Willow scrub and tall ruderal herbaceous species and has some wide gravel beaches that attract wading birds. A map of the site is attached (Fig 1).

There is a public footpath along the north bank of the river and a footpath has been created by local use from Mill Lane into the flooded woodland. Otherwise there is no current public access.

Ownership

The site is owned by the Canal and River Trust (CRT). The recent extraction operator is Harleyford Aggregates, who are now responsible for site restoration. The details of restoration are in the process of finalisation with West Berkshire Council. The CRT has said that they would like to lease the site to an entity that would manage it for conservation.

Plan aims

1. To conserve the site as a wetland nature reserve.
2. To provide access for the public to enjoy the reserve in a way consistent with the nature conservation objectives.
3. To establish a body to manage the site with the above aims.

Management Plan 2016-2000

1. Proposed Trust structure and role

- 1.1. A charitable Trust or other entity will be established with founder Trustees or Directors("the board") put forward by the BOC and [CRT, BBOWT, NDOC, a local community friends group?] .
- 1.2. The objects of the body will be to safeguard and enhance the biodiversity of Padworth Gravel Pit and its surroundings for the benefit of its wildlife and of the public.
- 1.3. The board will:
 - 1.3.1. Establish a management plan (of which this is an early draft) for the reserve,
 - 1.3.2. Negotiate a lease from CRT for Padworth GP for the purpose of managing the site as a nature reserve,
 - 1.3.3. Manage the reserve.
- 1.4. Board members' roles and skills: As the management body, the board must bring commitment to the project and the skills to manage it. Between them, their skills should encompass:
 - 1.4.1. Experience of developing and managing nature reserves
 - 1.4.2. Experience of obtaining relevant financial support
 - 1.4.3. Project management (technical and financial)
 - 1.4.4. Volunteer management
 - 1.4.5. Representation of key stakeholders (CRT, BOC, BBOWT, NDOC, TABCG, West Berkshire Council, local community).
 - 1.4.6. Key roles are: Chair, Treasurer, Operations (conservation and volunteer management). Soundings on appointments of the founding board members should be taken with the stakeholders. It is anticipated that 4-6 volunteer members would be appointed.

2. Conservation plan

The overall aim of the plan is to maintain the flooded woodland, which is a very rare habitat type in the UK, and to maintain the lake and its margins for wildfowl, waders and other wetland bird species and other taxa. It is anticipated that the bulk of the developer's restoration plan will have been completed before the Trust leases the site. The main elements of the restoration plan (see Figure 1) are:

- 2.1. Creating a bund and islands
- 2.2. Creating a shallow beach in the SW corner of the lake
- 2.3. Creating a fenced off footpath from Padworth Lane car parking area around the west side of the lake to the river
- 2.4. Providing two viewing screens
- 2.5. Providing a hard surfaced car parking area at SU609,673
- 2.6. Making secure the perimeter fencing and entrances (including the Mill Lane boundary).

Following completion of the restoration works, the body will:

- 2.7. Manage the willow scrub around the lake to provide partial screening (2-3m height)
- 2.8. Maintain the beach areas for waders, notably breeding Little Ringed Plover
- 2.9. Create reedbed areas (see Figure).
- 2.10. Manage the tree/scrub boundary between the flooded woodland and main lake.
- 2.11. Install information boards at entry points.
- 2.12. Establish a conservation volunteer programme using organised groups such as BBOWT, CRT and BCV, who are equipped, trained and insured, and local volunteers, for whom such support will be required.
- 2.13. Establish wildlife monitoring programmes. Current knowledge of the site's biodiversity is largely focussed on birds. Surveys of other taxa are urgently required for both the flooded woodland and the lake and its margins. Commission volunteer surveys for plants, mammals, amphibian, reptiles, odonata, butterflies.
- 2.14. Complete detailed surveys of breeding and wintering birds to support proposals for conservation designations (section 5 a).
- 2.15. Review the current angling agreement with Central Association of London & Provincial Angling Clubs.

3. Public access plan

- 3.1. A circular route is planned (Figure 1), using the public footpath along the river bank and a footpath through the reserve. Walkers will be restricted to the footpaths except for an area to be created to the south west of the lake.
- 3.2. There are no plans for wheelchair access, which would be difficult to achieve without creation of hard paths and providing entry points that would prejudice the security of the site (see section 7 a).
- 3.3. Visitors will be required to keep dogs on leads at all times, to protect ground-nesting birds in the breeding season and the wintering wildfowl.
- 3.4. Viewing screens will be sited to allow views across the lake for wildfowl and over beach areas for waders without disturbing wildlife.
- 3.5. The path established by local users through the flooded woodland will be made a permissive path.
- 3.6. Interpretation boards will be installed at the viewing screens and other points on the circular route.
- 3.7. The current angling agreement will be reviewed, with a view to ensuring sympathetic management of the river bank (see 2.15).

4. Fundraising plan

- 4.1. Section 106 funding (advice from Jeremy Davy)
- 4.2. BBOWT (advice from BBOWT)
- 4.3. BOC: the body will apply to the BOC's Conservation Fund for specified projects or items matching the Fund's criteria. It is anticipated that £1,000 p.a. might be available. In addition appeals can be made for attractive capital projects.
- 4.4. Other grant sources: WBCS, Greenham Trust, BIFFA, HLF, TW, CRT....

5. Budget

The table below is indicative of the anticipated start up and running costs. *All costs are guesses and require definition.* The table does not include capital projects that might be undertaken, for which grants would have to be sought.

Start up and maintenance Budget Items	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Trust establishment	1000				
Insurance	500	500	500	500	500
Administration (office costs, meetings etc)	500	500	500	500	500
Materials (fencing, gates, posts, concrete etc)	1000	1000	1000	1000	1000
Entry notice boards (4); route signs (6)	3000	500			
Maintenance working parties (TCV charges x 6 work parties)	1500	1500	1500	1500	1500
Equipment hire	1000	1000	2000	1000	2000
Other costs	1000	2000	3000	3000	3000
Contingency reserve	10,000				
Total	19,500	7,000	9,000	8,500	8,500

6. Administrative issues

6.1. Legal status

6.1.1. The project will be established as a trust, charitable company limited by guarantee or charitable incorporated organisation.

6.1.2. Charity registration: as some grant-awarding bodies prefer, or may only, give to charities, the body should seek charitable status at the outset.

6.1.3. LWS designation: the body will progress with West Berkshire Council the designation of the reserve as a Local Wildlife Site.

6.1.4. SSSI designation: the body will progress with Natural England the designation of the flooded woodland as an SSSI.

6.2. Health & Safety: Risks to health and to safety of visitors and volunteers are considered in the Risk Assessment.

7. Risks Assessment

7.1. The board will keep under review the risks that the body, its volunteers and visitors might face. See table below.

Risk	To whom	Risk level	Mitigation
Health: Blue/green algal contamination of lake (not known to have occurred)	visitors/volunteers/dogs	Low	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People and dogs to be fenced off from the lake and notices restricting access to be displayed.
Safety: Tree management	Visitors and volunteers		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inspect trees along footpaths at least annually and manage as needed. • Inspect areas prior to working party access and restrict access or manage tree if necessary.
Safety: Drowning or injury from falling in the water	visitors/volunteers	Low	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visitor access to the lake prevented by fencing and notices restricting access to be displayed. • Lone working by volunteers not permitted in or near the lake. Lifebelts held at 2 positions on lake footpath.
Safety: Injury during work parties, from use of tools <i>etc</i>	Volunteers Body	Low/Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training briefings to volunteers prior to starting work. • Work party leader to have mobile phone to call for assistance if necessary. • Body to maintain appropriate liability insurance.
Security: Illegal occupation of the site		Low	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •
Security: vandalism of fences, gates, screens <i>etc</i>	Body	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • So far as practicable, vandal-proof fixtures of little value will be used. Insurance is unlikely to be value for money. • A contingency for repair and replacement to be included in budget.
Financial: Income insufficient to meet expenditure.	Body	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Body will focus on fundraising and only commit to expenditure once the relevant funding has been obtained. • Body will normally maintain a reserve of at least one year's recurrent expenditure.
Financial: Unexpected and unavoidable large costs	Body	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • T Body will maintain a contingency reserve equivalent to approximately one year's running expenditure (£5,000 to £10,000)
Management continuity: loss of key [Trustees/Directors]	Body	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Board will review the board/volunteer complement at least annually and plan succession
Trustees/Directors/Organisation liability	Body/Board	Low	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public and employee insurance to be maintained



- GATE
- RAMP/WALL
- STOCK FENCE
- GRVEL COVERED BENCH
- BLIND
- CARPARK
- ISLANDS
- QUARRY COVERED BENCH
- PORTACABIN

D.K. Symes Associates Concept Restoration Plan Scale - 1:2,500 (at A3) Date - 21-12-2012 Plan No. 0046/R/1