

Clymping Mill – Ecological benefits of the proposed pond

Conservation Importance of the Site

Clymping Mill is situated adjacent to Climping Beach Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and within close proximity of West Beach Local Nature Reserve (LNR). These two sites have statutory designations with regard to their biological interest and conservation importance and Climping Beach SSSI is of National importance.

Two sites of local importance but with non-statutory site designations are Littlehampton Golf Course and Atherington Beach Local Wildlife Site and Climping Sand Dune System Local Geological Site.

Habitats Data from the Sussex Biodiversity Records Centre (SxBRC) show the Habitats of principal importance for the conservation of biodiversity in England' under Section 41 of the 2006 Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act found within 1km of the Site are:

- Lowland fen
- Reedbed
- Intertidal mudflat
- Coastal vegetated shingle
- Coastal sand dune
- Coastal & flood plain grazing marsh
- Deciduous woodland

The proposed development intends to add a pond to enhance the biodiversity value of the Site.

Ponds can be exceptional wildlife habitats, providing a link between the terrestrial and aquatic habitats. They act as refugia for wildlife and support a vast array of species, including amphibians and reptiles, aquatic invertebrates including dragon and damselflies, diving beetles and moths, as well as aquatic plants, mammals, bats and birds. Ponds typically support 70% of all freshwater species in lowland landscapes and support many rare species. Recent studies have also shown that ponds play a major role in global carbon sequestration.

There are thought to be around 18,000 ponds in the county of Sussex, but despite this high number, many parishes are listed by the Sussex Wildlife Trust as lacking in ponds. Research by the Freshwater Habitats Trust concluded that 50% of the UK's ponds were lost during the 20th century and that 80% of those remaining are in a poor state. As such there is a push from the SWT and the Freshwater Habitats Trust to create a Sussex wide and National pond network with incentives including the Million Pond Project.

The proposed pond at Clymping Mill will create new wildlife habitats, which will help link corridors of habitat within the agricultural surroundings. The ponds will give species the ability to colonize new areas and make them more resilient to threats including climate change.

The proposed pond at Clymping Mill will help protect, enhance and increase in size and number the best water habitats to safeguard and improve the wildlife populations of the parish and district.

Priority Ponds were acknowledged in UK conservation policy in 2007, when priority ponds were added to the list of UK Biodiversity Action Plan Priority Habitats.

Priority ponds contain one or more of the following attributes:

- Habitats of international importance
- Species of high conservation importance
- Exceptional assemblages of key biotic groups
- Ponds of high ecological quality
- Other important ponds

So far approximately 60 priority ponds have been identified in Sussex. These ponds are notable mainly for populations of BAP species including the great crested newts and common toad, the grass snake, fairy shrimp, water vole, small red damselfly, and black darter, and the critically endangered European eel.

Given the time to allow nature to take its course and using appropriate landscaping techniques, the pond at Clymping Mill, has the potential to be listed as a priority pond.

To increase the chances of this, landscape works will ensure that:

- Run off from the nearby agricultural land is minimized.
- The pond will be filled naturally by rainwater
- Shallow areas and deeper terraces will be created.
- Shallow sloping sides will allow easy access for wildlife.
- Boggy areas will be created near the pond edges and linked to other features in the garden including log piles, hedgerows, trees and shrubs.

Four species of amphibian have been recorded within a 1km search radius, these include the nationally designated smooth and palmate newts and, and the common frog and the internationally designated great crested newt.

The great crested newt is the UK's most strictly protected amphibian due to the considerable decline that the species has undergone in the past century. It is a priority species and a feature of the Sussex County and District Biodiversity Action Plan.

The main factors for the species decline are:

- The deliberate filling in of ponds
- Pond loss through natural succession
- The introduction of fish
- Chemical pollution and eutrophication of breeding sites
- Loss of terrestrial habitat
- Habitat fragmentation

The County BAP states "Favourable habitat management, restoration and creation need to be encouraged".

It is hoped that, if granted Planning Permission, the pond at Clymping Mill will contribute a potential breeding habitat for these creatures in the future.