

Draft

Habitat Action Plan for Ponds

**Due to changes in the UK BAP process the UK Ponds HAP will remain
in 'draft' form**

An updated version of the draft HAP will be available later in 2009

**Information describing the criteria for selection of Priority Status
ponds can be obtained, separately, from:**

www.ukbap.org.uk (Species and Habitat review report 2007, Annexes 4-6, p131)

Draft Habitat Action Plan for Ponds

DESCRIPTION

BAP Priority Habitat Ponds are defined as permanent and seasonal standing water bodies up to 2ha¹ in extent, which meet one or more of the following criteria.

- *Habitats of high conservation importance.* Ponds that meet criteria under Annex 1 of the Habitats Directive.
- *Species of high conservation importance.* Ponds supporting Red Data Book species, BAP species, species fully protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act Schedule 5 and 8, Habitats Directive Annex II species, a Nationally Scarce wetland plant species², or three Nationally Scarce aquatic invertebrate species.
- *Exceptional assemblages of key biotic groups:* Ponds supporting exceptional populations or numbers of key species. Based on (i) criteria specified in guidelines for the selection of biological SSSIs (currently amphibians and dragonflies only), and (ii) exceptionally rich sites for plants or invertebrates (i.e. supporting ≥ 30 wetland plant species² or ≥ 50 aquatic macroinvertebrate species).
- *Ponds of high ecological quality:* Ponds classified in the top PSYM category (“high”) for ecological quality (i.e. having a PSYM score $\geq 75\%$). [PSYM (the Predictive SYstem for Multimetrics) is a method for assessing the biological quality of still waters in England and Wales. Plant species and / or invertebrate families are surveyed using a standard method. The PSYM model makes predictions for the site based on environmental data and using a minimally impaired pond dataset. Comparison of the prediction and observed data gives a % score for ponds quality.]
- *Other important ponds:* Individual ponds or groups of ponds with a limited geographic distribution recognised as important because of their age, rarity of type or landscape context e.g. pingos, duneslack ponds, machair ponds.

Estimates based on the relatively small pond data sets currently available suggest that around 20% of the c.400,000 ponds outside curtilage in the UK might meet one or more of the above criteria.

¹ The “Lakes” HAP 2005 Targets review quantification of the lakes resource in UK was based on lakes >1ha in size. This overlap can be managed by liaison between the two HAPs

² Includes marginal, submerged and floating-leaved plant species

TARGETS

Target 1. Maintain the number of priority pond sites.

Notes for Target 1: The aim of this target is to maintain the *net* number of high quality pond sites. There will inevitably be some turn-over in high quality sites (i.e. some will be lost, and some gained). In addressing this, and other targets, particular emphasis should be placed on maintaining functional pond networks and species meta-populations.

Target 2. Maintain the quality of flagship pond sites.

Notes for Target 2: the aim is to work directly with a sub-set of c.1% of high quality ponds (“flagship ponds”) to ensure they are monitored and their quality is maintained. This will ensure that critical sites do not degrade. It will also provide case-study information about (a) threats to high-quality sites, and (b) effective means of mitigation. The list of flagship ponds, and basis on which they will be chosen have still to be agreed.

Target 3. Restore pond sites to deliver Species Action Plan targets.

Notes for Target 3: The aim is to restore ponds that are below high quality status for pond-associated priority species, in order to help address the action plans for these species. The target can apply to any pond with a good potential for successful restoration for a priority species, and can be aimed at improving water quality, or directly managing habitats. Invasive habitat management (e.g. plant clearance, dredging) should be undertaken only where there is little risk of damage to the existing biodiversity value of the pond site. Target numbers are based on ultimately restoring of c1000 sites/yr. However the target is staggered, starting at 50 sites/yr, then rising progressively by 50 sites/yr until the target 1000/sites/yr is reached (in 2022). Note that country targets are currently proportional to country area, and will need to be readjusted to relate more specifically to SAP targets areas.

Target 4. Create new pond sites of high quality potential.

Notes for Target 4: The aim of this target is to create a new network of ponds with clean water and high biodiversity potential. The definition of “high quality potential” has yet to be agreed. However a provisional definition is “ponds located in areas where they drain a semi-natural surface-water catchment, and are unlikely to be significantly impacted by man in after-use (e.g. stocked with fish)”. Target ponds should be located in a wide range of landscape types to maximise regional biodiversity. Their creation should not damage the value of existing sites or areas. Creation of (a) pond mosaics/complexes, (b) new ponds that increase landscape connectivity or form protective networks, and (c) new sites that are targeted to support pond SAP species are particularly encouraged. Ponds cannot be counted against this target if they are created as mitigation for destruction of existing high quality ponds. Note that country number targets are currently proportional to country area and that in some countries, particularly Scotland, numbers will need to be readjusted when further data (e.g. Countryside Survey 2007 results) are available.

Definition of terms used

Pond site = pond (or clusters of small ponds) plus the surrounding area that significantly influences the pond

HAP pond sites = Ponds relevant to the HAP targets i.e. high quality pond sites, and other ponds that can be improved to maintain BAP species.

Flagship pond sites = a listed subset of the best ponds which will be a particular focus of attention.

Draft target numbers³**Target 1. Maintain net number of high quality pond sites**

	2007 baseline	2010 target	2015 target	2020 target	2030 target
UK	80,000	80,000	80,000	80,000	80,000
E	43,000	43,000	43,000	43,000	43,000
NI					
S	26,000	26,000	26,000	26,000	26,000
W	7,000	7,000	7,000	7,000	7,000

Target 2. Maintain quality of flagship sites

	2007 baseline	2010 target	2015 target	2020 target	2030 target
UK	0	264	528	800	800
E	0	139	279	424	424
NI					
S	0	85	169	256	256
W	0	24	48	72	72

Target 3. Restore pond sites to deliver priority species targets

	2007 baseline	2010 target	2015 target	2020 target	2030 target
UK	Targets to be agreed				
E					
NI					
S					
W					

Target 4. Create new pond sites of high quality potential

	2007 baseline	2010 target	2015 target	2020 target	2030 target
UK	Targets not yet defined				
E	0	795	7,950	31,800	63,600
NI	Targets not defined because data are very limited				
S	Targets not yet defined				
W	0	135	1,350	5,400	10,800

³ Note: the national target numbers do not include ponds in curtilage (i.e. garden ponds). However, creation and maintenance of high quality garden ponds is encouraged as part of HAP actions.

ACTIONS

1. Policy and legislation

Objective

Work at the European, national, regional and local level to ensure that current and new policies, legislation and funding opportunities support HAP targets.

Actions

1.1 European and national policy

Ensure that relevant European and national biodiversity and water management policy and legislation operates to protect priority ponds by ensuring that ponds are:

- (i) formally included in relevant sections of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act in England, and equivalent legislation in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland
- (ii) adequately represented in statutory networks of protected sites (e.g. Ramsar, SSSI, Natura 2000) and that species protection and management measures are properly enforced (e.g. by tighter restrictions on the sale of invasive non-native species)
- (iii) considered in Water Framework Directive River Basin Management Plans and other relevant catchment planning processes
- (iv) protected by developing additional mechanisms (e.g. Pond Protection Orders) where other policy tools prove insufficient.

1.2 Regional and local policy

- (i) Work with partners to develop pond-focused regional and local strategies (e.g. Important Areas for Ponds, LBAPs for ponds) and ensure that ponds are fully represented in existing Regional Biodiversity Strategies and Regional Spatial Strategies to focus activities.
- (ii) Ensure that ponds are well-represented in local designation systems (e.g. County Wildlife Sites, Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation).
- (iii) Work with local / regional partners to ensure that ponds are well represented in the planning system by:
 - a) including pond creation and protection in long-term plans (e.g. Local Development Framework, landscape characterisation)
 - b) requiring local planning authorities to protect HAP ponds by: (i) introducing mandatory assessment under PPS9 of ponds affected by planning applications (ii) using S106 agreement mitigations to make high quality pond creation a common development condition, (iii) streamlining the pond creation process by e.g. simplifying the planning permission process for new ponds.

1.3 Funding

Ensure that relevant funding bodies and grant schemes help to promote HAP targets and actions, including those providing funding for:

- (i) research, survey, and policy development
- (ii) practical action (e.g. agri-environment schemes, pond creation grant schemes developed with Local Authorities)
- (iii) water management, flood defence and other ecosystem services (e.g. achievement of PSAs and SSSI condition targets, flood defence schemes, climate change mitigation)
- (iv) public engagement and community orientated grant schemes (e.g. set up agreements with funding bodies to support work linked to HAP targets)

Wherever possible, ensure grant funding for pond and wetland work is conditional on simple management/creation stipulations e.g. no inflows to new ponds in agricultural areas.

2. Site safeguard and management

Objective

To ensure that effective on the ground practical programmes are developed and maintained to protect existing high quality ponds, restore sites for priority species and create large numbers of new ponds of high quality potential.

Actions

2.1 Establish a national support network to protect high quality ponds

Establish formal and informal networks linking HAP, LBAP, SAP, Amphibian and Reptile Groups and other regional/local actors, in order to: (i) facilitate identification of high quality ponds (see research and monitoring) (ii) provide advice (see Advisory) (iii) extend, where successful, on the ground approaches developed for flagship sites (see below), (iv) integrate local and national initiatives.

2.2 Identify and protect ‘flagship’ pond sites on the ground

Set up a national project to identify and protect flagship ponds on the ground. This to include development of partnership agreements for all flagship pond sites to maximise protection (e.g. set up and support a pond guardian system, work to obtain local designation, minimise impacts from pollution, set up early warning monitoring systems to detect threats).

2.3 Restore ponds to high quality status to deliver priority species targets

Work with SAPs, LBAPS, environmental NGOs and others to (i) identify appropriate sites to restore for priority species (ii) develop and promote tool-kit materials and other advice on species-specific restoration techniques (see Advisory), and (iii) promote, support, undertake and monitor appropriate management on the ground.

2.4 Create high quality ponds

Develop and implement projects to ensure widespread creation of ponds to achieve HAP and SAP targets. This to include:

- (i) provision of training, toolkit (see Advisory), funding and other resources for project partners.
- (ii) establishing of a permanent network of up to 10 trained regional pond officers across the UK to lead the high quality pond creation programme. The pond officers’ roles should be (i) to promote pond creation at regional policy level and on the ground, and (ii) to train, develop, facilitate and co-ordinate a network of other workers including: local specialists, staff from statutory agencies, regional government and environmental NGOs, Community and other local action groups and volunteers e.g. Pond Champions.

3. Advisory

Objective

To provide UK-wide advice, a tool kit of resource materials and practical demonstrations of good practice to support the pond HAP at all levels from policy development to delivery on the ground.

Actions

3.1 Develop, promote and disseminate widely a toolkit of practical advisory resources

A range of practical advisory resources should be developed and disseminated to support the HAP. These to include:

- (i) Creation of an Important Areas for Ponds (IAP) report and web tools to: (a) collate national data to make an inventory of known Pond HAP sites (b) use these data to further develop the Important Areas for Ponds (IAP) approach (currently Wales only) for other UK countries / regions so as to identify and target opportunities and priority locations for HAP activities.

(ii) Maintain dedicated phone and/or web-based advice lines for HAP enquires.

(iii) Develop and disseminate web and paper-based advice including a “Pond HAP Handbook” incorporating best practice examples and case studies. These should cover at least the following broad areas: (a) identification of high quality ponds, (b) techniques for creating new high quality ponds, (c) site protection measures (e.g. catchment de-intensification, interceptor wetlands etc.), (d) dossier of management techniques, including for specific BAP species, (e) legal, technical and other practical issues, (f) survey and assessment techniques covering both ‘quick’ and scientifically-credible approaches, potentially including development of Habitat Suitability Indices for BAP species.

3.2 On the ground support networks

Regionally based advice should be available to practitioners to promote on the ground actions for HAP targets (as stated in Site Safeguard 2.2-2.4). This to include (i) a permanent staff of regional pond officers, (ii) networks of trained advisors, (iii) experts in partner organisations and (iv) a volunteer network.

3.3 Provide site based opportunities for seeing first hand high quality pond creation, management and survey techniques.

A network of demonstration sites should be established across the UK to provide examples of high quality pond creation and management for technical and non-technical stakeholders.

4. International

Objective

To support HAP objectives through European and International interactions.

Actions

4.1 Use opportunities to interact at a European and International level

To share best practise from pond research and conservation activities across Europe and learn from the experiences of others.

To influence EU policy and legislation development where this is relevant to pond HAP targets and actions.

5. Research and Monitoring

Objective

To ensure that research and monitoring work needed to deliver the HAP targets is undertaken,

Actions

5.1 Develop current National Pond Monitoring Network (NPMN) activities to meet the needs of the pond HAP

(i) Develop NPMN functionality to meet the needs of the pond HAP. In particular use and develop the NPMN pond inventory, Important Areas for Pond concept and targeted local survey approach to: (a) identify HAP sites and flagship pond sites, (b) record information on new ponds being created, and (c) monitor flagship pond sites and collect information to assess the value of the pond and surrounds for all ponds

(ii) Continue Countryside Survey monitoring of ponds, but extend its coverage to better address the monitoring requirements of targets 1 and 4 by increasing (a) the number of ponds included (b) the range of biotic groups monitored, particularly by gathering invertebrate data.

(iii) Develop and instigate additional monitoring schemes and methods to support assessment of all HAP targets.

5.2 Carry out research needed to inform the pond HAP

Ensure that the research needed to effectively implement the pond HAP is carried out e.g. by (a) setting up pond research sites, (b) encouraging research using existing frameworks (e.g. the Collaborative Research Partnership in Freshwater Biology, the Environmental Change Network, the National Pond Monitoring Network and the National Amphibian and Reptile Recording scheme), c) encouraging bids for new funding for pond research projects. Key areas of research are:

- i) Research to inform pond management and creation e.g. where in the landscape to put new ponds, test advice, role of buffer zones, methods for improving ponds for BAP species.
- ii) Research to better understand pond ecosystems e.g. pond catchments, role of ponds in freshwater ecosystems, threats to ponds e.g. impacts of climate change, non-native species, waterbody isolation, pollution.
- iii) Creation of tools to identify and monitor HAP ponds e.g. develop PSYM for three seasons and for Scotland. Investigate value of methods suitable for non-specialist surveyors.

6. Communications and publicity

Objective

Develop and deliver a communication strategy to ensure key audiences (policymakers, funders, landowners, partners, and practitioners, public) are aware of the pond HAP, particularly what a HAP pond is, why ponds (especially new ponds) are important and what threats ponds face.

Actions

6.1 Run publicity campaigns on key messages

Explain key topics for the Pond HAP using website, media, paper materials, newsletters, factsheets., These should include pond myths, publicity for flagship sites, awards, improved Health and Safety information, information for the public / fisherman about activities which can harm ponds e.g. adding fish / non-native species / dogs / feeding ducks, potential for garden ponds to contribute to freshwater biodiversity and the HAP.

6.2 Work in partnership to agree and share messages

Encourage organisations to develop shared messages that can be promoted jointly e.g. materials that can be used by LBAPs or others, position statements with SAPs or HAPs.

6.3 Enable trained staff to deliver key messages

Pond Officers / Pond Wardens / Pond Champions share key messages through giving talks, attending meetings, going on site visits, running events with audiences such as local communities, anglers or schools.

6.4 Develop site based media

Ensure interpretation materials are available at pond sites, e.g. interpretation boards at sites, explanation of good and bad ponds at regional demonstration sites.

LEAD PARTNERS

The Environment Agency and Pond Conservation and joint Lead Partners for the Priority Habitat; the Pond HAP Steering Group includes representatives from Natural England, the Countryside Council for Wales, Scottish Natural Heritage, the Environment and Heritage Service Northern Ireland, the Scottish Environment Protection Agency and the Herpetological Conservation Trust.