

## **BLYTH TOWN COUNCIL**

### **Environment Committee**

**Tuesday 27 May 2025**

### **Decision Report**

## **Recommendation:**

### **Wildlife Ponds**

**The Committee RESOLVE to consider the request of allowing Wildlife Ponds on the town's allotment sites under the attached Wildlife Pond Policy. The Policy includes a number of caveats and would be regularly reviewed.**

#### Ward

Bebside & Kitty Brewster, Cowpen, Isabella, Plessey, Wensleydale & Newsham

#### Risk Management

There would be no impact on financial budgets if there was a change in policy. There is no legal restriction on the Council changing policy if they wish to. Ponds on allotment sites can be permitted for environmental reasons, however; ponds can be hazardous particularly for children and wildlife, and steps would need to be taken to mitigate risk. Currently allotment holders must ask for permission, and this will formalise the current arrangements

#### Objective

To consider the attached policy as part of the democratic process.

#### Crime Prevention

There would be no Crime Prevention implications to consider with regard to this matter.

#### Report

Blyth Town Council (BTC) has responsibility for 10 allotment sites across Blyth.

BTC is aware of a small number of longstanding wildlife ponds that were mainly in place before BTC was established in 2009. Recent ponds that have been installed have fallen into the recommended conditions of this policy.

BTC has previously refused any new wildlife ponds when the request has been for a large pre-formed pond as the primary focus should be on allotment gardening i.e. the production of fresh fruit and vegetables in line with the 75% cultivation requirements as per the tenancy agreement. This view was supported by the Blyth Smallholdings & Allotment Association (BSHAA) and the Newsham & New Delaval Allotment Association (NNDAA) who manage five sites on a day-to-day basis on behalf of BTC.

BTC has received an increasing number of requests for wildlife ponds in the last eight months and together with the increasing recognition of the environmental benefits of ponds, such as increasing biodiversity, has led to this decision report.

The overriding consideration when contemplating the installation of a pond is its potential hazard to both people and animals and if agreed the policy includes a number of caveats and would be regularly reviewed. As example, new ponds created using old baths are potentially hazardous due to depths and slopes and therefore would not be permitted.

In developing this draft policy, the National Allotment Society, of which BTC is a member, highlight the environmental benefits of wildlife ponds, however this needs to be balanced against the loss of cultivatable space as well as safety risks. They also recommend, as do our insurers, clear signage near to ponds, fencing and netting where possible as well as seeking advice on insurance purposes.

The attached draft policy highlights that all new ponds must be within a fenced allotment plot, with secure gate access, to prevent anyone, particularly young children, from easily accessing the pond. If children do come onto the plot they must be supervised at all times. Signage would also need to be displayed advising that a pond is on the allotment plot. If a wildlife pond was developed it would be the plot holder's responsibility for the safe management and the on-going regular maintenance of the pond. BTC and/or Allotment Association would not be responsible.

If a plot holder wishes to remove the pond, they must consult with the Town Council to ensure no harm to the surrounding environment or

wildlife. If a plot holder relinquishes their tenancy, BTC will assess whether it is practical to keep the pond.

BTC may decide upon the mandatory removal of the pond if it is deemed unsafe, poorly maintained or in violation of the policy. Should the plot holder not comply then their tenancy may be terminated.

In developing the policy, BTC Officers have consulted with BSHAA and NNDA. NNDA are generally supportive of the proposed policy, however, BSHAA are minded in maintaining the status quo on their respective sites (Bolam Avenue, Twentieth Avenue and South View sites) to be primarily focused on the production of food. Again, within the allotment tenancy agreement it clearly states that 75% of the allotment plot should be cultivated. BTC have also reviewed guidance from the Freshwater Habitat Trust.

Should members agree to this draft policy this will continue to be monitored within our current inspection programme. Consideration would also need to be given to the small number of existing wildlife ponds and working with plot holders to ensure that these ponds fall within the policy.

If the draft policy was agreed it would be incorporated into current tenancy agreements and was also incorporated into the new tenancy agreements with Associations, where applicable.

**David Clough**  
**General Service Officer**

**20 May 2025**



**BLYTH TOWN COUNCIL**  
**WILDLIFE POND POLICY FOR ALLOTMENT SITES**

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# **1. Introduction**

Blyth Town Council has responsibility for 10 allotment sites across Blyth, as follows; Bolam Avenue, Twenty Third Ave, Twentieth Avenue, Newsham Side Club, Beatrice Avenue, Tenth Avenue, Delaval Gardens, Laverock Place, Bebside and Wensleydale Terrace.

The Bolam Avenue, Twentieth Avenue and Twenty Third Ave sites are managed on a day-to-day basis by Blyth Smallholdings & Allotment Association (BSHAA). The Newsham Side Club and Beatrice Avenue (old) sites are managed on a day-to-day basis by the Newsham & New Delaval Allotment Association (NNDAA).

The purpose of this policy is to outline the guidelines and procedures for the safe installation and maintenance of wildlife ponds on allotment sites across the town. The aim is to promote biodiversity while ensuring safety, environmental sustainability, and the enjoyment of all plot holders.

Ponds on allotment sites are permitted for environmental reasons. However, tenants need to be mindful that ponds can be hazardous for children and wildlife and should take steps in their design to mitigate risk. Additionally, having a pond is not a primary purpose of having an allotment plot and the keeping ornamental or edible fish (e.g. Koi Carp) is not permitted.

The overriding consideration when contemplating the installation of a pond is its potential hazard to people and animals. As example: new ponds created using old baths are potentially hazardous and are therefore not permitted. In addition, a pond should not impact on the 75% cultivation which is included in the tenancy agreement.

All ponds must be within a fenced allotment plot, with secure gate access, to prevent anyone, particularly young children, from easily accessing the pond. Signage must also be displayed advising that a pond is placed on the allotment plot. Consideration should also be given to placing netting over the pond to reduce the risk of drowning.

It is the plot holders, responsibility for the safety and the on-going regular maintenance of the pond and if children come onto the plot they must be supervised at all times. It is the allotment plot holder's responsibility for the safe management of the pond. The Town Council and/or Allotment Associations are not responsible.

## **2. Application Process**

The application process is as follows:

### **Submission**

Allotment plot holders wishing to install a wildlife pond must submit a written request to Blyth Town Council. For plot holders on sites managed by BSHAA and NNDAA the Town Council will liaise with the relevant Association in handling any request. The request should include:

- The proposed location of the pond (Allotment Site and Plot Number).
- The dimensions and depth of the pond.
- The type of materials to be used.
- A brief plan detailing the intended design, including any planting and landscaping.
- Confirmation that the pond is fenced off and signage will be in place advising of a pond.

### **Review**

The Town Council will review the application, considering factors such as safety, impact on neighbouring plots, and overall site aesthetics. The Town Council reserves the right to request additional information or suggest modifications, liaising with the relevant Association, where applicable.

### **Approval**

If approved, the allotment plot holder will receive written permission to proceed with the pond installation. Any significant changes to the approved plan must be resubmitted to the Town Council for approval.

## **3. Design & Construction Rules**

The application process requires the pond to meet the following requirements:

### **Safety**

Safety is paramount and all ponds must be within a fenced allotment plot with secure gate access to prevent anyone, particularly children, from easily accessing the pond. The pond should be as far from access paths as possible to minimize the risk of accidental falls. Signage must be displayed advising that a pond is placed on the allotment plot.

Consideration should be given to the use of small gauge netting to reduce the risk of drowning and the protection of pond and other wildlife.

Ponds should have gently sloping edges, or shelved areas, to allow wildlife to easily enter and exit the pond. Tenants must demonstrate they have taken seriously the need to aid animals, such as hedgehogs, in escaping the pond.

It is the allotment plot holder's responsibility for the safe management of the pond. As stated, the Town Council and/or Allotment Associations are not responsible.

### **Size and Depth**

Ponds should not exceed 2 square meters in surface area. The depth of the pond should not exceed 60cm at its deepest point to minimize risks to children and animals. Ideally, ponds should be at a depth of 20–60cm (8in–2ft), which varies across the pond, as this will suit the majority of pond flora and fauna.

### **Materials**

The use of non-toxic, wildlife-friendly materials is mandatory. Liners, if used, must be durable and designed specifically for pond use only.

### **Biodiversity**

In developing the ponds consideration should be given to prioritising the use of native aquatic plants to support local wildlife and avoid introducing non-native or invasive species.

Consideration should also be given to incorporating features such as shallow areas, logs, and stones to provide habitat diversity.

## **4. Environmental Considerations**

Environmental considerations are important and plot holders must consider:

### **Water Conservation**

Ponds should be filled using rainwater or recycled water where possible to conserve resources. Plot holders should avoid using treated tap water, as it can harm pond wildlife.

### **Chemical Use**

The use of chemicals, including fertilizers, pesticides, and herbicides, near the pond is strictly prohibited to protect the ecosystem.



## **5. Maintenance & Inspection**

Regular on-going maintenance to the pond is very important. The pond will be regularly inspected by the Town Council and/or the Allotment Association where applicable.

Plot holders who apply for permission to install a pond must agree to keep the pond in good repair and take all reasonable measures to maintain its safety for both people and animals. The plot holder must ensure regular maintenance including water quality management, plant care, and debris removal. The pond should be kept free of pollutants and harmful substances.

The Town Council reserves the right to inspect the pond regularly to ensure compliance with this policy. This will be done in partnership with Allotment Associations, where applicable.

If the pond is not maintained to an acceptable standard, the Town Council and/or the Association may require corrective actions or, in extreme cases, request that the pond be removed.

## **6. Termination & Removal**

If a plot holder wishes to remove the pond, they must consult with the Town Council to ensure no harm to the surrounding environment or wildlife.

When a plot holder relinquishes their tenancy, BTC will assess whether it is practical to keep the pond.

The Town Council may decide upon the mandatory removal of the pond if it is deemed unsafe, poorly maintained or in violation of this policy. Correspondence between the Council and the tenant will take place to ensure no harm to the surrounding environment or wildlife. Should the plot holder not comply then this will result in their tenancy being terminated by the Town Council and/or the Association.

Decisions made by the Town Council are final.

## **7. Policy Review**

This policy will be reviewed regularly to ensure it continues to meet the needs of the allotment community and environmental best practices.