Berrick Parish Wildlife Pond

Background and Proposed Enhancements



Berrick Wildlife Pond – Background and Appearance

The Berrick wildlife pond was created in March 2025, with the endorsement of Berrick Parish Council and the help of volunteers, young and old, from within the parish.

The pond was sited at the allotments, in a natural depression in the land, that frequently flooded during winter months.

Advice on the use of a pond liner was sought from Dr Stephen Head, ecologist and wildlife pond expert. He recommended a butyl rubber liner, with lifespan 30+ years, that will not rot or harm the ecosystem. Topsoil in Berrick is free draining and fertile, with elevated levels of nutrients. Allowing excessive amounts of topsoil to enter the pond would lead to rapid algae growth - depleting oxygen and suffocating aquatic wildlife.

Prof Jeremy Biggs, CEO of the Freshwater Habitats Trust visited the pond in Oct 2025 and confirmed filling the pond naturally through rainfall was essential to protecting its ecosystem, with the liner helping to collect rainwater.

The exposed liner around the pond, particularly during the summer months, is not attractive. However, it has been retained for the time being to help prevent surrounding topsoil from washing into the water and affecting the developing ecosystem.





What’s happened since March 2025?

Since being created, the pond was left to fill naturally through rainwater.

In October 2025, volunteers from the Parish helped tidy-up the area, remove excess thistle and stinging nettles and tucked the pond liner under a layer of soil, creating a natural lip to help stop topsoil draining into the water (recommended by Freshwater Habitat Trust).







November 2025

Volunteers continued to help tidy the area and planted Pendulous Sedge, Yellow Iris and Marsh Marigold. Dead roots and stumps were removed and wildflowers were sown on the exposed earth.

Water levels had risen.







February 2026

A winter of heavy rainfall resulted in a full pond, with a small area historically prone to flooding underwater - although to a lesser extent than in previous years.

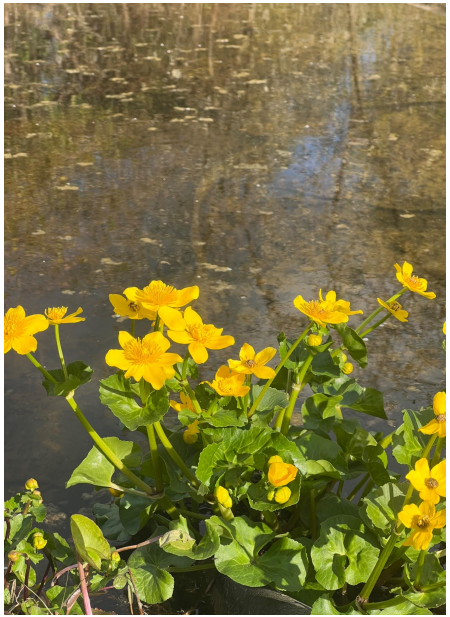




Wildlife in March 2026

A temporary sign and fence was erected. Water levels remained high and wildlife abounds including: Marsh Marigolds in full bloom, Common Newts, insect larvae and Peacock butterflies









Wildlife in May 2026

Wildflower seeds sown in the autumn have germinated, the Yellow Iris was growing and Painted Lady butterflies were spotted.







Summer 2026 - warmest on record (Met Office)

The wildlife pond filled naturally with rainwater over the winter of 2025/26. However, below-average rainfall in spring, followed by the UK's warmest summer since records began, with unprecedented dryness had a dramatic impact on water habitats.

Nationally, wildlife-rich ponds and other standing water habitats dried out completely. Locally, residents in Benson were rescuing fish from the dried-out Lady Brook. Streams, ditches and garden ponds within the Parish lost excessive amounts of water or dried out altogether.

Berrick's pond was no exception. Water levels fell dramatically, nevertheless, some water remained, with larvae still present among the pond weed, demonstrating that the pond continued to provide a habitat for wildlife despite the challenging conditions.

Aesthetically, the pond was not looking at its best!



Proposed Enhancements: Options for improving the pond's appearance

We have tried to allow time for vegetation around the pond to establish, however the exposed liner is still more visible than we would like, especially during the summer months.

Therefore, the following options to improve the appearance of the pond, while ensuring that any changes do not compromise its wildlife value are to be considered:

- **Remove sections and re-lip the liner:** Lower the liner around the pond's edge and replant with suitable vegetation, with the support of volunteers.
- **Add more gravel:** Cover the exposed sections of liner with additional gravel, particularly where these are likely to become more visible during the hotter months (cost paid for by funding or donation in kind).

Proposed Enhancements: Set up a series of volunteer sessions, inviting people from within the parish as well as the wider Nature Group's green-space volunteer network.

Early 2027

- Tidy up vegetation
- Cut back and tidy the hedge adjoining the allotments.
- Remove bamboo where possible.
- Begin creating a natural dead hedge along the boundary, using cut branches and adding to it during future work sessions.

Spring 2027 (once the risk of heavy rainfall and water level has subsided)

- Trim back the pond liner and re-tuck it beneath soil.
- Plant new vegetation: lay turf and add gravel around the exposed top edge of the liner (likely to require funding or donations).
- Explore the potential to plant a new, manageable hedge along the side of the pond that floods. The roots may help absorb excess water. Ensure the hedge is maintained below the height of the adjoining allotment fences.

Autumn 2027

- Organise a volunteer session to tidy vegetation and cut back hedges.

Future management

- Nature Group to organise a minimum of three volunteer work-party sessions each year, in spring, autumn and winter, to maintain the pond and surrounding area.
- TC to liaise with allotment owners and carry out monthly checks of the pond to monitor its condition and wildlife, keep the area looking tidy and mow the access path as required.