

Conningbrook Lakes Management Objectives 2021 – 2025

Management Objectives	
Objective 1	Manage and improve the habitat quality of the wet woodland areas surrounding the lakes, specifically for breeding and migrating bird populations, as well as for reptiles, amphibians, dragonflies and other invertebrate populations.
A	Create a varied age structure of trees through regular coppicing and scrub management to provide greater abundance of nesting and roosting sites as well as feeding sources for birds, and improved basking, breeding and feeding conditions for reptiles, amphibians and dragonflies.
B	Manage reed beds to control water levels and to reverse natural succession, creating structure and ensuring balanced presence of young and mature reeds.
C	Control invasive species, specifically Himalayan Balsam (<i>Impatiens glandulifera</i>) and Lucerne (<i>Medicago sativa</i>). Eradicate Himalayan Balsam from site working from edge of range towards riverside.
How will this be achieved	
A1	Coppice 2 blocks of approx. 20m x 20m per year.
A2	Leave standard trees in each block to allow to grow to full maturity.
A3	Create habitat piles from cut logs and dead hedges from brash material to create further habitat for insects, small mammals and birds.
A4	Leave standing dead wood where appropriate and create new standing dead wood through ring barking.
B1	Cut up to 30% of reed beds on a rotational basis, ensuring constant presence of young reeds.
B2	Divide large reed beds into smaller islands to increase reed bed edges.
B3	Create tall dome-shaped litter heaps with cut material to support grass snakes and specialist invertebrates.
B4	Manage light levels by felling surrounding trees where necessary.
C1	Pull Himalayan Balsam (<i>Impatiens glandulifera</i>) each year, starting from southwest corner of the Eco Lake moving north, followed by areas further east towards the river. *
C2	Organise and carry out annual joint tasks with KSCP, Pirate Canoe Club and other local organisations to clear Himalayan Balsam from river
C3	Graze wet woodland around Eco Lake to maintain favourable species distribution and control Himalayan Balsam (<i>Impatiens glandulifera</i>) and Lucerne (<i>Medicago sativa</i>). *
C4	Manage light levels by felling trees where appropriate to encourage native species to compete.

* Grazing is currently not possible until construction works of the neighbouring development are finished. Over the years management will shift from hand pulling to grazing.

Objective 2	Manage and enhance improved, semi-improved and wet grasslands, including its ponds and pools, specifically for butterflies and dragonflies, and for amphibians and reptiles. Other key species to benefit include barn owl, harvest mouse and skylark.
A	Create and maintain a varied structure of biodiverse grasslands which is favourable to reptiles and other target species of Objective 2.
B	Encourage native flowering species to increase nectar source for insects.
C	Create and maintain areas of wet grassland.
D	Keep pools and ponds in favourable condition, including rich species diversity and stable water levels.
How will this be achieved	
A1+B1	Graze grassland areas around Main Lake with sheep (20 head). *
A2+B2	Graze grassland areas around Eco Lake with cattle (4 head).
A3+B3	Graze grassland areas of Northern Meadow with a mix of sheep (20 head) and cattle (4 head).
A4+B4	Hay cut larger grassland areas around Main Lake once a year (Aug/Sep).
A5+B5	Scallop paths along Eco Lake and Northern Meadow once a year (Aug/Sep).
C1	If resources allow, restore areas of wet grassland through conversion of level grounds to undulating grounds with dips and pools.
C2	Where appropriate, seed newly created wetland areas with an appropriate mix of wet grassland and clay seeds. Where local species rich grassland exists, consider natural regeneration, and allow for periods of bare ground as valuable habitat to invertebrates and bird species.
C3	Hay cut newly created wetland areas in first year of establishment.
C4	Graze newly created wetland areas after first year of establishment in early spring and early autumn.
D1	Keep <i>Typha</i> under control in pools and ponds but allow presence of up to 30%.
D2	Allow margins of pools and ponds to be grazed. Northern Meadow ponds have to be grazed under close monitoring and potentially with sheep only to avoid puncturing of pond lining.
<p>* We are currently not using cattle to graze around the Main Lake due to concerns that they may be a factor impacting on water eutrophication and algae blooms. If conditions change, this could be reconsidered in the future.</p>	

Objective 3	Protect sensitive habitats and wildlife from the impacts of public access, construction works and the neighbouring estate through access management and engagement with the developer and the public.
A other	Create natural barriers to the Eco Lake to protect the breeding bird population and sensitive wildlife, while allowing for a dynamic viewing experience created by different coppice stages.
B	Support the installation of a bird hide as the only access point to the Eco Lake to allow visitors to fully enjoy the view of the lake without causing disturbance to sensitive birds and other species.
C	Manage the central area of the Northern Meadow as a pedestrian free area to prevent impact from dogs on bird and reptile populations, while providing access for visitors around the perimeter of the Northern meadow and along the river Stour.
D	Support the creation and enforcement of a <i>Public Space Protection Order</i> (PSPO) and other instruments of zoning.
E users.	Positively influence and engage with the public through regular presence on site and engagement events, focussing on local residents, dog walkers and other regular site users.
F the	Monitor the impact of construction works and the neighbouring estate and liaise with developer to prevent and remedy negative outcomes for sensitive habitats and its wildlife.
How will this be achieved	
A1	Encourage dense vegetation around the outer margins of the wet woodland surrounding the Eco Lake through regular coppicing (see Objective 1, A1).
A2	Use dead hedges to create natural barriers (see Objective 1, A3).
B1	Liaise with Ashford Borough Council and the contracted artist on the position and installation of the bird hide to minimise disturbance to wildlife, where the hide itself can act as a shield, while also maximising the viewing benefits for visitors.
B2	Assist the contracted artist through enabling access and provide volunteer support where appropriate.
B3	Manage the surrounding vegetation to nestle the bird hide into sheltering shrub to protect sensitive wildlife as well as the hide itself from vandalism.
C1	Lock field gates and remove pedestrian access points.
C2	Work with ABC to ensure appropriate signage and interpretation boards are in place clearly stating the rules and explaining their importance.
D1	Gather continuous evidence of antisocial behaviour to support the creation of a PSPO.
D2	Regularly warden the site (minimum twice a week) to engage with people, record evidence of antisocial behaviour and report to Police Community Support Officers if necessary.

D3	Regularly report to Ashford Borough Council about access issues and antisocial behaviour.
D4	Provide continuous advice to Ashford Borough Council on how to best protect the Country Park and its wildlife, and lobby for further protection measures such as the extension of the PSPO area.
E1	Show regular presence on site (see B2) and engage with visitors to discuss the importance of Conningbrook Lakes and to encourage appropriate behaviour.
E2	Establish a volunteer-based warden group that regularly visits the site, engages with the public and reports on issues.
E3	Run regular events on site to engage with the wider public. Use interesting activities to attract visitors and create opportunities to discuss how the public can protect the Country Park through adequate behaviour.
F1	Regularly monitor the impact of construction works and the neighbouring estate.
F2	Engage with the developer when problems arise and clearly communicate expected remedial actions.
F3	Liaise with the developer on a regular basis to maintain a positive and well-disposed relationship.

Objective 4	Engagement of the general public, and specifically of the local residents and visitors, to promote ownership and protection of the Country Park as well as to create a legacy of its continuous care.
A	Run yearly events to engage with the public with a strong initial focus on local residents and regular visitors.
B	Engage with the residents of the Conningbrook Lakes estate through various channels, online as well as face to face.
C	Inspire and support the creation of a self-led Conningbrook Lakes Action Group.
How will this be achieved	
A1	Foster strong relationships with the developer and neighbouring businesses to secure funding for yearly events and to create a community based around Conningbrook Lakes.
A2	Organise and implement yearly events in cooperation with the developer and/or neighbouring businesses.
A3	Create opportunities during yearly events to deliver Kent Wildlife Trust's message in a convincing and consistent manner.
B1	Create and maintain a regular and easily accessible communication channel, e.g. through the Conningbrook Lakes Residents Facebook Group.

B2	Offer online webinars and interactive materials specifically tailored to the Conningbrook Lakes residents.
B3	Organise meet-ups and tours for Conningbrook Lakes residents to promote a strong relationship and inspire ownership and care of Conningbrook Lakes.
C1	Organise an initial meeting with a wide base of local residents to exchange ideas and listen to the residents' needs and aspirations.
C2	Set objectives and formulate actions of the Conningbrook Lakes Action Group, ensuring participation of its members during the whole process.
C3	Support the establishment of the self-led Conningbrook Lakes Action Group through appropriate guidance and encouragement.
C4	Assist in the management of the Conningbrook Lakes Action Group as and when required – this should be minimal due to the intended autonomous nature of the group.

Objective 5	Manage and improve the riparian and lake habitat to benefit bird and fish populations as well as dragonflies, water voles and otters.
A	Improve hydromorphology of the river to increase flow diversity and to achieve a greater presence of pools, riffles and sediment bars for the benefit of fish, invertebrate and plant populations.
B	Enhance riverbank structure and vegetation to improve waterflow during dry periods, increase flood storage during wet periods, and to restore habitat for water voles, otters, and riparian birds.
C	Implement effective invasive species control through joint efforts with neighbouring landowners and land managers (e.g. KSCP).
D	Run regular litter cleans along the riverbanks as well as from within the river itself through joint efforts with Pirate Canoe Club and other clubs and organisations.
E	Improve marginal and floating vegetation of lakes to improve habitat for breeding and migrating birds as well as for dragonflies.
How will this be achieved	
A1	Consult with specialists and the Environment Agency to develop a plan for river structure changes.
A2	Where appropriate, consider channel narrowing and the creation of back channels.
A3	Where appropriate, consider the addition of large woody debris.
B1	Where appropriate, consider creating two-stage channels through the creation of stepped banks to accelerate flow when water is low and to slow flow when water is high.

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| B2 | Identify exposed areas and plant trees to increase cover. Ideally use Willow cuttings and Alder seeds from on-site. |
| C1 | Liaise with KSCP and other landowners and managers to organise yearly joint efforts of invasive species control. |
| C2 | Run yearly action days on invasive species control in partnership with other organisations and the general public. |
| D1 | Liaise with Pirate Canoe Club, KSCP and other clubs and organisations to organise yearly litter picks of the riverbanks and beds. |
| D2 | Run yearly litter picks in partnership with other organisations and the general public. |
| E1 | Increase reed bed margins through propagation to increase available habitat for bird populations and dragonflies. |
| E2 | Where appropriate, increase wildflower areas through seeding. Ideally use seeds from on-site cuttings. |
| E3 | Create floating islands to promote good bacteria and increase habitat for bird populations. |