

**BHTC REQUEST FOR INTERVENTION**

**TITLE: Allotment tenant request to update terms of tenancy to allow ponds**

**DATE: 13<sup>th</sup> July 2023**

**Reason (please place an x in the corresponding box/es):**

Financial:

Economic:

Social:

Health & Safety:

Legal:

Other  
(Please  
state):

Tenant request - Environmental

Please complete the following information regarding the project:

**Background:**

Our current allotment tenancy terms state under general condition of use (aa) 'Ensure that all water receptacles are stable, not sunken and where appropriate have a secure cover', therefore we currently do not allow ponds within the allotment sites. A tenant at Poveys Close allotments has installed a pond which we have asked him to remove as this is in breach of his tenancy. He has requested that we revisit the terms of the tenancy to consider a change and permit ponds within the allotments for environmental purpose and to encourage wildlife and biodiversity.

**Purpose/ Justification:**

He has provided the following reasoning:

1. Encourages Biodiversity

Small local ponds encourage to name a few: dragonflies, great crested newts (GCN), toads and hedgehogs. I've seen GCN most years I have worked the allotment and since having a pond I have seen all the above among many others critters.

## 2. Natural bug killer / pesticide

Thirsty toads, hedgehogs, birds & newts eat slugs and snails after a nice refreshing drink.

## 3. Encourages organic gardening

By encouraging biodiversity we encourage natural fertilisers and bug killers (hedgehogs, toads, newts, birds etc.)

## 4. Retains water and moisture levels in the soil.

Having a pond allows me to keep a moisture retaining area within my allotment meaning that I need to use less water in the dry months.

## 5. Saves Money

By saving water, fertiliser and pesticides saves the council and the allotment holders money

## 6. Growing watercress, water mint and water spinach etc.

I aim to encourage biodiversity while increasing organic produce and diversity for my family. The allotment is one of the things I enjoy the most in my life and this goal, small as it may be, keeps me happy & focused.

## 7. Social Interaction & the pleasure of wildlife watching

There are others at the allotment who would like to have a pond and encourage biodiversity.

## 8. Climate change

During a time of extreme weathers a pond helps to stabilise the local soil temperature and encourage more moisture in hot times and more biodiversity at all times.

He also states that his request is backed up by the recommendations of the allotment association and the Wildlife Trust.

## **Financial implications:**

The Town Council would potentially have to remove ponds at the end of tenancy which we would try to reclaim the cost from the tenant but this is likely to be a cost to BHTC.

The Poveys tenant who has requested a change in the tenancy advised Greater Crested Newts had been seen on his plot by his pond. As they are a protected species the Town Council had to arrange an Environmental DNA (EDNA) test, at a cost of £204, to establish if the pond was in fact inhabited before asking for the

tenant to remove his pond so as to ensure we are not disturbing a habitation. If we have to remove ponds in the future they may have to be tested before removal.

**Benefits:**

Encourage Biodiversity and Wild life to the allotments.

**Payback/ Value for Money:**

Tenants would be able to install ponds and encourage wildlife.

**Current Situation:**

We currently do not permit ponds at the allotment sites.

**Other Options:**

We could offer other methods to encourage bio diversity and wildlife into the allotments for example we could establish wild flower areas within the sites on areas that are not suitable for growing.

**Desired Outcome:**

To satisfy the tenants desire to encourage wildlife and biodiversity without allowing ponds.

**Risk**

We have approx.260 plots across 6 sites within Burgess Hill, therefore potentially allowing 260 ponds to be installed. The ponds, if permitted, would need restrictions and for safety would need to have surrounding fences and the current terms of the tenancies would have to be changed accordingly. Also, we would need to investigate the impacts of allowing ponds on the 3 sites that we lease and if there are any restrictions on the land or within the lease.

Allotments are provided for the cultivation and production of fruit and vegetables. Allowing ponds will take valuable growing space when we are already under pressure for allotment growing space.

There is the possibility we may not be able to remove ponds if any established wildlife is found.

We do not currently have any expertise on managing ponds and the associated health and safety issues and therefore would need to train and member of staff at a cost or engage and pay for a third party.

**Conclusion and Recommendation:**

It is recommended we do not permit ponds within the allotment sites but in some way encourage those tenants who have a desire to improve biodiversity and wildlife on the allotment's sites by other methods such as above suggestion to add wild flower areas that can be managed more efficiently. We could also consider on an individual basis any other suggestions from tenants of proven methods of a communal nature to encourage biodiversity.

**SCORE:**