

Rottingdean Pond during the drought

Frequently Asked Questions

What is the Parish Council doing to protect the pond?

The Parish Council has been monitoring the pond since the drought began and has sought advice from City Parks and our pond maintenance contractor on how best to protect the pond's wildlife and ecosystem during a prolonged dry period. Some wildlife may be affected if the drought continues, but many species are able to respond naturally to low water levels. Wildfowl can move to better water sources. Many aquatic insects can fly away, while others may burrow into the pond's wet mud. Newts, frogs and toads should largely cope by finding damp shelter. The greatest risk is to fish that cannot reach deeper water and to some insects that may dry out in the heat.

Can the pond be refilled with tap water?

We do not plan to refill the pond with tap water. Tap water contains chlorine or chloramine, which are added to make it safe for people to drink. These chemicals can harm beneficial bacteria, stress fish and damage plants if added directly to a pond. Untreated tap water can also upset the pond's natural balance. In addition, although Rottingdean is not currently covered by a hosepipe ban, Southern Water's advice is to use water wisely.

Is there a well or other untreated water source that could be used?

We do not have information about any local sources of untreated water. Even if a source were available, the logistics and costs of investigating, testing and extracting groundwater would probably be prohibitive. A groundwater extraction licence from the Environment Agency may also be required, and they would at least need to be consulted. Southern Water would also need to be consulted.

If no water will be added how will the fish survive?

Because the water level is now very low and no significant rainfall is forecast, we have asked our maintenance contractor to remove and rehome the fish in a local fishing lake to safeguard their welfare. The fish are non-native carp that were previously dumped in the pond. Carp can damage wildlife ponds by uprooting aquatic plants, disturbing sediment and reducing habitat for other wildlife.

Will the fish return to the pond?

We do not intend for the fish to return. Rottingdean pond is intended to be a wildlife pond, which provides an important habitat for amphibians, insects, invertebrates and

other animals. Fish and especially non-native species are not usually added to wildlife ponds because they can eat or disturb much of the other wildlife. Rehoming the carp to a more suitable location should help the pond ecosystem recover more quickly and sustainably once rainfall returns.

I have heard that the ducks are clipped. If this is true, then how can they find other water sources?

We are not aware that any of the remaining ducks have been clipped. However, we are having this verified before deciding if any further action is needed.

What will happen if the pond dries out?

The pond should recover quickly once rainfall returns. The Freshwater Habitats Trust reports that around 40% of lowland countryside ponds dry out during drought years, and its surveys show that ponds which occasionally dry out can be among the richest habitats. This is because many plants and animals are well adapted to temporary drying.