

Abbey Rd. Pond update

Dated June 18th, 2020

Briefing from Roger Brown

1. Pond area

At the last Amenities on 26th May I was asked to liaise further with Craig Daters, the lead ranger for the SDNPA, regarding willow cutting and herbicide treatment in the area of the pond to be cleared.

I spoke with Craig on 3rd June and sent the following update to Cllrs on the Abbey Rd Working Party on 4th June.

As agreed at last week's Amenities meeting, I've finally managed to have a chat yesterday with Craig Daters (SDNP lead Ranger for this area) about the clearance work on the Abbey Rd pond.

He apologised for not replying earlier. He is mainly working from home and home educating his 2 children, so emails have piled up somewhat!

But he was delighted to hear that the pond project is going ahead, asked to be kept informed of progress, and offered this further advice on willow cutting and treatment:-

Now the ground is relatively dry, the willow stems should be cut about 4" above ground level.

Then 2 choices:-

1. Leave the stumps and cut the re-growth again next year. (and the year after etc)

Removing the top growth will dramatically reduce the water they pull out of the area. Yes, it will need to be done again next year, but the growth will be much less, and avoid the use of herbicide.

2. Treat the cut stumps by painting with glyphosate mixed for this purpose as per manufacturer's instructions. Once painted, the herbicide is quickly drawn into the stumps and the cut surface dries off. This should kill the tree and roots, so prevent future regrowth..

The SDNP itself uses glyphosate in limited specific situations when needed.

I did mention that a contractor had mentioned stump grinding to get rid of the willows. His view was that it was too aggressive an approach for this area, and that willow roots run long distances, so any part left in the ground after grinding would simply regrow.

As Amenities has already made the decision to cut and treat the stumps, and Craig was happy to suggest this as one of the alternatives, I think we can now push ahead with the 'cut and treat with glyphosate' option.

As a result of this further advice, the clerk is following up with contractors to get the cutting and glyphosate treatment done. (also, a willow tree removal and limb removal from another willow in this same area).

We had talked about using some of the willow (goat willow) to plant along the stream bank. Willow roots very easily and it is a simple job of just pushing 12" willow wands into damp soil.

Is this still an option?

By September we ought to be able to create some small scrapes within the cleared area to see what effect the willow clearance has had on water levels. These need only be a few feet in diameter, and no more than 12" deep. Once the pond refills, these scrapes will provide water up to 24" deep during the winter and hopefully keep some open water into early summer. So we are following Craig's advice of taking small steps, and assessing the results before doing more.

I have found a couple of new volunteers who have said they would be happy to help with the Abbey Rd pond project. These last two items are jobs that could easily be carried out by us as they both fairly simple.

2. Meadow area

We have only mentioned this briefly up to this point. It is due to get a *final cut this year in August (I think?). Perhaps before September, the WP can draw up some ideas about how we might go about improving this area to bring in some more wild flowers, and try and create a true meadow here?

CLLrs will have seen a short video I found entitled "What has happened to all our English Wildflower Meadows?" published on YouTube by 'The Bald Explorer'. There is also a link to it in Item 10.2 on this agenda. A couple in Adversane describe the process they went through setting up a wildflower meadow from scratch. At the end of the video they recommend anyone wanting to do this to contact the Sussex Wildlife Trust for advice. We have many contacts there, so this is another source of expertise we should draw on.

(* we are trying to reduce fertility here, so can we make sure that risings from this last cut of the year are collected and put in the pile left from the previous cut in early May?)

Roger Brown