HABITAT ENHANCEMENT INITIATIVE

Ponds, pools and lochans

Guidance on good practice in the management and creation of small waterbodies in Scotland
SEPA developed the Habitat Enhancement Initiative (HEI) in July 1998, with the aim... “to help secure measurable improvement in the way in which habitats are managed” and “to focus on the aquatic and riparian habitats and the conservation and enhancement of biodiversity interests.”

SEPA’s objectives for pond conservation within HEI are to:
- Promote the protection of existing ponds, pools and lochans.
- Encourage pond creation.
- Work in partnership with organisations to conserve small waterbodies.
- Develop public understanding of aquatic habitat conservation issues.

The HEI aims to help SEPA staff, Local Biodiversity Action Plans and partner organisations realise these opportunities.

WHAT IS THE HABITAT ENHANCEMENT INITIATIVE?

WHY ARE PONDS IMPORTANT IN SCOTLAND?

Geological records show that ponds and pools were a natural feature of the landscape long before human activity began to shape the surface of the earth. Scotland still retains many naturally formed ponds, but in more intensively managed areas man-made ponds have frequently replaced ponds created by natural processes. However, whether called ponds, pools or lochans, and whether man-made or natural, small water bodies provide an essential habitat for pond life.

- Scotland has many small waterbodies, over 150,000 in total, representing about half the ponds in the Britain.
- Over the past 50 years Scotland has lost many of its ponds due to human activities such as infilling, drainage and urban development.
- Ponds and the land associated with them often support a highly diverse range of habitats, particularly important for aquatic invertebrates, wetland plants and amphibians. They are also used by a variety of mammals, birds, and fish.
GUIDANCE ON GOOD PRACTICE IN THE MANAGEMENT AND CREATION OF SMALL WATERBODIES

The handbook produced as part of the Habitat Enhancement Initiative in collaboration with several other key organisations, provides guidance on good practice in the protection, management and creation of ponds, pools and lochans in Scotland. The document covers both man-made and natural waterbodies and provides advice on incorporating ecological design principles into Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems.

SIMPLE MEASURES TO ENHANCE THE HABITAT VALUE OF SMALL WATERBODIES

1. ASSESSING POND ECOLOGICAL QUALITY

- Good ecological and historic information about a pond is essential if management is to be effective and damage to the pond avoided.
- Standard conservation assessment methods (National Pond Survey methods) have been developed by Pond Action for plant and invertebrate communities of ponds. Survey methods and forms are available from Pond Action.
- Techniques are also available for assessing the conservation value of the pond using other groups of animals such as Amphibians, Water Beetles and Dragonflies.

2. MANAGEMENT OF EXISTING PONDS

- Carry out a detailed survey of the different habitats and species at the site.
- If possible, assess whether the pond is suffering any impact and aim to remove or mitigate the cause as an initial action.
- Prepare a management plan for the site using information collected and the management objectives for the site.
- Ensure any changes are small, carried out in stages and monitored.
- Avoid clearing marginal and aquatic vegetation from the ponds as this may damage the pond’s existing wildlife interest.
- Establish wide buffer strips with rough grassland and scrub.
- If in doubt, leave the pond alone. Create a new pond rather than managing an existing one.
3. DESIGNING NEW PONDS AND SUDS

- Where possible, create new ponds close to existing wetland areas (streams, fens, ditches etc.) but avoid digging up existing wetlands and creating on-line ponds.

- Create shallow bays for wildlife and vary depths across the pond. Avoid creating a smooth over-engineered bed.

- Focus on the edge habitats and maximise the extent of the drawdown zone, the area between winter and summer water levels.

- Create a mosaic of pools and wetland areas, including permanent, semi-permanent and seasonal pools, as well as pools of different sizes and depths.

- Allow pond species to recolonise naturally. Where necessary use only native plant species from a reputable source. Avoid buying plants from garden centre.

For further information contact SEPA at the addresses below.

For more general information contact SEPA at the addresses below.

For more information about the HEI and copies of the Ponds, Pools and Lochans Guidance Document and information leaflets on SUDS and Biodiversity contact HEI Staff on 0131 449 7296 or visit the Habitat Enhancement Website: www.sepa.org.uk.

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