

Volunteer Conservation Fund Monitoring Form

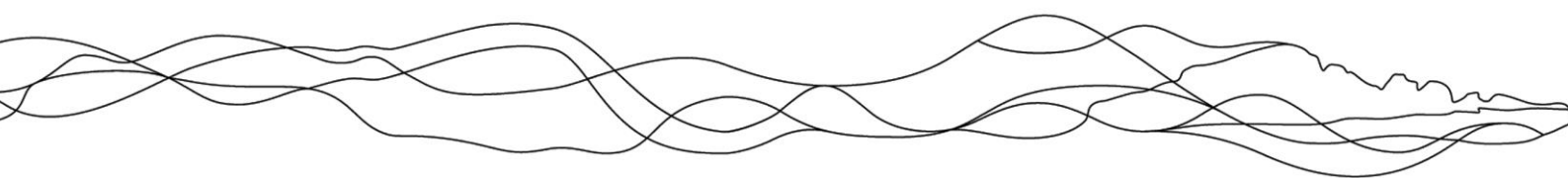
‘Renovation of Seaford Head Dewpond’, undertaken by Seaford Natural History Society, on the Dewpond on Seaford Head, Seaford.

To what extent has the project delivered the benefits stated in the Application Form:

The stated benefits were :-

- The creation of a valuable new habitat within the nature reserve, and consequent increase in biodiversity, with clear open water for a wide range of invertebrates and amphibians, which is not available elsewhere in the reserve.
- Provision of fresh water for birds – Seaford Head has one of the largest lists of recorded bird species of any nature reserve in Sussex.
- A source of water for Grass Snakes which have been recorded recently in the vicinity of the pond.

The value of the new habitats created by the establishment of clear surface water, resulting from control of Invasive Non-native weed Species is evidenced by the increase list of species recorded in the dewpond and surrounding area – some 85 new species have been recorded, including the first record of a rare Dragonfly breeding in the UK . The difference in the dewpond at the beginning and end of the project can be seen from the photographs below.



In addition to the planned work, two hibernacula have been created as overwintering places for reptiles and amphibians, and next year a number of refugia will be positioned around the enclosed area, to monitor the presence of reptiles.

- Building on the work of Sussex Wildlife Trust's 'Wild about Seaford' project, we will encourage local schools to use the Dewpond as a learning resource once the renovation work has made significant progress.
- Enable people of the South Downs to develop their appreciation and understanding of Dewponds as part of our historic local landscape.

During the renovation process, it has not proved safe or practical to use the area as a learning resource. This was for safety reasons, and to be able to ensure that the invasive weed was not spread. Also it was felt important to have a fairly complete – but on-going – renovation story to tell. However the renovation work has featured several times in the local Parish magazine, posters have been attached to the new fencing, and further publicity was obtained when the Mayor of Seaford attended an event to hand over the future maintenance of the Dewpond to the Friends Group which was established as a stated output of the project (picture below).



- The involvement of local people in a 'Friends' group will increase local awareness, and appreciation of the Nature Reserve and wider natural environment.
- Long-term maintenance to ensure it does not suffer from future neglect.
- Reduced risk of invasive weed being spread to other watercourses.

Initial publicity at the start of the project resulted in 30+ local people coming forward to undertake the renovation work, under the control of a Natural History Society Steering Group. They have carried out in excess of 500 hours of work on the project, and are responsible for all the progress that has been made. With support from the Natural History Society, these volunteers formed a 'Friends Group' who have produced their own Development Plan for future renovation and management work, and this plan has been accepted by Seaford Town Council - as responsible land owners.

The huge reduction of invasive weed has reduced the potential for its spread to other locations, and the biosecurity measures of burning all the weed on site, and ensuring all footwear and tools are clean before leaving the site has further reduced the risk of spread. Whereas the Dewpond was originally effectively open to the public and dogs, the new fencing (see photo), with padlocked gate has provided added security.

