

Pond Creation Toolkit



Ponds - A Priority Habitat: best practice guidance for development control planning officers

In 2007, ponds were added to the list of priority habitats in the UK Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP). The new Pond Habitat Action Plan (HAP) is now available on www.pondconservation.org.uk.

Biodiversity, including priority habitats, is a material consideration in planning, and local authorities have a duty to ensure that the potential impacts of all planning decisions on biodiversity are fully considered.

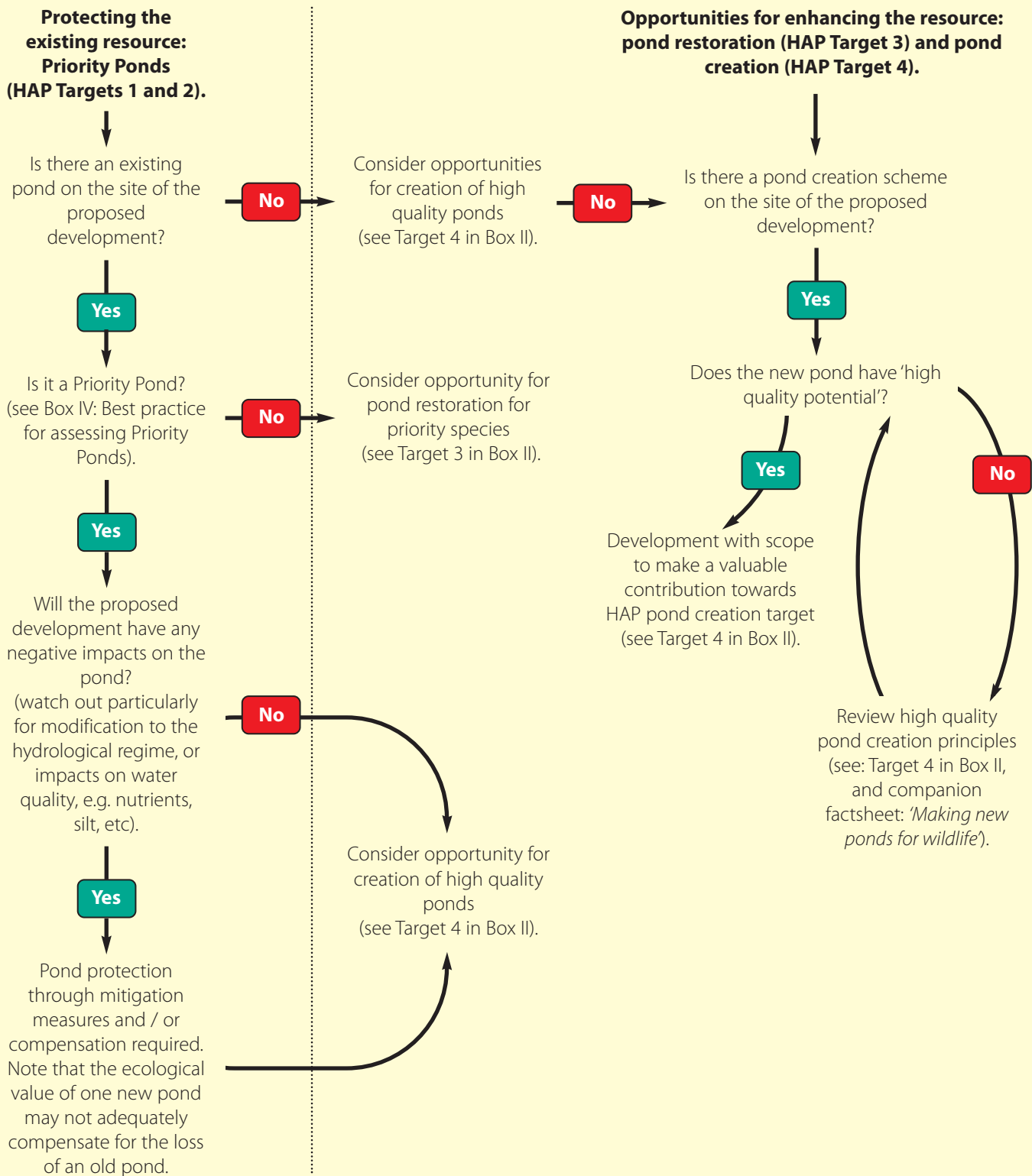
This factsheet aims to help development control planning officers fulfil their obligations under PPS9, and assist the local planning authority in meeting their duty under Section 40 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 with respect to Priority Ponds. The key principles to achieve this are presented in PPS9. These are:

- planning decisions should be based on up-to-date information.
- planning decisions should aim to maintain, and enhance, restore or add to biodiversity interests, in this case ponds.
- the aim of planning decisions should be to prevent harm to biodiversity interests. Where a planning decision would result in significant harm to biodiversity which cannot be prevented or adequately mitigated against, appropriate compensation measures should be sought.

This factsheet addresses these issues by providing:

- Box I: A decision tree for implementing the Pond HAP targets in the context of development control planning.
- Box II: The Pond HAP targets with supporting notes.
- Box III: The criteria for assessing Priority Ponds.
- Box IV: A decision tree showing best practice for assessing Priority Ponds.

Box I Decision tree for implementing the Pond HAP targets in the context of development control planning (see Box II for information on the Pond HAP targets 1 to 4)



Box II Pond HAP targets

- **Target 1 (maintaining extent): Maintain the number of Priority Pond sites.** In addressing this target, particular emphasis should be placed on maintaining water quality, functional pond networks and species metapopulations. A pond site is a pond or a cluster of ponds including its surrounds. Priority Ponds are identified by assessing sites against a set of five criteria (Box III).
- **Target 2 (achieving condition): Maintain quality of Flagship Pond sites.** The aim of this target is to work directly with a sub-set of about 1% of Priority Ponds ("Flagship Ponds") to ensure they are monitored and their quality is maintained. The list of Flagship Ponds is yet to be agreed.
- **Target 3 (restoration): Restore pond sites to priority status to deliver Species Action Plan (SAP) targets.** This target can apply to any non-Priority Pond with *good potential* for successful restoration for a SAP species, and can be aimed at improving water quality, or directly managing habitats. Invasive habitat management (e.g. plant clearance or dredging) should be undertaken only where there is little risk of damage to the existing biodiversity value of the pond site.
- **Target 4 (expansion): Create new pond sites of high quality potential.** The aim of this target is to create a network of ponds with clean water and high biodiversity potential. The provisional definition of 'high quality potential' is 'ponds located in areas where they drain a semi-natural surface-water catchment, which are unlikely to be significantly impacted upon by their after-use (e.g. stocked with fish, used to treat contaminated runoff): Creation of (a) pond mosaics/complexes, (b) new ponds that increase landscape connectivity or form protective networks, and (c) new sites that are targeted to support pond-associated BAP species are particularly encouraged. Ponds cannot be counted against this target if they are created to compensate for the destruction of existing high quality ponds. The rationale for pond creation and the key principles of high quality pond creation are presented in companion factsheets: *Why make new ponds for wildlife?* and *How to make new ponds for wildlife.*

BEWARE: Pond creation schemes should not *replace* large nature conservation schemes such as reedbed, wet grassland or wet woodland. Pond creation can however be integrated into most wetland or terrestrial habitats.

Box III Criteria for assessing Priority Ponds

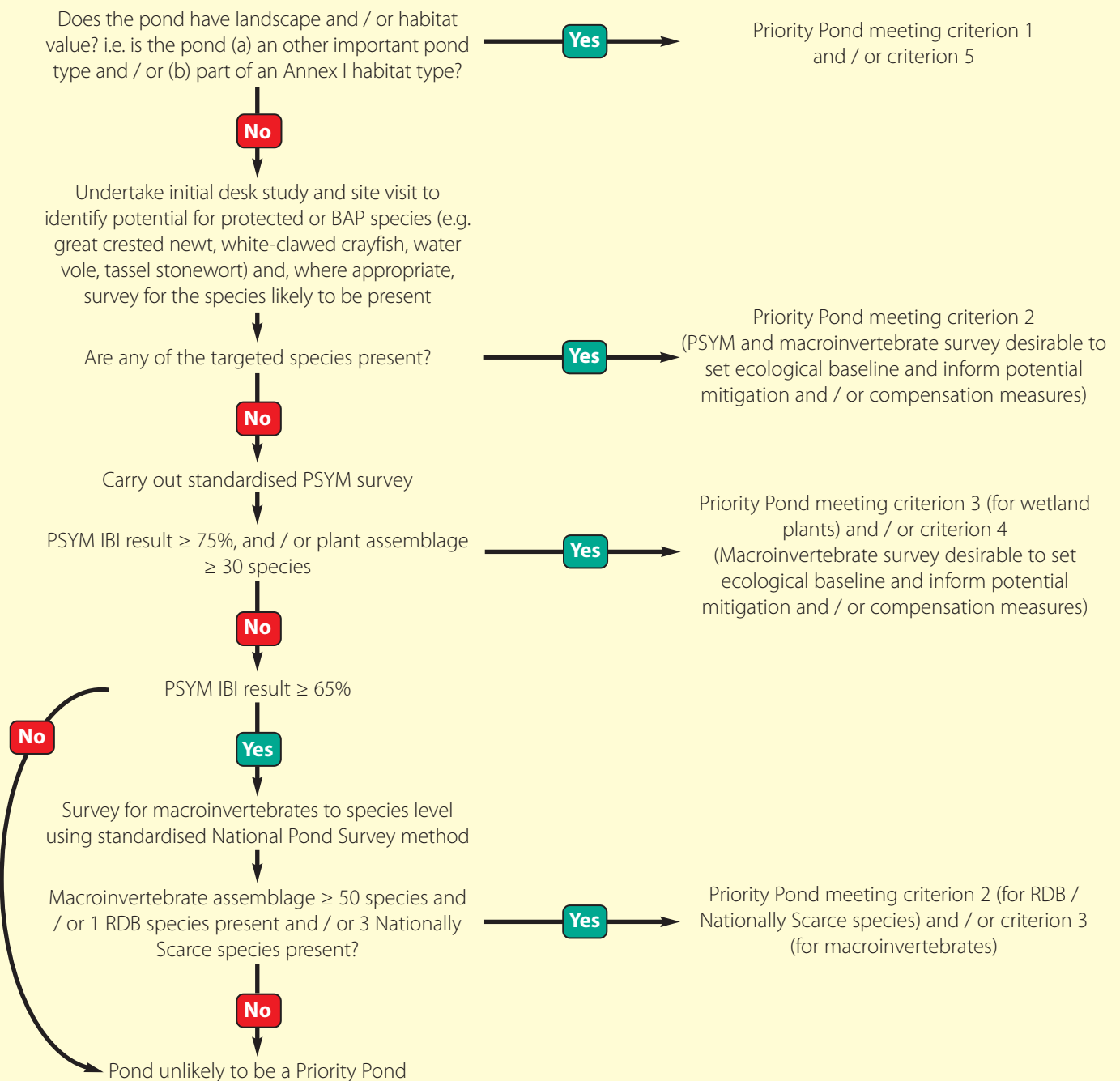
UK BAP Priority Ponds are defined as permanent and seasonal standing water bodies up to 2 hectares in extent which meet one or more of the following criteria:

- **Criterion 1: Habitats of international importance.** Ponds that meet criteria under Annex I of the Habitats Directive.
- **Criterion 2: Species of high conservation importance.** Ponds supporting Red Data Book species, UK BAP species, species fully protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act Schedule 5 and 8, Habitats Directive Annex II species, a Nationally Scarce wetland plant species, or three Nationally Scarce aquatic invertebrate species.
- **Criterion 3: Exceptional assemblages of key biotic groups.** Ponds supporting exceptional populations or numbers of key species. Based on (i) criteria specified in guidelines for the selection of biological SSSIs (currently amphibians and dragonflies only), and (ii) exceptionally rich sites for plants or invertebrates (i.e. supporting ≥ 30 wetland plant species or ≥ 50 aquatic macroinvertebrate species).
- **Criterion 4: Ponds of high ecological quality.** Ponds classified in the top PSYM category ('high') for ecological quality (i.e. having a PSYM score $\geq 75\%$). PSYM (the Predictive SYstem for Multimetrics) is a method for assessing the biological quality of still waters in England and Wales.
- **Criterion 5: Other important ponds.** Individual ponds or groups of ponds with a limited geographic distribution recognised as important because of their age, rarity of type or landscape context e.g. pingos, duneslack ponds, machair ponds.

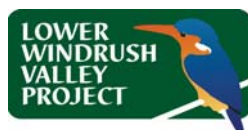
Note that any pond could *potentially* be a Priority Pond, even ponds which dry out, are very shaded, or those which may be unsightly or in urban areas. The key point is ponds need to be adequately surveyed in order to assess their status (see Box IV).

Box IV Best practice for assessing Priority Ponds

(Refer to Box III for definitions of Priority Habitat selection criteria)



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If you are interested in finding out more about pond creation, the conservation of ponds, pond surveys or the Pond Habitat Action Plan (HAP), please visit: www.pondconservation.org.uk, or contact Pond Conservation on info@pondconservation.org.uk, telephone: 01865 483249

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