

## Report for Information

**Report to** Mousehold Heath Conservators  
18 June 2010

**ITEM**

**Report of** Natural Areas Officer

**7 (4)**

**Subject** Review of Action - Vinegar Pond (future options)

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### **Purpose**

To outline options for the Vinegar Pond

### **Recommendations**

That the Conservators note the report's contents, and use the information to decide whether or not to approve remedial action to enable the pond to retain water.

### **Financial Consequences**

The remediation option of this report would have cost implications.

### **Strategic Priority and Outcome/Service Priorities**

The report would help to meet the strategic priority Safe & Healthy Neighbourhoods, and the service plan priority to ensure Norwich has a clean and safe environment.

### **Contact Officers**

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### **Background Documents**

Mousehold Heath Management Plan, 2008-2013.

# Report

## Background

The Vinegar Pond is a seasonal water body that tends to dry up in most years. Normally, the pond holds water from approximately autumn to the following summer, after which it is frequently dry until the next substantial rainfall occurs. Although the fact that a pond may dry up completely in most years is often regarded as a problem, aquatic life can be well adapted to cope with such conditions. Frogs and newts can actually benefit from a pond occasionally drying up, as this prevents the establishment of fish that would predate or compete with their tadpoles. The Vinegar Pond is a major breeding site for the local frog population; in some years, an entire brood of tadpoles can be lost if the pond dries up before the tadpoles have metamorphosed into frogs, but last summer (2009) the frogs succeeded in completing their life cycle and leaving the water before the pond dried.

This year (2010), the Vinegar Pond had, unusually, dried up during the spring and it is possible that the lining has been damaged as, according to the Meteorological Office, the preceding winter was not especially dry. The tadpoles were unable to complete their life cycle, although many were 'rescued' and transferred to other ponds.

There is a high risk that, from now on, the pond will hold water for a shorter period of the year than formerly so two options, one involving taking no action and the other a remediation proposal, are outlined below.

### **Option 1: take no further action**

The pond will be retained but no further action will be taken to enable it to hold water more effectively. It is possible that, in time, the pond might 're-seal' itself as organic matter builds up and forms a layer in the base, although this could not be guaranteed.

#### Advantage

No cost implications.

#### Disadvantages

Possible loss of significant frog breeding site and reduced value for wildlife.

Possible reduced value of pond as an amenity feature.

### **Option 2: remediation using bentonite product**

The pond base will be re-lined using a bentonite matting product; this is a proven and successful technique.

### Advantages

Likely to provide the most practical and cost-effective solution to the problem of the pond drying out.

Retention of pond as an amenity feature and frog spawning site.

### Disadvantages

Cost (estimated £6000 – 8000).

Could permanently alter the character of the existing pond.

Possibility of lining being damaged (although this type of lining is amongst the most robust).