

Kemerton Conservation Trust

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Kemerton Lake Nature Reserve New Boat and Onsite Storage Project Report 6th January 2021

Project Background

Kemerton Lake Nature Reserve (KLNLR) is Kemerton Conservation Trust's flagship reserve. It is a 46.5 acre (18.8 ha) wetland complex created out of a former gravel working, situated between the villages of Bredon, Westmancote, Kemerton and Kinsham. The reserve is a designated Local Wildlife Site, and has a diverse range of habitats including a 16 acre (6.5 ha) lake, pools, seasonal wet scrapes, reed beds, grassland, and land specially cultivated for arable plants. The reserve is surrounded by 111 acres (45 acres) of native woodland and arboretum which are not part of the reserve, but which make an important contribution to the habitat mosaic.

KCT manages the reserve under a long lease and the majority of habitat management on site is carried out by the Trust's volunteer Warden John Threadingham, and the Trust's volunteer work party group, with contractors brought in for specific tasks as needed and when funds allow.

A boat for use on the open water is essential to annual site management including brushcutting vegetation on the four gravel islands to create nesting habitat for Oystercatchers, cutting back reeds from around Water's Edge Hide when needed, cleaning up litter washed into or thrown into the lake, and various other tasks. For many years the Trust had a rowing boat which was used by our warden and volunteers. It was originally stored near the water's edge, chained to a tree, but after vandals targeted the boat and damaged it in 2019 we were forced to move it to a shed close to our head office. This meant whenever a task involved the boat, our warden had to use a vehicle and trailer to move the boat to the reserve, and take it back to the shed afterwards. This limited the boat's usefulness and wasted valuable warden time.

The Trust's existing boat, which was heavy and unwieldy, reached the end of its useful life in 2020 and needed replacing. In addition, we wanted to find a solution to allow us to store the boat at the lake again.

The Trust therefore applied to the Severn Trent Community Fund for a grant to pay for a new, lightweight boat and a shipping container to securely store it at the reserve. We successfully bid for £3,600, which covered the cost of the boat and container, whilst the Trust covered a couple of incidental costs out of our own reserves. The project began in July 2020 and was completed in December 2020.

Project Aims

The main aim of the project was to purchase a lightweight boat for use at Kemerton Lake, along with a used shipping container that could be sited near the lake edge for secure boat storage with easy access to the open water. The new boat would help the Trust continue managing Kemerton Lake as a wonderful wildlife habitat and much-loved local green space. Siting the shipping container would include some scrub clearance and ground preparation.

As part of the project, a new boat launch area would be created on the East bank of the lake, with some bramble clearance needed. The Trust planned to hold an official boat launch event to celebrate the project, which would be open to the general public and would highlight the work we carry out on the lake and why.

Finally, the project would include completing an overdue management task checking the kingfisher posts in the open water and replacing if needed.

Overview of Works

Project works commenced in July 2020 as soon as our grant was awarded, and the final works were completed in December 2020 (see Appendix A – Project Photo Montage). Various Covid-19 restrictions were in force throughout the project but did not materially affect the project, as we were able to continue following minor adjustments to ensure Covid-19 safe working practices.

In July Project Manager Kate Aubury ordered the shipping container and boat. Whilst waiting for delivery, KCT volunteers began preparing the chosen container location, which included brushcutting bramble and cutting back scrub. Railway sleepers were laid on the ground to keep the container level. The container site was carefully chosen to minimise visibility from any of the public or permissive paths on the reserve or from the bird hides on the lake.

Our new boat, a Heyland Neptune 250, arrived in August and was stored safely until the storage container was ready for use. We chose the Neptune 250 because it is designed as a stable work boat, can carry up to 3 adults but is lightweight enough for one person to handle. It is also made of robust high density polyethylene, which will give it a longer life than a conventional wooden boat, with no maintenance requirements.

Our used 16ft shipping container arrived in September and was temporarily stored at Kemerton Estate's farmyard until we were ready to move it to the reserve. Kemerton Estate donated staff time and machinery to move the 2t container onto the reserve and lower it into position on the railway sleepers. The container has been painted green to ensure it is in keeping with the woodland surroundings and to minimise visibility.

Once the container was in-situ, our warden moved the boat, oars and life jackets etc. to the new secure storage. The container came with a shelving unit, which will be used to store smaller items off the ground.

In October contractors cleared bramble and cut reeds on the eastern bank to create the new boat launch site, directly opposite the storage container.

Our official boat launch event was held in October, but because of social distancing rules, it was attended by KCT personnel only. KCT Governor Matthew Darby officially launched the boat and Warden John Threadingham took the boat for its first row on the lake. Project Manager Kate Aubury and her family then rowed from one end of the lake to the other to try it out properly. The planned public event could not go ahead due to Covid-19 rules.

Finally, in December Project Manager Kate Aubury, with help from her family, carried out the overdue kingfisher perch check using the new boat, and also checked regrowth on the islands following some scrub clearance works earlier in the year.

Project Results

Our project was completed on time and on budget (the cost of some ancillary items were slightly above the initial project estimate but the additional cost was covered by the Trust as they were not directly funded by the grant), and the new boat has already proved useful in carrying out water-based management. The secure storage facility means the boat and other necessary items are on location and ready to use at a moment's notice, which will be very helpful for our warden and volunteers. There were no difficulties apart from some delays caused by Covid-19 disruption, which thankfully did not impact on the overall delivery, and our official launch event had to be downscaled to just key Trust personnel because of Covid-19 regulations on people meeting up.

The Future

The new boat will be used for annual water-based management tasks including brushcutting the island vegetation to ensure the islands remain suitable for breeding Oystercatchers and other waders, cleaning up litter from the water, and cutting back reedbed sections where needed. The Trust also intends to use the boat to carry out water based surveys and monitoring. The essential tasks the boat will assist with helps to maintain Kemerton Lake Nature Reserve as a wonderful, diverse habitat which attracts a wide range of water birds, invertebrates particularly dragonflies, and mammals including Otter.

Acknowledgements

Kemerton Conservation Trust would like to thank Severn Trent Community Fund for generously supporting this project and making it possible. We would also like to thank Kemerton Estate for donating staff time and machinery to help us move the storage container to the reserve.

We would also like to thank all those who assisted in the delivery of the project, particularly our Warden John Threadingham and Trust volunteer David Aubury.

Appendix A: Project Photo Montage

Photographs © Kate Aubury



Shipping Container Site at KLNLR
before clearance, July 2020



Shipping container being unloaded,
September 2020



Ramp for shipping container,
September 2020



New Neptune 250 boat, August 2020



Railway sleepers after delivery, August 2020



Shipping container sited at KLNLR,
October 2020



Shelving unit construction begins,
October 2020



Shelving unit complete & ready to
use, October 2020



Eastern bank of lake opposite storage container site, before clearance , October 2020



Eastern bank of lake with boat launch area after clearance, October 2020



KCT Warden John Threadingham, Support Coordinator Kate Aubury & daughter, and Governor Matthew Darby at official boat launch , October 2020



KCT Support Coordinator Kate Aubury with volunteer David Aubury & daughter launching the boat, October 2020



KCT Support Coordinator Kate Aubury checking kingfisher perches using the new boat, December 2020