

RIBBLE VALLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL REPORT TO PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

Agenda Item No. 6

meeting date: THURSDAY, 12 MARCH 2020
title: REPAIR WORK TO PRESERVE CHAMPION FLOOD POOL
LOCATED ALONG TINKLERS LANE, SLAIDBURN,
submitted by: NICOLA HOPKINS – DIRECTOR OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & PLANNING
principal author: ALEX SHUTT – COUNTRYSIDE OFFICER

1 PURPOSE

- 1.1 For Committee to consider a request for a grant towards the preservation of Champion Flood Pool. The information and Annex within this report has been supplied by Hilary McGuire – RSPB Conservation Advisor Forest of Bowland
- 1.2 Relevance to the Council's ambitions and priorities
- Community Objectives – To protect and enhance the existing environmental quality of our area.
 - Corporate Priorities – To protect and enhance priority species and habitats identified in the Lancashire Biodiversity Action Plan.
 - Other Considerations – None.

2 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Champion Flood Pool is a naturally occurring wetland, about 50m wide and 80m long located along Tinklers Lane, Slaidburn, at SD74865221. The pool provides critical habitat for several species of breeding wader including lapwing, curlew, redshank, oystercatcher and snipe. See Annex 1 for a summary of the pairs of waders recorded at Champion flood pool since 2014. The damp, soft ground at the pool edges is full of rich invertebrate life on which these species and their chicks feed. The rushy areas surrounding the pool provide cover from predators, and the standing open water provides a continual source of invertebrates as the pool slowly shrinks throughout the summer.
- 2.2 These species, commonly known as the breeding wader assemblage, have all undergone serious declines in recent years. Lapwing numbers in England and Wales have dropped by 60% since the 1960s, curlew have declined by nearly 50% since the mid-1990s, and redshank populations have fallen by 35% since 1995. Redshank are the rarest of Bowland's breeding waders, with the 2019 survey recording just 23 pairs. The two pairs found at Champion flood pool in 2019 thus represent a significant proportion of this small and vulnerable population. These species are all threatened by landscape scale drainage of wetlands and farmland, so it is crucial that we maintain the remaining good habitat where it still exists.
- 2.3 Champion Flood Pool was enhanced in 2012 by the addition of a right-angle pipe to allow water level control and an earth banking to protect the adjacent stone wall from erosion. The edges of the pool were also expanded to provide a long muddy edge on which breeding waders could feed. As a result, good numbers of all five species have been recorded breeding at Champion Flood Pool over the past five years.

3 REQUEST FOR GRANT FUNDING (MARCH 2020)

3.1 A historical stone field drain, which has been blocked for several years has recently opened up again, allowing water to drain out of the flood pool. If allowed to continue, this drainage will render the pool unusable by the birds which rely on it as breeding and feeding habitat. An agricultural contractor would be able to reverse the drainage issue by closing the land drain with a mini-digger.

3.2 The land is farmed by Mr. Martin Waddington who has managed the surrounding farm sympathetically for waders for many years. Mr. Waddington has provided agreement for the work to be carried out and a grant is sought to cover the cost for this work. A verbal quote has been provided by D & G M Cowking Ltd - Agricultural and Farm Contractors for £248.00. Hilary McGuire, Conservation Advisor for Bowland with the RSPB, will be present on the day the work is carried out.

3.3 It is proposed to use the Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise Organisations grant budget to fund this work.

4 RISK ASSESSMENT

4.1 The approval of this report may have the following implications:

- Resources – There is sufficient funding available within the Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise Organisations grant budget to fund this work.
- Technical, Environmental and Legal - None.
- Political – None.
- Reputation – The Council's reputation for protecting and enhancing the existing environmental quality of our area will be upheld.
- Equality & Diversity – None.

5 CONCLUSION

5.1 Restoring the ability of Champion Flood Pool to retain water throughout the summer will provide an immediate and substantial positive impact on the breeding waders which return to Bowland each spring. Many farms in Bowland are working closely with the RSPB to maximise their wader habitat and waders on these farms are bucking the national trend of steep declines. Maintaining good habitat is critical to securing a future for waders in Bowland and preventing them disappearing as they are sadly doing from many areas of the UK.

6 RECOMMENDED THAT COMMITTEE

6.1 Approve utilising the Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise Organisations grant scheme to fund the works to seal the land drain at Champion Flood Pool, at a cost of £248.

ALEX SHUTT
COUNTRYSIDE OFFICER

NICOLA HOPKINS
DIRECTOR OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND PLANNING

Annex 1

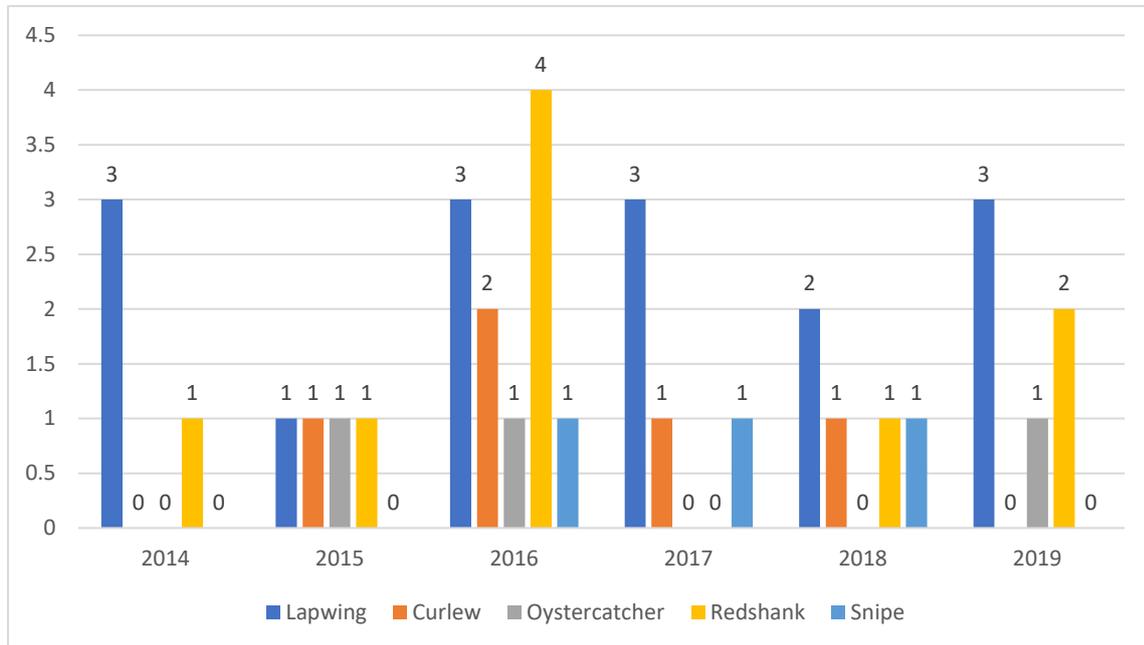


Figure 1: Breeding pairs of wader species recorded at Champion Flood Pool since 2014

