

North Lane Pond Report via email from Trust for Oxfordshire's Environment

Received: 29th January 2026

Dear Jane

Thank you for your time yesterday when we discussed the pond along North Lane and also for this helpful update. As promised, this email is to summarise the main points we discussed.

Standing by the pond, you shared the two short reports the Parish Council has received from Pedro Collins, one in November 2024 and the other in December 2025. The advice provided is sound and I encourage the Parish Council to apply for one of TOE's Small Grants to fund the work recommended.

The report dated December 2025 starts by saying that autumn/winter is the best time of year to carry out pond maintenance work. This is true and it is also the best time of year to carry out tree work to avoid disturbance to breeding birds. You explained that Matt from Bicester Tree Services is the Parish Council's preferred tree surgeon and that he is good value. I recommend you asked him to provide you with a quote to pollard the willow on the far bank that is to the left of the pollarded willow. Pedro Collins recommended the pollarded willow is pollarded again on a 3-5 year cycle so it would be good to know when it was last pollarded. It looks as if it was at least a couple of years ago and, if so, it would be sensible to ask Matt to quote for pollarding it again. I expect all the tree work at the pond will cost less than £2,500 making you eligible for one of our small grants.

Pedro's report dated December 2025 states that an area had "been created since my last visit". We weren't sure which area he referred to – a sketch map would have been helpful. Please ask if Cllr Miller knows, or ask Pedro to confirm, as he/Pedro recommend vegetation in the area be managed.

We discussed the pendulous sedge (*Carex pendula*) in the front of the pond near the bench. Although a native species, pendulous sedge can become invasive/dominant as it spreads rapidly by seed as well as vegetatively. As the pond is relatively small, I recommended you keep an eye on the pendulous sedge or even dig it out now before it becomes a problem.

I believe a well-attended volunteer work party should be able to manage the pond vegetation, assuming the water isn't too deep. You explained that previously people who live along North Lane have come along to help but you may not get enough pairs of hands. I suggested you could contact Bicester Green Gym <https://bicestergreengym.org/> or the Oxford Conservation Volunteers <https://www.ocv.org.uk/> for extra help. Both groups organise volunteer work parties at different sites and, in exchange for a modest fee (and delicious cake!), may well be able to incorporate a session at the North Lane

pond into their programme of work parties in late summer/early autumn – their services are popular so you will need to book them in advance.

Once you've received a quote for the tree work, please apply for one of our Small Grants of up to £2,500 - our application form can be downloaded from this page of our website <https://trustforoxfordshire.org.uk/grants/> We welcome applications for Small Grants any time and aim to let applicants know the outcome within two or three weeks (depending upon staff availability). As the money we award as grants is public money, we ask a lot of questions so the form is a Word document so you can complete it gradually. Please quote the advice received in Pedro Collins's reports when it comes to answering some of the questions on our application form. I can review a draft if that would be helpful.

We ask for a variety of supporting documentation to be submitted in support of each grant application. TOE does not insist upon match funding but likes to see our grant holders have 'skin in the game'. The fact that Weston Parish Council has paid for Pedro's report demonstrates this. In addition, the Parish Council will be able to reclaim any VAT charged by the contractors, effectively saving 20%. For TOE, community/volunteer involvement is also important which is why I think it would be worthwhile building a relationship with a group like Bicester Green Gym or OCV. They may even be willing to make it a regular annual visit to keep on top of the week re-growth.

Assuming TOE awards Weston Parish Council a grant, we will then draw up formal contract letter. Your grant money is likely to have come to us from Grundon Waste Management and is effectively the tax due for waste they've put in landfill. We register all projects supported via Grundon with HMRC's regulator of the Landfill Community Fund which can take up to a couple of weeks. You will have plenty of time to arrange the tree work to take place in early autumn, after the end of the breeding season for birds and amphibians and when the pond water level is likely to be low before winter rain. New grant holders must return signed acceptance of our offer before they can start project delivery.

TOE grants reimburse actual expenditure, our grants are not given as money up-front. Although our paperwork states that we pay grants on completion of the project, we don't want this payment schedule policy to cause cashflow problems to our grant holders so we allow interim grant claims. We usually have two payment runs a month so turn around grant claims quickly, our grant holders receiving payments before they need to pay their contractor/supplier/credit card.

In the meantime, I recommend the Parish Council starts to include copy in the parish newsletter so your local community is aware of the work to restore the pond – the tree work, the volunteer work party and, possibly, the removal of some of the reeds closest to North Lane by mechanical means, i.e. using a bucket attachment on a small excavator (again, next autumn/winter).

I hope this summary of our conversation is helpful but please don't hesitate to get in touch if you've got any queries as I'm here to help guide people through our application process.

Kind regards

Rachel

Rachel Sanderson

Head of Community Grants



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