

## **PDF3: Summary of the Ecological Impact Assessment regarding the future use and development of the Mepal Site:**

Since the closure of the Mepal Outdoor Centre, the ecology of the site has matured to create a unique biodiversity site in East Cambridgeshire.

The site is already designated as a County Wildlife site because of rare pond weed in the lake. To fully understand the ecology of the site the Council commissioned an extensive series of ecological surveys beginning in March 2020 and ending in November 2020. This was important to undertake and shows that the site now supports several protected and notable species and habitats which could be impacted as a result of any future use and development of the site.

The surveys confirmed the following:

- The site is noted for hosting pondweeds, including the nationally scarce species, e.g. otters, bats, fieldfare, song thrushes and herring gulls.
- The marginal habitat around the lake, the lake itself and the open sandy areas are the most important parts of the site from a botanical perspective. Open sandy ground is generally rare in the county, so this is an important habitat. The open sandy areas support seven species of county wide significance
- The buildings were deemed as low to moderate potential for use by roosting bats. No active roosts were noted and vandalism during the summer has reduced the potential from low to negligible. The site itself, however, offers high value for use by foraging bats
- The Winter Birding Survey identified 32 species of birds, 30 of which were present onsite, two of which flew over the site. Three bird species are listed on the Birds of Conservation Concern 'Red' List; fieldfare, song thrush and the herring gull. The birds identified during the Breeding Bird Survey were predominantly common species, both at a national and local level
- The open habitat mosaic at the southern end of the site, shelving lake edge at the southern end of the lake and the plentiful dead wood resource are critical to support the invertebrates that are on site and are of county wide significance
- Evidence of otter field signs were found and recorded on the south-eastern banks of the lake

Mitigation, precautionary and compensation measures have been recommended by the ecologist that carried out the survey work to allow the use and development of the site for a crematorium and low impact recreational activities without negative impact on the ecology of the site.

These recommendations have been subsequently incorporated into the development proposals for the site to ensure that the design for the project and the construction programme have been developed to minimise adverse impacts on the ecological features.

The ecologists, supported by the Wildlife Trust, have established that recreational activities need to be limited to low impact activities, and limited to certain locations: recreational fishing, lakeside walking, and bird watching. The site will require monitoring in place for five years to assess any potential ongoing impacts from the proposed recreational activities on site

With the implementation of the proposed mitigation and precautionary measures being proposed by the ecologist, the proposed crematorium development will be confined to the existing footprint of buildings on the site and it is not anticipated to result in any significant adverse residual effects to the identified ecological assets.

The Council will commit to monitoring to ensure that the mitigation and compensatory measures have been undertaken to a satisfactory standard. This applies to both the construction and operation phases of the development.

The enhancement measures that have been recommended by the ecologists will ensure net gains for biodiversity in East Cambridgeshire in line with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and the Council's Environment and Climate Change Strategy, Local Plan and Supplementary Planning Documents.