

Planning permission granted on appeal at South East's largest reservoir

Bewl Water is the largest stretch of open water in the South East. Located in Lamberhurst Kent, the 800-acre site is open to the public all year round.

TUNBRIDGE WELLS, KENT, UNITED KINGDOM, March 16, 2023 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Proposals to convert a derelict [fishing lodge](#) at Bewl Water in Lamberhurst, Kent into four-holiday apartments have been approved.



It follows a 12-month appeal against the decision of the Wealden District Council over 'ecological concerns', however, a government-appointed inspector has now ruled in favour of the reservoir concluding that the small-scale development 'would not adversely impact on the integrity of the protected European site'.

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Kevin Parker

The appeal has granted the change of use and an extension of the fishing lodge to form 4 x 1 bed tourist units. The run-down building, which is in desperate need of conservation has been vacant since 2016 but prior to that had been used to support [fishing at the reservoir](#).

Inside anglers could hire boats, tackle, and fishing equipment as well as purchase permits which have since moved online along with other administrative tasks.

However, due to the declining conditions of the fishing lodge, support for Bewl Water's angling community has been relocated to another building onsite.

Operations Manager Kevin Parker said:

“As the [largest reservoir in South East England](#), Bewl is a popular water sports destination, particularly with fishermen so it was necessary to relocate them to accommodate their needs. Since then, the building has been vacant – we haven’t used it for seven years”.

The proposed development aims to conserve the fishing lodge through small-scale restorations to encourage greater long-term spending within the surrounding area and contribute to local tourism accommodation, which the Council indicate there is presently an identified shortage.

‘We still find ourselves dealing with the aftermath of the Covid-19 crisis – travel afar is still very much off the table for many people, especially with rising living costs, and the tourist board continues to tell me that there's not enough quality accommodation in the area’ Kevin explained.

‘Services need to be stepped up to keep pace with rising expectations, and to protect the future of Bewl Water as both a visitor attraction and haven for wildlife’ he continued.

Home to hundreds of species, Bewl Water spends over £1.3 million annually running and maintaining the estate, which includes ongoing biodiversity schemes. These play a huge role in maintaining the reservoir’s natural ecosystem and include shoaling measures and conservation grazing.

As part of the appeal decision, the planning inspector said:

“The appellant [Bewl Water] has carried out all the required ecological assessments that have been subject to the Council’s Biodiversity Officer consideration”.

To address ecology issues during construction, Bewl Water says fencing and dust coverings will be used throughout, protecting the woodland close by and its native wildlife. They have also



provided bird counts as part of the appeal.

"We understand that Bewl Water is treasured by the local community as a unique and beautiful landscape," said Head Ranger Daniel Baker.

"Since submitting the planning application, we have increased our ranger team to ensure we are adequately prepared to care for our local wildlife throughout the development, which of course will put a higher demand on our protection efforts" he continued.

As well as giving great weight to its designated species, the proposal also takes into consideration landscape conservation. Minimal light pollution will be achieved by controlled and directional low lighting, whilst reduced glazing will limit reflection and glare.

And whilst the renovations would alter the appearance of the existing building, designs have been carefully planned to respect and enhance its original character. External materials would remain in keeping with the area and include feather-edged timber boarding, along with metal and timber for the external stairs and balconies.

Bewl Water says they are now working towards ensuring all conditions outlined in the appeal decision are met, which includes submitting a scheme for the enhancement of the site for biodiversity.

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