

Marlot Conservation Group (MCG)

Work report to Whixall Parish Council meeting 24 January 2024

Reporting Period 5 Nov 2023 – 10 January 2024

Volunteer work during this reporting period has been adversely affected by seasonal bad weather and in particular the constant rain experienced. Brush cutting and grass raking of the front and back meadows was completed over several work sessions, but it has been impossible to burn the grass cuttings, as we would normally do, as it is just too wet. It was decided to remove the cuttings and place them in the wooded area between the two meadows in the numerous hollows that exist. This ensures that the cuttings are out of sight and will mulch down in the next few months. There are still patches of grass cuttings in the front and back meadows that require removing and this will be completed as and when volunteer availability and weather permits. Martin Spenser has also removed the electric fence wiring from the main entrance of the Marlot.

The pond area is still an area for concern. During this reporting period the volume of rain has caused further extensive flooding of the pond area with all paths now completely underwater. The whole area resembles one big lake and has extended all the way across to the compost heaps. The water level in the ditch at the pond side of the entrance remains at the top of the bridge and in fact at one time did start to overflow across the entrance. Whilst it can be seen that there is a “flow” of water into the meadow side ditch this is considered mainly due to water forcing itself through the foundations and bank of the bridge and not through the blocked pipe. As has been previously mentioned the integrity of the bridge foundations are in doubt and action is desperately needed to resolve the drain problem which is the cause of the flooding. This is the period when the MCG would be clearing the ponds of overgrown reed mace and attempting to deepen and clear the ponds in readiness for the newt breeding season – however we are unable to do this due to the extensive flooding and blocked drain. This will inevitably result in a reduced count, if any, of newts later on in the year. We are acutely worried about the environmental impact this is having on the pond area as well as the amount of corrective and repair work that will now be needed to bring the paths and surrounds back to a standard where it can be used and enjoyed safely by visitors.

As has been previously requested by the MCG we would like to know the Parish Council’s way forward on the drain and bridge issue. It is now coming up to a year since this was highlighted by the MCG.

Graham Turnbull
Marlot Conservation Group
10 January 2024