

Marlot Conservation Group (MCG)

Work report to Whixall Parish Council meeting 8 February 2023

Period - 8 January 2023 – 2 February 2023

Once again, this month's work has been dependant of weather and availability of volunteers. It was decided to cordon off the pond area from both the main entrance side and the woodland side. This was done to avoid any safety issues with visitors due to the extensive flooding in the pond area and also to avoid any further damage to the muddy pathways. Unfortunately it was found that the cordon tape had been broken and there was evidence of bicycle tracks along the pond pathways which has caused muddy ruts along the length of these paths. Whilst most of the flood water has now rescinded it has been decided to keep the ponds cordoned off until the ground has time to recover and to avoid further damage to the paths.

The water level along the road ditch has remained high along the pond side and is considerably lower on the meadow side with only a trickle of water flowing through. It was thought that this was caused by a blockage of the drainpipe underneath the main entrance bridge and therefore work commenced on clearing the silt and blockage in the pipe. Rod pipes were used to clear the silt and mud from the main drain pipe, however it was found that there was a still a blockage on the pond side of the drain. Due to the high level of water on this side it was difficult to ascertain what the blockage was but it is thought that it is due to numerous willow roots that have grown across the ditch from willows situated on the bankside that are obstructing the drainpipe entrance. Further work to clear any obstruction could not be done until the water level on this side of the ditch reduces. Whilst working on clearing the pipe we noticed that the side of the bank, on both sides, has started to crumble away and that the water has found its own route through the side of the bank, which is reducing the integrity of the bank that the bridge is laid on. Furthermore, we have found that the concrete base of the bridge has a large crack along its centre line, on both sides, which is a cause for concern. Please see the photographs with this report to see the extent of damage. Having seen this damage, it has been decided to stop any vehicular access into the Marlot via the main entrance; it is however still considered safe for pedestrian traffic, but weekly assessments will be conducted to check any further damage. The MCG considers this damage a possible major issue to health and safety on the Marlot and recommends that the Parish Council bring in a professional to properly survey the bank and bridge structure in order to recommend any action for repair as necessary.

Both meadows have now been completely cleared of all the grass and brash cuttings and these have been re-distributed in the numerous depressions and holes situated within the meadow treeline, out of sight of the meadow pathways. A large pile of willow cuttings still remains on the front meadow and this will be burnt later on when the weather improves as the willow will re-grow if we place this in the depressions and holes. Martin has also carried out more cleaning and repair of the birdboxes in the woodland area.

The review and update of the A5 Marlot information 8 page booklet is still continuing but has been slightly delayed and it is hoped that we can submit a finished A5 information booklet to the Parish Council for the March parish meeting for approval and subsequent printing considerations and decision.

Graham Turnbull
Marlot Conservation Group

2 February 2023