

Marlot Conservation Group (MCG)

Work report to Whixall Parish Council meeting July 2025

Reporting Period 6 May – 7 July 2025

Even with MCG volunteers down to three in number (due to myself having had foot surgery), a tremendous amount of work has been conducted during this reporting period. The early work concentrated on chipping much of the cut brash from previous work and distributing the chippings along the pond pathways. A new willow woven small boundary fence was also constructed at the entrance of the Marlot – providing a pleasing visual and functional break into the meadow pathway. Cut logs have also been laid in a row at the entrance area and a newly made bench by Martin Spenser has been positioned inside the gate just to the right. These additions to the entrance area hopefully provides a more welcoming feel and will attract more visitors to the Marlot.

Three new robin bird boxes, provided by Tim Lamb, were erected in carefully chosen positions in the meadow woodland area and will be sympathetically monitored during the season and coming years to assess their use. Volunteers also laid a small pipe between the exit of the front meadow and back pathway to facilitate the run off of collected flood/rain water from the meadow woods. This area has consistently flooded and the pathway tends to turn into a muddy bog and becomes difficult to pass. It is hoped that this small covered “culvert” will drain any surface water away from the pathway making it drier and easy to pass.

As part of the usual summer programme of work, the MCG has conducted regular strimming of the pathways around the meadows and ponds as well as clearing back the bracken growth in the back meadow. More chipping of brash and tree cuttings also continued, as well as a tidying up of the compost heap area.

During one volunteer session it was noticed that several trees appeared to have their bark stripped bare. Fortunately a “Tree expert” from Natural England was visiting and he identified the problem as being caused by Grey Squirrels. He intimated that this may cause a problem with the health of these trees with the possibility that they may become diseased; he provided some suggestions and considerations that may have to be taken. This is something that may have to be addressed in the future and needs further discussion and advice with Natural England. This is an issue that the newly established Marlot Liaison Group from the Parish Council, with input from the MCG, would need to look into further before providing the Parish Council with possible actions and solutions.

Regarding the new Marlot PC Liaison Group, an initial “meet and greet” meeting was held in order to introduce each other and have a general discussion and visit to the Marlot. Although the Terms of Reference for the PC Liaison Group have not yet been established, the MCG members felt it useful if the Group was aware of the MCG working practices and the

documentation and guidance that is used to conduct the work. This included discussing the Ecological Management Plans the MCG work to, an explanation of the Local Nature Reserve application process and also Natural England's guidance for LNRs. All documentation was provided to the new PC Liaison Group for their information.

The final session during this reporting period concentrated on a full comprehensive service and clean of all PC capital machinery equipment, as well as a full inventory check of all Marlot PC held hand tools, consumables and PPE. The inventory identified several items, both consumable and permanent, that will soon need replacing and updated. These will be purchased, as and when, using the annual running cost budget line and invoices submitted to the Parish Clerk as per normal.

Graham Turnbull
Marlot Conservation Group
7 Jul 25