



Your Council

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Village Pond

The pond was the main item of discussion at the last meeting of the Parish Council. The meeting was attended by four residents who live near the pond and formal proceedings were suspended for a general discussion on the way forward.

It is obvious to all that the pond is choked by leaves, vegetation and silt. It contains a weed called "parrot feather" that is not indigenous and is a species that is illegal to introduce into water courses. It is perhaps fortunate that the culvert to prevent flooding is blocked at the moment, although this is also something that needs sorting out.

The first thing seems to be to deal with the overhanging trees as it will be difficult to get to the greater part of the pond until this is done and of course more leaves will fall in next autumn. The Parish Council has been advised that the three weeping willows and one crack willow that have been pollarded in the past should be kept as pollarded trees.



Weeping willows overhanging the Pond

Apparently pollarded and coppiced trees, once done, must be kept that way. Unfortunately a pollarded tree looks stark for several months and naturally the residents closest to them don't want to have the effect of World War III in front of their windows.

The residents who attended the meeting have all volunteered to carry out much of the work on the pond and its surroundings as they can themselves. Two have asked to join the Pond Warden scheme and two the Tree Warden scheme, run by the Kent branch of the BTCV (British Trust for Conservation Volunteers). These schemes provide

training and advice on tree and pond management. In addition, Cllr Beckey will join the scheme for both pond and trees. The village will undoubtedly benefit from their expertise when they have completed the training.

Struck by this willingness to volunteer for the benefit of the whole community, Cllr Beckey proposed the Council set up an Amenity Committee to concentrate on the management of the Council's property, which includes the green by the church and conservation area at Fenn Corner as well as the pond. This proposal was seconded and

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agreed and Cllrs Beckey, Hassell and Mrs Johnson agreed to serve on the new committee. Residents Andrew Laphorn (tree warden) and Tim Weedon (pond warden) were invited to join the committee.

The committee met for the first time on Saturday 8th December at the pond. Cllr Beckey was elected Chairman of the committee. Higham's pond warden Jill Kingsford also attended and gave excellent advice and we are very grateful for her interest.

A compromise was reached over the pruning of the trees and we expect to see work progressing in the New Year.

We include photographs taken in October of the willow trees and the pond itself with the parrot feather in full growth. We hope to print more photographs from time to time showing progress on this restoration project.



Pond showing Parrot Feather Weed

You can see how choked the pond is and there is very little water in it, in spite of the outflow being blocked and the rain we have had.

The restoration will not only enhance this most attractive part of the village but will encourage wildlife too.

Coloured photos don't reproduce very well on a copier, to see them properly, visit our website:

www.stmaryhoo-pc.gov.uk

where you will find a copy of this Newsletter.

Budget

The Parish Council's budget for 2008/9 was discussed and adopted at the last meeting.

You may remember that the previous Clerk worked for over 50 years without pay. You were used to a low amount on your Council tax (the "precept". Now you are served by a fully qualified Clerk who would like at least some remuneration. Of course this meant a doubling of the precept and again a

considerable increase (comparatively speaking) for next year. Add to this making provision for the cost of regular maintenance of the Parish Council's property, the cost of keeping in touch with you through a proper website and your new Newsletter, as well as normal increases in things such as insurance, councillors consider they have done their best in keeping next year's precept to £3,750. This

averages at £43.60 a year per household. Putting it in perspective, this is the cost of a reasonable meal out for two.

Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Parish Council will be held on Thursday 10 January 2008 in the Function Room of the Fenn Bell Inn at 7.30pm.

Everyone welcome.

The Chairman, Councillors and Clerk of St. Mary Hoo Parish Council wish you a very happy Christmas and Prosperous New Year

Articles, pictures, comments and ideas for this Newsletter are welcome. Please submit anything to the Parish Clerk. The Parish Council will retain the right to select items for publication and to exercise editorial control.