

Title	Greenmoor Ponds	
Author	Clerk to the Council	
Meeting	Woodcote Parish Council Meeting – 2 nd September 2025	

7.1. To consider Woodcote Conservation Group proposal for unspent PC contribution to Ponds Restoration Project

LETTER FROM CHAIR OF THE WCG

Woodcote Conservation Group request to Woodcote Parish Council
for re-allocation of funds budgeted for the restoration of Lower Greenmoor Pond

Funding

1. At the start of this FY, £260 was held in Earmarked Reserves for the Pond Restoration, the balance remaining following a donation of £1,500 made by Woodcote Conservation Group (WCG) to pay for preliminary tree work which was undertaken in February 2025.
2. Following a tendering process, White Horse Contractors' quote of £34,372.67 (net) for the major engineering works was accepted by Woodcote Parish Council (WPC). As there were a number of unknowns, not least the weather and ground conditions at the time the work was carried out, James Godfrey recommended budgeting £45,000 to include 15% contingency.
3. With support from WCG, WPC applied for a grant from the Trust for Oxfordshire's Environment and was awarded £25,000.
4. Woodcote Parish Council budgeted £10,000 towards the cost of restoring the Lower Greenmoor Pond and WCG agreed to launch a public appeal and make a donation to WPC for a further £10,000.
5. The prolonged dry weather meant White Horse Contractors completed the work to schedule and without needing to draw down additional funds for (a) slurry pumping as the pond was dry, (b) track mats as the ground was hard, and (c) additional clay as James Godfrey's estimate of the amount needed to re-line the pond had been accurate. The invoice amount therefore matched the quoted amount.
6. WPC claimed the £25,000 from the Trust for Oxfordshire's Environment and WCG donated £9,112.67 to WPC to cover the balance of White Horse Contractors' invoice (with the £260 from EMR).
7. With members of WCG drawing on their professional expertise to provide WPC with all other support and advice *pro bono*, to date, no funds from WPC have been required to finance the restoration of Lower Greenmoor Pond.

Long-term site management

8. In December 2023 WCG, with the help of (now) Cllr Simon Pritchard, made seven boreholes to monitor the groundwater on Greenmoor Hill. James Godfrey monitored water levels until the White Horse Contractors started in June 2025 with the data giving confidence that the Lower Greenmoor Pond will re-charge naturally once the current drought breaks.

9. Plant movements during the recent restoration works by White Horse Contractors have led to the loss of four boreholes at the site. The three remaining points are the 'older' boreholes that were installed by hand about 20-25 years ago and they lack proper headworks to seal the standpipe from surface water infiltration.
10. With the current depleted groundwater situation in the south of England now 'nationally significant' it is even more important to gain a good understanding of the groundwater situation at the ponds to inform long-term site management.
11. Moving forwards, and given the groundwater situation in the area, James Godfrey feels it is necessary to have a robust and permanent network of boreholes at the site that are properly installed into the subsurface geology to a greater depth than the existing network. Drilling to ~5m will allow us to understand whether (as suspected) there are two groundwater bodies in the area; one that feeds the upper pond and a separate deeper body that feeds the lower pond. If this is proven by the investigations, we may have options for monitoring the two groundwater bodies independently through the standpipes that will be installed. The data provided will be valuable to determine how the two groundwater bodies interact and how they behave seasonally and after rainfall. The data gained will be useful in developing a long-term management plan for the ponds which are situated in a geologically unique setting within the Chilterns National Landscape (previously known as the Chilterns AONB).
12. Based on James's advice, WCG believe that a timely instruction to proceed with the works will be beneficial as the ground conditions are presently favourable for a drilling rig to access the site. Quotes have been obtained from Jackson Drilling and Elwood Environmental and the net cost will be £4,953.93.
13. James Godfrey will then manually monitor the boreholes on a monthly basis for the foreseeable future FOC. WCG believe this is a more cost-effective option than WPC either buying (or renting) dataloggers (at approx. £300 each) and therefore recommends this approach to the Councillors.

Improving visitor access

14. The Greenmoor Hill site is the only area of natural greenspace owned by WPC and is very popular with Woodcote residents with many families, walkers and dog-walkers including the ponds and surrounding woodland on their walks.
15. Some stretches of the natural paths around the site get extremely muddy when the weather is wet. Volunteers from WCG laid a stretch of all-weather path and a short flight of steps a few years ago which significantly improved the site accessibility.
16. As part of the pond restoration project, WCG would like to increase the length of all-weather path on site to further improve access. Volunteers from WCG will carry out the work so the only costs will be for the materials needed (geo-textile membrane, MOT Type 1, screws, wooden gravel boards and pegs).
17. WCG members highly experienced in quantifying the amount of material needed have assessed the work and provided a quote – see attached spreadsheet. A net cost of £2,300 has been estimated.

Conclusion

18. WCG request WPC approve that £7,250 of the funds budgeted for the Restoration of Lower Greenmoor Pond be spent as follows
 - £4,953.93 net for boreholes for the long-term monitoring of groundwater

- £2,296.54 net for materials for path improvements

Rachel Sanderson
WCG Vice Chair