

## 2. Advice on our new “Eco Area” and hedgerows from Wild Oxfordshire experts



**Looking at one of the new ponds in the Eco Area**

On a very cold and damp afternoon, January 3rd, two members of the Wild Oxfordshire team, Imogen Parker, Community Ecologist and Jess Bouwer, Hedgerows and Partnerships Officer, made a visit to various sites of interest in the parish with Pat Ward and Elaine Brittan. In spite of the horrible weather, we were both excited about the visit and its outcomes!

### **The future development of the Eco Area**

Imogen gave good advice about management of the Eco Area (the area across Simmons Brook from Calais Field) much of which will remain wet all year round. This included reducing the willowherb, preferably by “cultural” methods rather than herbicides; replacing some of the trees lost to drought; allowing scrub to increase in certain areas; and wildflower enhancement in others. Retaining some tussocky grasses and rushes would provide good cover for various animals, including many bird species, amphibians, reptiles, and small mammals. Bird surveys would be useful in having a better understanding of which birds are using the area and how to benefit them...we are delighted that local bird enthusiast, Chris Barnes, has agreed to assist with this. *Thank you, Chris.*

In looking at other initiatives in the parish, Imogen was suitably impressed by the effectiveness of the bed check dam (our “woody” or “leaky” dam!) near the allotments which was in full flood after all the heavy rain in December. This is part of the Littlestock Brook Natural Flood Management scheme. And also by the Community Orchard and Woodland Walk – *Well done MuW!*

## **Restoring hedgerows and planting new ones – we may get help from Hedgerow Heroes**

Jess and Imogen looked at the sites we are proposing for help from “Hedgerow Heroes”, a national project run by the Campaign to Protect Rural England delivered through Wild Oxfordshire. Initially, more than 1150 metres of hedgerows have been identified with four enthusiastic farmers/ landowners (Roger Hartley, Peter Rawlins, Philip Watson and Ed Reynolds). Our bid will go in for possible funding 2024/25.

Our grateful thanks to both Imogen and Jess, and fingers crossed for the funding!

In addition to the above, Pat Ward is negotiating with Oxford County Council for more trees to be provided by them for parish use, and another 50 trees are being personally nurtured by him and others for the Eco Area. These include beech, horse chestnut and oak and will be planted next autumn.

***Stop Press.*** *We will be providing a map and more information on progress on the Eco Area, and the bid for funding for hedgerows in the next Newsletter.*