What's going on?

Have you noticed anything new happening in a corner of Sarah's Meadow?

If not, you will soon as work starts on a "leaky dam".

What is a leaky dam? A leaky dam (or "woody dam") allows normal levels of water to pass but holds back heavier flows to reduce the risk of flooding downstream.

It also creates a wetland area which, as we well know from the ponds and wetland areas we have created on Sarah's Meadow (SM), is a really excellent way of increasing biodiversity.

It's a win-win situation, folks – a win for people and a win for nature.

Where will it be? On Simmonds Brook in the NE corner of Sarah's Meadow and, in conjunction with the owner of the field, Philip Watson, the SE corner of Calais Field. Flooding where the brook runs under Shipton Road should reduce, and a wetland area spanning Sarah's Meadow and Calais Field will be created either side of the stream. It is envisaged that the new wetland might be perhaps 20 metres in diameter.



Photo shows proposed site

How is it made? The leaky dam will be constructed from 3m long logs pinned into each other and into the banks of the stream. The logs will be coming free of charge from the Wychwood Golf Club.

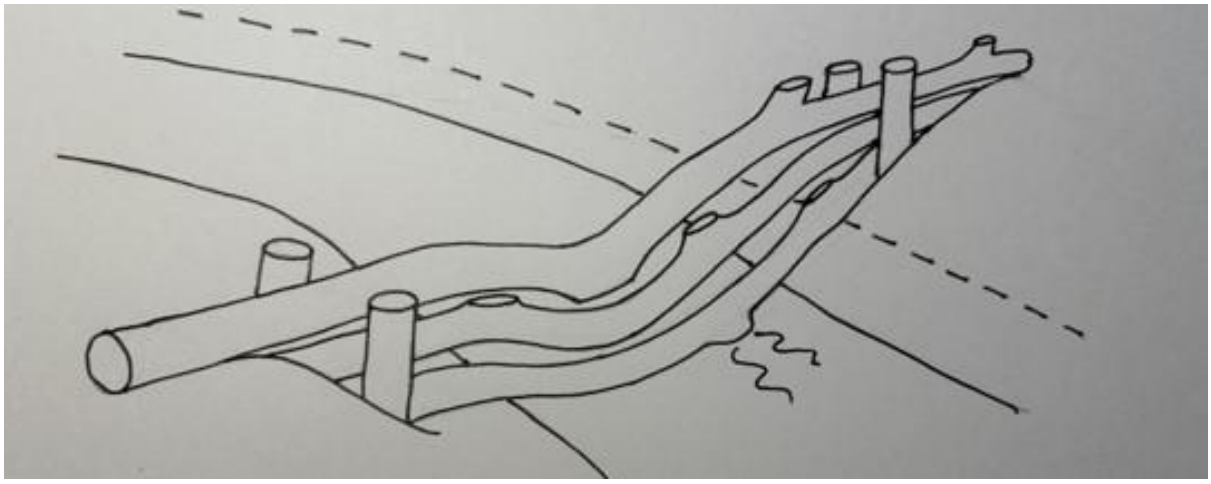


Diagram of a leaky dam

How did it come about? The Management Plan for Sarah's Meadow (SM) suggested that the NE corner would be a good place to put a leaky dam and create a wetland area as opposed to another pond. Philip Watson indicated that he would like to enhance and widen the small wetland area already in the SE corner of Calais Field. From that emerged a plan to put the dam across Simmonds Brook on the boundary of Calais Field with Sarah's Meadow.

Milton Parish Council applied for and was awarded a grant from Oxfordshire County Council's Flood Prevention Unit to install a leaky dam modelled on the successful installation of leaky dams on Littlestock Brook.

When will it happen? A contractor has been appointed to do the heavy construction work and work is expected to begin in the next few weeks.

In our experience on Sarah's Meadow, water life will start to appear quite quickly. In May this year, we "dipped" the main pond on SM and found more than 15 species of invertebrates as well as frogs, toads, newts and eight new plant species. We have also noted a number of new water birds visiting us including Water Rail, Kingfisher and Redshank.

After the dam is installed, Milton Biodiversity Monitoring and Action Group (BMAG) will work closely with the Parish Council to monitor the wildlife and report progress to OCC and to Wild Oxfordshire who have been so helpful and supportive. Our grateful thanks especially to Ann Berkeley and Imogen Parker.

The Sarah's Meadow Volunteers (SMV). The SM Volunteers do so much good work on SM. Tasks are varied from cutting back; planting trees, wildflowers and pond plants; developing habitats including building hibernacula; and monitoring wildlife such as birds, butterflies, plants, mammals and so on.

If you would like to enjoy fresh air in an interesting place, and meet lovely, friendly and active people, come and join the Sarah's Meadow Volunteers?

Contact Elaine Brittan ebspamfree@gmail.com or Cllr. Pat Ward on patrickwardpc@gmail.com for further details.

