

A Pond Working Party has been formed of parishioners and Parish Councillors. Its objective is to restore the pond to the way it looked a few years ago and give it back its ability to retain water even during dry periods. We would like the pond to resume its place as one of the village's most beautiful features but as many people will probably understand, achieving this won't be straightforward.

That's in part because Aldbury pond isn't a simple dew or spring-fed pond and, at its best it doesn't just look pretty, it also forms an integral part of the village drainage system. That brings with it some complications around how to put things right. Unlike most village ponds in the Chilterns and elsewhere, our pond receives most of its water from run off during and after rainfall - most of it flowing down Tom's Hill or Stocks Road. The pond also helps manage the flow of water through the village - excess water runs along a drain under Trooper Road and eventually into the ditch and fields beyond Stoneycroft. That water brings with it silt and organic material which gradually build up in the pond and require regular removal. Very few ponds have these distinctive characteristics.

In the 80's the pond had a liner installed to help it retain water. That liner was punctured during silt removal and then taken out altogether in 2018. Since then the pond hasn't been able to retain water properly and during the dry spells last summer and this winter it has looked far from its best as we all know. It used to be topped up regularly from the well in Chantry Row but the dry summers and winters we've had since then have made doing this unworkable - there simply isn't enough water flow and anyway groundwater levels have been lower than the norm. Requiring a liner to hold water whilst at the same time needing regular silt removal poses a particular challenge for our pond. Liners can be damaged during silt removal and because the base of the pond is chalk, as we've seen over the last few years it won't simply self-seal.

The Working Party started work before Christmas and is aiming to get a pond restoration plan together soon. If that proves workable, we'll probably need to raise some money to implement it. It is probable that we will be looking to recruit a volunteer workforce from the village to help with the work to help keep costs down. The likelihood is that the pond will require a new liner but it will also need a more robust protective layer over the liner to avoid damage during necessary silt clearance. Because we seem to be getting more long dry spells and more intense rainfall when it does rain, we'll also need to factor into our thinking how we manage water flows in and out of the pond to take more account of flood risk around the village.

We'll provide an update on the Working Party's progress at the Parish Assembly on 24 April and we're also planning to have a stall at May Day so that we can talk to as many people as possible about the group's work.