



# The Longlander

MARCH 2022 ISSUE 06

# Welcome

**Welcome to Spring!**

**The three months since our last newsletter have seen some big changes at Long Lands Common – three big changes, indeed!**

**In our winter newsletter welcome, I wrote that we had been given planning permission authorisation for a new project, and would soon be seeing our first three newt ponds dug on site.**

**With this new year's newsletter welcome, it is my great pleasure to celebrate that the three ponds have now been dug, have filled up with water, and now sit as wildlife havens on site – our first major stage of directly enhancing the bio-diversity of Long Lands Common, has been completed.**

**As we gain further planning permission and design authorisations across this year, more major projects will be undertaken, including path laying, installing visitor and ranger facilities, and of course, tree planting!**

**All members are welcome to come on site and visit the new ponds (do see our article on accessing the site, for the latest directions on that), and if you wish to register for a guided tour of Long Lands Common, please do fill out the form [here](#).**

**For now though, as this issue of The Longlander (curated as ever by our superb editor Artemis) also brings us updates on our current plans, and informative articles on wildlife found on site, I would particularly like to draw attention to our "Volunteer Heroes" article. We are a volunteer-run, and volunteer-supporting organisation, and we could not be pursuing this incredible project without the collective collaboration of such a large membership, each contributing in often radically different ways towards our common goal.**

**This issue's spotlighted hero is Janet; but we are also together in this endeavour, and if I could thank every shareholder, volunteer and supporter for their contributions towards creating and developing Long Lands Common, I would.**

**Oh wait, I just did...**

**If you would like to contribute to The Longlander by writing an article, or want to send us your letters and photographs, then get in touch at: [thelonglander@yahoo.com](mailto:thelonglander@yahoo.com)**

**Ben Skinner - Chair of Long Lands Common**



*Photo Credit: Ben Skinner*



# Contents

**02 Welcome**

**04 News from Long Lands Common**

- A round-up of news since our last issue

**05 Accessing Long Lands Common**

- Navigating the gateways to get on site

**06 Volunteer Heroes**

- Meet this month's Long Lands Common Champion

**07 Site Development**

- An update on how the site is developing

**08 The Newt Ponds**

- Find out more about our new ponds

**11 Species Spotlight**

- Skylarks

**14 Ecology at Long Lands Common**

- Hibernacula's and how to build one

**16 Your Nature Finds**

- Here's what you found

# Contributors



**Artemis Swann, Editor**



**Angela Jex**



**Ben Skinner**



**Richard Lord**

# News From Long Lands Common

## Certificate Update

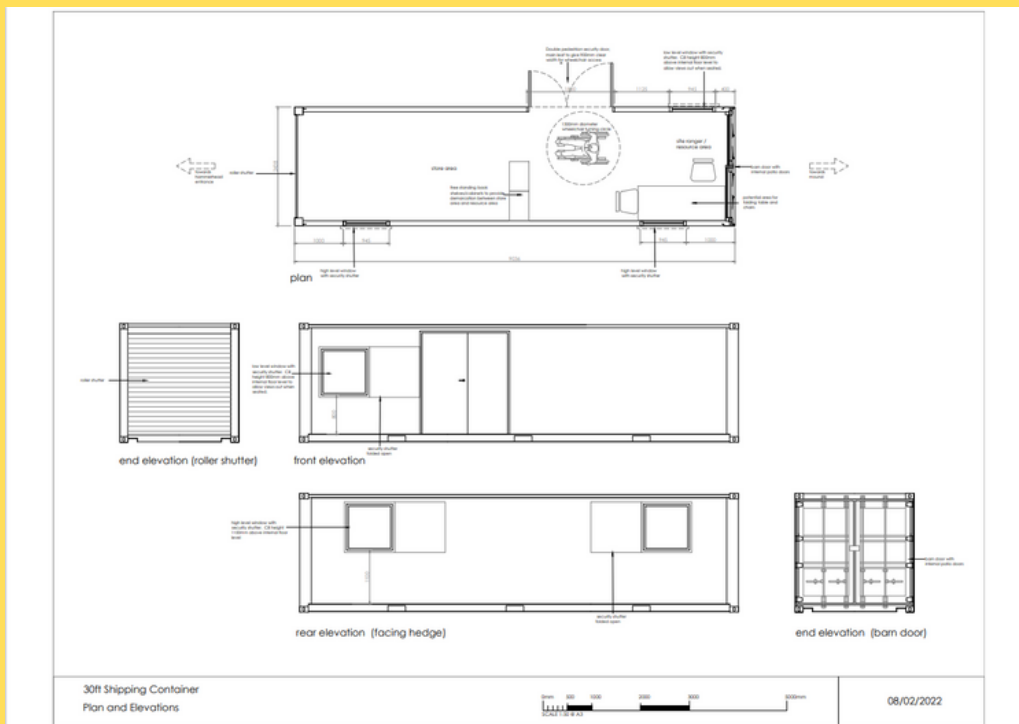
We know there are still people out there who have paid for shares but haven't received a share certificate because their application form was not submitted successfully.

If you are one of these people, please get in touch. As previously stated, we will keep going with issuing certificates until everybody has got what they paid for!



Artwork: Laura Crompton

## Container Workshop Design



Drawing by:

After much debate and deliberation between the design team and the Long Lands board, we have settled on the 30ft x 8ft design below. This final design features 8ft wide doors in either end and a double door in the front to maximise both access options and natural light opportunities in our off-grid, multi-functional space that will act as a base for site rangers as well as an educational and workshop space.



# News From Long Lands Common

## Access to Long Lands Common

We have had some feedback with regards to access to Long Lands Common for members and shareholders and appreciate that the entrance area isn't particularly welcoming at present. By way of explanation, the entrance track area is currently owned by the neighbouring farm; we are in the process of negotiating a land swap so in the near future Long Lands Common will take ownership of the entrance track in exchange for a similar area of land.

In the meantime, we are perfectly entitled to use the gateway and track to access our Common.

The neighbouring farm keeps horses and you may see headcollars, rugs etc. on the gate. The temporary fencing is not electrified. Please respect the horses and any property on the gates and ensure bungee cords are secured once you have passed through. Please do not feed the horses.

The annotated photographs below include detailed instructions on how to access the site. We hope this is helpful and gives all members and shareholders confidence when visiting Long Lands Common. Please bear with us whilst we finalise the land swap.



Photo Credit: Miranda Dunstan & Barry Slaymaker

# Volunteer Heroes



*Photo Credit: Tony Johnson - The Yorkshire Post*

## Our March Long Lands Common Champion!

### Janet Willoner

In February, we collected another 300 native seedling trees grown by our inspirational member, Janet Willoner, in her back garden in Boroughbridge.

Germinating trees from local seeds she has collected herself, Janet has now grown 1300 seedlings in her cottage industry nursery, using recycled cartons and plastic bottles as plant pots. Some had to be kept warm in the airing cupboard, others cool in the fridge, or bathed in warm water to break their winter dormancy.

Janet was inspired by her grandchildren's climate change campaigning and started growing her trees to help their fight as she felt a little old to be joining in on protest marches! Most of the nurturing was done in secret as she says she wouldn't feel silly if non had germinated but, by March last year, little green shoots had appeared.

The collected trees will now be nursed by our board member, Richard, in his back garden in Starbeck, before they are planted on at Long Lands Common in autumn this year.

You can read more about Janet's efforts in The Yorkshire Post article she appeared in [here](#).



# Site Development

In our two design meetings since the new year, the main focus has been on completing our Woodland Design Plan for submission to the Forestry Commission next month and designing the container workshop.

The finalised plan below has recently been delivered to local stakeholders for consultation purposes. Once the consultation period has finished, on March 22nd, and any responses have been processed, it will be submitted to the Forestry Commission for approval, on April 11th, ahead of our bid for White Rose Forest grant funding later this year.

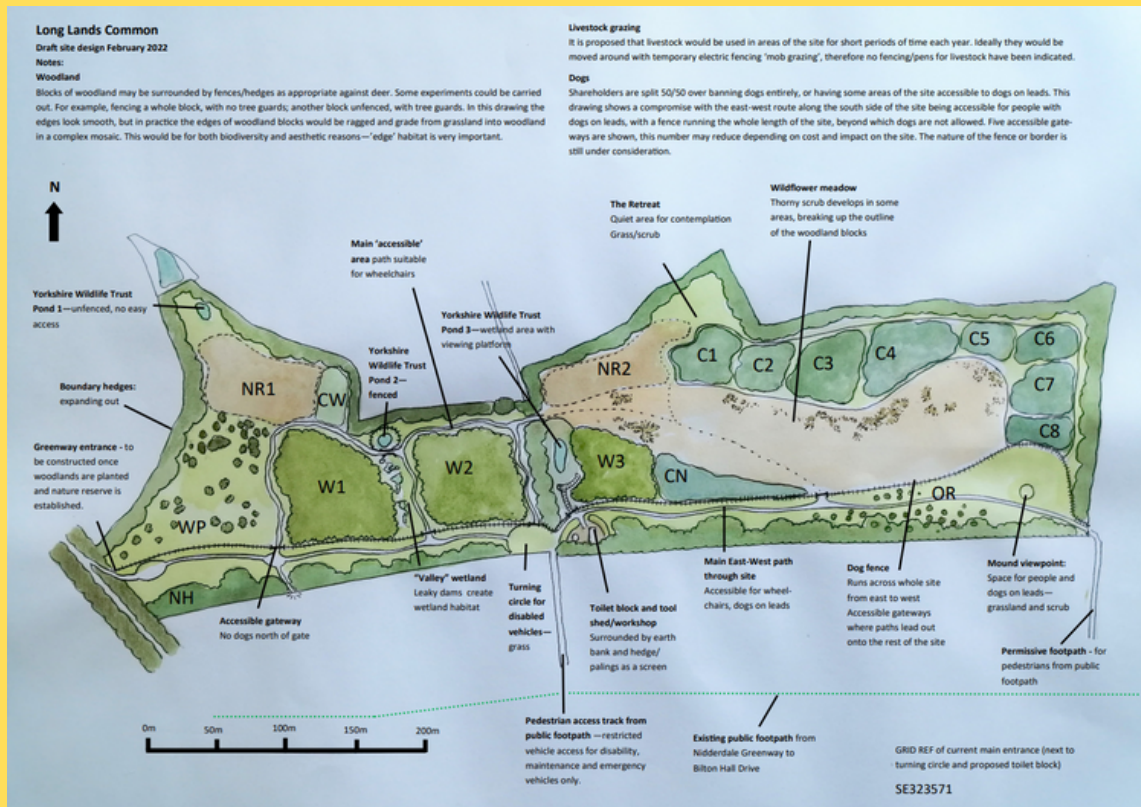


Illustration by:

## Map key and tree species

**W=woodland blocks:** pedunculate oak; hornbeam; lime; alder; birch (silver and downy); crab apple; field maple; wild cherry; hazel; spindle; guelder rose

**C=coppice:** hazel; sweet chestnut; pedunculate oak; hornbeam; lime; alder;

**NR=natural regeneration**

**WP=wood pasture:** oak (pedunculate and sessile); lime; sweet chestnut

**OR=orchard:** domestic varieties of cherry, apple and pear; Victoria plum; Damson, Greengage

**CW=coppice of willow**

**NH=new hedge along south boundary of west field**

**CN=coppice woodland and tree nursery**



# The New Ponds

By Ben Skinner

This quarter has seen the second major groundworks project on the Common, after our main access track was laid last year.

Three ponds have now been dug in partnership with the Yorkshire Wildlife Trust, in order to serve as wildlife habitats and landscape features, spread along the western border of the Common.



*Photo Credit: Ben Skinner*

From initial observations, and as hoped-for when their locations were chosen, Ponds #1 and #3 appear to be being fed by underground springs or a high local water table, and should maintain close to their current water levels all year round.



*Photo Credit: Ben Skinner*

Pond #2 has been sited on a slope, with a mud supporting bank slightly uphill from the nearest underground stream. This means it is not being fed directly, and thus it may see a drop in water level across the year in the summer months. We will be monitoring how Pond #2 develops over the next few months, and consider whether it is desirable to intervene to maintain it as a pond all year, or whether we will allow it to dry out in the summer, and then refill naturally from rainfall as the weather cools again.

A cyclical filling and drying process across each year would not affect the pond's purpose as a habitat for endangered newts and other amphibians, as they only need the ponds for breeding activities from Spring until early Summer, so it may well be that no intervention is deemed necessary, in order to best support our amphibious friends.

# The New Ponds

Each of the three ponds will be developed in accordance with our Woodland Creation Design Plan. The plan (subject to any potential changes) currently calls for Pond #3 to be given a viewing platform, reached via a wheelchair-accessible path. Pond #2 will be also on our path network, and will be fenced around, without a viewing platform. Pond #1 will be our most “wild” pond, being away from our accessible paths, tucked away in a corner of Long Lands Common, and also left unfenced, so as to develop most naturally over time.



*Photo Credit: Ben Skinner*

Spoil from digging out the ponds, has been moved to three places on the site, firstly a berm of spoil has been placed near Pond #1.

This will shortly be used in constructing artificial hibernacula (hibernating chambers for our amphibians through the winter months). Spoil has also been used to reinforce the downslope bank of Pond #2.

This will soon be sprouting grass, and will look like a natural feature before too long.



*Photo Credit: Ben Skinner*

A small amount of spoil has been put aside near the planned location of our onsite workshop, which will be used for concealing the workshop and blending it into the environment. Finally, the remainder of the spoil has been used to double the size of the viewpoint mound at the highest spot of the land.



# The New Ponds



*Photo Credit: Ben Skinner*

**Please be aware that if you visit, the earth around the three ponds has been churned up somewhat from the machines used to dig them out. Wading or swimming is not permitted.**

**We have already seen evidence that local deer have been visiting the ponds, and hope to catch some in a photograph or two, very soon. We'll keep everyone in touch with the latest developments from the ponds as they mature and settle into the landscape across the coming year.**



*Photo Credit: Jane - Getty Images*



# Species Spotlight: Skylarks



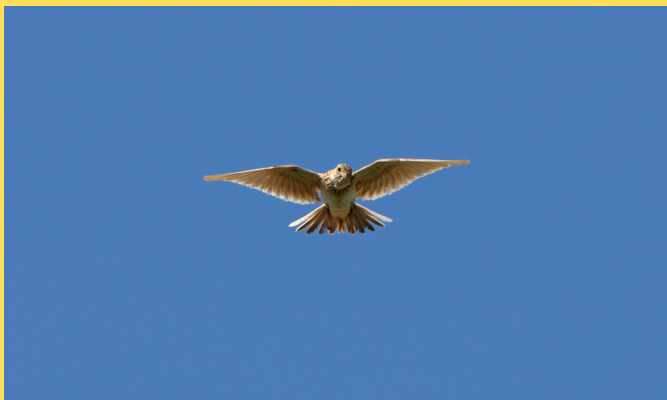
*Photo Credit: Andrew Howe*

**By Angela Jex**

One of the birds that may be seen or heard at Long Lands Common is the Skylark that can be found throughout the UK on farmland and upland moorland. Skylark numbers have dramatically decreased and it is now a red listed conservation species by the RSPB.

Skylarks proclaim their territories with a spectacular and beautiful song-flight that rises almost vertically hovering at up to 1,000 feet before parachuting down. The Skylarks distinctive song and aerial display is one of nature's wonders. It is fascinating and uplifting and has inspired poets and composers such as Shelley with *To a Skylark* and Vaughan Williams "The Lark Ascending".

A good description of the bird and its song for those unfamiliar with it can be found on the [RSPB website](#).



*Photo Credit: Neil Bowman*

Skylarks are ground-nesting birds and will breed from April to early August as spring temperatures trigger the start of the breeding season.

The nest is a hollow on the ground, lined with grasses leaves and hair. For nests to be successful they need vegetation height not to be too short or tall. Skylarks eat seeds and insects

The decline in numbers relates to human factors including a number of changes in farming practice i.e. the change from spring to autumn sown crops make it difficult for birds to raise more than one brood, use of pesticides and insecticides and less stubble fields affect the food supply.

# Species Spotlight: Skylarks

Often inconspicuous when on the ground, it can be difficult to see birds until you are very close. As with other ground nesting or foraging birds, the skylark is vulnerable not only to predation but also to disturbance.

As a concluding note larks are symbolic of joy, hope, and laughter. They start singing at sunrise with their cheerful songs and continue to uplift and inspire.



*Photo Credit: Magnus Lindberg*

## Wildlife disturbance and threat

The response of birds and other wildlife to a threatening stimulus, such as people, dogs or natural predators is called 'disturbance'. The reaction is often to use 'anti predator behaviours', such as freezing, fleeing or hiding. Important activities like foraging, feeding young or resting are stopped and accompanied by physiological changes such as the release of stress hormones and altered heart rates affecting the health of the adult bird.

This is a big problem for ground-nesting birds, who do not have the safety of being up in a tree or bush. To birds and wildlife, our dogs and people are a threat, often resulting in birds leaving their nests trying to distance themselves from their eggs or chicks. They might try to lead the threat in another direction, mob the intruder along with other nesting birds until it leaves the area. These disturbances mean that eggs and chicks are left unattended, making them vulnerable to predation, to thermal stress from being too cold or too hot, or to being crushed as they are very hard to spot and, if there is too much disturbance the nest may be abandoned. Wildlife can be threatened by disturbance at non breeding times especially winter e.g. depleting precious energy reserves.

The threat to ground nesting birds is well known and in open access areas in England dogs should only be on footpaths and should always be under close control at distance of less than 2 m (which in practice means a short lead) between 1st March and 31st July.

# Species Spotlight: Skylarks



*Photo Credit: P.J McFarlane*

## **How to enjoy and protect the nesting birds and wildlife at Long Lands Common**

- **Take time to enjoy and observe nature**
- **Please keep to path areas or around the edge of fields whenever possible**
- **Walk slowly and stop if you disturb wildlife and alter your direction if necessary**
- **Keep dogs on a short lead. This is very important as the presence of a loose dog is a much greater threat.**
- **Don't approach nesting birds' nests or young animals**
- **If you have concerns, contact the Long Lands team at [info@longlandsccommon.org](mailto:info@longlandsccommon.org) or if you suspect criminal activity the Police on 101 or 999 in an emergency.**
- **Be courteous and helpful to other Long Lands visitors to enhance our community**
- **Protect yourself by keeping yourself and dogs out of ponds and away from hazards such as barbed wire fencing /old machinery.**
- **Take photos or use Long Lands as an inspiration for yourself and others**



# Ecology at Long Lands Common



Photo Credit: Getty Images

**By Richard Lord**

**We hope to make amphibians and reptiles, frogs, toads, newts, lizards and snakes regular inhabitants & visitors to our project. We have built 3 ponds which will naturally attract all these creatures in spring, summer and autumn, but where will they go in the colder winter months?**

**These animals need to hibernate in Winter. Naturally they will seek out undisturbed damp places, under rocks or piles of wood, fallen trees, especially if they're in sunny spots, near ponds & bogs, or in heaps of composting vegetation. Our Common, though, is lacking these places so, in order to help Mother Nature along we intend to build some hibernacula.**

**Hibernaculum (singular), Hibernacula (plural) – are basically fancy words for somewhere that amphibians & reptiles can safely hibernate in winter. Essentially, they are man-made underground chambers filled with rocks & branches, roughly covered in soil to protect the animals from winter's cold.**

**So, if in a few months you see untidy piles of partly covered rocks & branches like in the photos near our ponds, you will know why.**



Photo Credit: Getty Images

# Ecology at Long Lands Common

Creating a hibernaculum in your own garden will provide a safe space for amphibians and reptiles in your own garden to hibernate too. They are also great spots for solitary bees to soak up the sun and for birds to relax.

You will need:

- A spade
- Logs and branches
- Rocks and bricks
- 2-3 drainpipe cut-offs or cement pipes (if using plastic drainpipes, roughen the insides with sandpaper, so that they are not too slippery for animals to climb)
- Turf or meadow flower seeds (optional)

How to make your hibernaculum:

1. In a sunny spot, dig a hole about 50cm deep and 1.5 metres across.
2. Fill with logs, branches, bricks and rocks, leaving plenty of gaps in between.
3. Insert entrance tubes (drainpipes) at ground level into the hole.
4. Cover the pile with soil (to about 50cm high).
5. Plant meadow seeds or long grasses over the mound to create a feast for summer pollinators.



Source: [Wiltshire Wildlife Trust](#)



# Your Nature Finds

The winter months are giving way to the warmer and much brighter early spring days! This means we are seeing green shoots and the days are getting noticeably longer making it an excellent time to get out with your camera! It's always exciting to see what you can discover and there is so much to see no matter what you're into.

In this issue, we feature early spring signs taken by board members of Long Lands Common.



We would love it if you sent us your captures of what you've found and we'll do our best to feature them!

Email your photographs to: [thelonglander@yahoo.com](mailto:thelonglander@yahoo.com)

or

Tag us in your pictures on Twitter [@LongLandsCommon](https://twitter.com/LongLandsCommon) or over on our [Facebook page](#)





**Wishing you all a Happy Easter!**

**from  
The Long Lands Common team**