

The Longlander

Spring 2025 ISSUE 16



Photo Credit Ian Burl

WELCOME

Happy Easter Longlanders,

Welcome to the Spring 2025 edition of our newsletter that comes to you with a great sigh of relief now that we are debt free and in complete community control of 90 acres of beautiful greenbelt land between Harrogate & Knaresborough.

This follows the wonderful news of a generous donation - made by one of our lovely supporters - following a recent tour of Knaresborough Forest Park, that has enabled us to repay our loans and focus our attention on other things besides fundraising, just in time for the arrival of spring.

This has been a huge morale boost for the whole Long Lands Community as we can now look forward to recovering nature and reclaiming the commons across our three sites: Long Lands Common; Knaresborough Forest Park; and the Community Food Forest.

There will always be admin duties for our volunteers to take care of, as you will discover later in this edition, when you read about the considerable challenge of issuing new share certificates to all the recent investors, but the knowledge that we now have a much larger wildlife corridor under the long term ownership and protection of local people, gives us the motivation and energy we need, as a team, to keep on giving our time, freely and passionately, in support of a secure, long term environmental legacy to our future generations and wildlife and become good ancestors for those who follow us.

Amongst all the ceaseless fundraising efforts, life has still been going on behind the scenes and on the land and we hope you feel energised and motivated to get involved in whatever way you can...

There are opportunities to visit the sites coming up:

[A Community Earth Day on Long Lands Common](#), 11 till 1, on Saturday 26th April;

[A Knaresborough Forest Park Celebration Day](#) on Sunday 4 May from 12 noon till 2, with an optional guided walk around the site beforehand.

Click on either event to see details, and sign up.

We have also set a date for this year's AGM: it will be held on **Saturday 19 July**, when we hope to have new share certificates ready for collection.

Now that the warmer months are here there will also be opportunities to register your interest and get involved in a Permaculture Design workshop for the recently completed henge on the Common, where we will be observing and interacting with the land and contributing ideas towards the further design of this newly created human space. Please register on the link below if you are interested in attending.

<https://www.longlandscommon.org/event-details/henge-design-permaculture-workshop-expression-of-interest>

Many thanks for your continued support.

The Long Lands Community Team

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KEEPING IN TOUCH

The Long Lands Community has a number of social media channels and email contact addresses (and we'll probably be spawning more over the next few months!). Please feel free to follow them all, and contact us with enquiries too.

LONG LANDS COMMON



[FACEBOOK LINK](#)



[YOUTUBE LINK](#)



[INSTAGRAM LINK](#)



[EMAIL LINK](#)



[TWITTER / X](#)

KNARESBOROUGH FOREST PARK



[FACEBOOK LINK](#)



[EMAIL LINK](#)



[TWITTER / X](#)

Long Lands Common Update

Community Earth Day Event - Saturday 26th April 2025 – 11am to 1pm.

To coincide with Earth Day 2025 we will be holding an open day on our Long Lands Common site to give visitors a tour of the site and an opportunity to see the steady progress we are making in the gradual transformation of our grassland site to a mixed habitats, community woodland nature reserve – a living example of how we can think globally by acting locally and inspire others to do the same along the way.

In keeping with the spirit of [Earth Day](#), we will also be asking one of our most global of local heroes, Piers Forster, to unveil our newest community woodland block that we have chosen to name 'Forster Wood' in recognition of his vital international work as a climate scientist in defence of our planet.



Forster Wood, seen from the Middle Pond at Longlands Common.

To sign up for the event, please click on the link below:

<https://www.longlandscommon.org/event-details/community-earth-day-tour-of-long-lands-common-2>



Planting Day at Forster Wood.

Design Workshop for New Henge

In recent weeks, with the drying weather, our fabulous civil engineering contractors - Coxon Brothers – returned to site to complete the henge groundworks and leave us with a fantastically unique space for our intended human activity zone.



The creation of the henge, along with the planting of the woodland blocks and the recent compost toilet installation has all been funded by the [White Rose Forest](#) using first two phases of our woodland creation grant.

The next stage is the design of the area and we are now wanting to hear from all members and supporters interested in taking part in a design workshop where we will be revisiting our guiding Permaculture principles and ethics to create a special space in the local landscape.



It doesn't matter if you are new to Permaculture or have previous knowledge, the workshops will be a good social opportunity to interact with the land and make observations and contributions towards the final design and hopefully pick up some new knowledge along the way.

To register your interest in the workshops please sign up below.

Dates will be arranged when we have an idea of numbers interested.

[Sign up here for Henge Design Workshop](#)

Newly twinned compost toilet installed

A marvellous team effort over the last couple of months has seen the successful installation of our new compost toilet on the common. Many volunteers and many work party days, over hundreds of hours, were needed to get us to the stage where we were finally ready to commission the (swanky but homely) double-drop [Natsol](#) loo, complete with accessible concrete ramp.



Many thanks to all our wonderful volunteers and their tremendous enthusiasm to get the job done and ensure no more portaloos at future AGMs!

To mark the historic occasion we have decided to twin our new toilet with one in South Sudan in support of the [toilet twinning](#) charity that 'funds hygiene education via community-led workshops and sourcing local materials for families and communities to build their own toilet'.

Many thanks to all our generous volunteers who have offered to make a contribution to this charitable initiative.

Chris Kitson



Knaresborough Forest Park Update

You may have heard the wonderful news that a supporter gave us a generous donation after participating in one of our guided walks! This enabled us to pay off all remaining debt owed by “LLC Ltd” (the Community Benefit Society that owns the sites in the Long Lands Community) and gave us some spending money to maintain the land besides.

It had been a dream of our site lead, Geoff, to invest in a small tractor to mow paths and carry out other tasks on the land. Just as he was daring to believe that we could buy one with the windfall, we were offered one! It's a few years old and needs a bit of maintenance, but it will make a huge difference to what we can achieve on the site, and it accords perfectly with our permaculture principle of reducing waste and reusing materials.



We have run three guided walks on KFP so far, one a month since February. It's a great way for us to meet KFP supporters and explain our vision to them, and we have had lots of lovely comments from people who have taken part in them.



We cap these at 50 participants as a manageable number, and each event has been sold out. The next one will be an optional precursor to our celebration event on Sunday 4 May – see our website for details and to sign up.

The main event will be from 12 noon: all welcome, (including dogs and children), bring a picnic and help us celebrate being debt-free!

We have run a few working parties already, out of which a stalwart group has emerged, (the self-styled 'last of the summer wine' group), who are now hooked and turn up to an informal working party every week. We have also run a few corporate volunteering days which went down very well with the participants. Do get in touch if your company is interested in this.



For more news of our activities, see our blog posts:

<https://www.knaresboroughforestpark.org/blog>

We ran some successful fundraising events over the winter, including two quiz nights and a ceilidh, which each raised about £2000. Our next event will be a “Green” Gardening Question Time on Wednesday 14 May – an opportunity to learn more about sustainable gardening practices. Tickets (£10) are available from Castlegate Books in Knaresborough, The Red Box in Starbeck or here:

<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/green-gardening-question-time-tickets-1326192209599>

We love meeting supporters and sharing our passion for this project, so please do come along and get involved in any of these activities or sign up as a volunteer on the website.

The KFP team

What is a Food Forest, and why do we want one?

Cosied alongside Bilton Hall Lane next to a soon-to-be meadow is our proposed Food Forest field of 5 acres. This is part of the Knaresborough Forest Park land acquisition that has recently completed its funding, a huge thank you to our supporters who helped make it happen.

The vision is to slowly and gently create a space for learning, enjoyment and harvesting that is accessible for all.

A food forest, or forest garden, is a complex environment of mostly edible plants combined in a way that reflects natural ecosystems. Think the Amazon but on a teeny tiny scale.

This structure will be guided by the main concepts of permaculture: Earth Care, People Care and Fair Share. Each flowing into the next and informing all decisions, so every time an idea is proposed it has to fit in each section to be accepted. Will it be good for the earth, will it benefit the people interacting with the site and is there balance with who benefits from this (i.e habitats and food for animals, whilst providing for humans also)?

But what actually is a food forest?

There are seven recognised layers of each forest – the overstory, the understory, shrubs, herbaceous, roots, ground cover, and vines (sometimes fungi are also included as their own layer). This may seem initially confusing but in fact many established gardens already cater to this idea and don't know it, whether it's; planting tall trees for shade, blueberry bushes to eat or bulbs for spring they all have a place in the 7 part plan. The idea of a food forest just takes these parts and makes all of them productive, whether that's for humans or wildlife.

So imagine a big old apple tree, usually this would be planted in a neat lawn or walled garden and kept clear of ground competition. These huge trees don't need to fear the locals, they have deep roots pulling nutrients and water from far underground. Now imagine giving them some company, perhaps planting blackcurrants around the trunk but half a meter away, then between them place comfrey plants. Already you have an overstory, a shrub and a herbaceous layer. These won't always be in leaf so daffodils would make a welcome addition to the spaces in late winter. "But they're not edible" I hear, not everything has to be but they could be useful in another way - many people think they deter rabbits from the area due to a toxin called lycorine which rabbits choose to avoid. Wild, or Alpine, strawberries would provide ground cover and climbing beans up the trunk of the tree would be a welcome annual that helps to fix nitrogen for surrounding plants.

All of a sudden we have a "guild" of 5 plants working harmoniously, all providing for us and creating complex habitat for insects (perhaps the birds will need a little deterring).

Now take that one guild and nestle it amongst a number of them....doesn't it sound like a forest of food?

While this sounds like a huge task, we are in no rush. The first thing to do with a space is to observe, so this year we will be holding a number of visits and workshops on the proposed site. Allowing us to get to know the land and see the benefits and pitfalls of our future choices. From there we can start planing this coming winter to start a small area on the right path.

Our first introduction to the site will be in May when the leaves have burst and we can see what's due to happen in the field over summer.

Keep an eye out on our email updates for that date!

A fruitful planting

A big thank you to those who made it on Saturday 29th March for the fruit tree planting on The Common. Situated next to The Mound are now 6 large fruit trees, two of each; apple, pear and plum. These tall young trees with no branches below 5ft, known as standards, will eventually grow to form a ring around a meeting place for the future.

Varieties suitable for our northern climate were chosen and placement was dictated by their overall size. This mature spread and growth rate, "vigour", are dictated by the rootstock used below a graft. This is the underground part of the plant that has characteristics that are desirable, such as overall mature tree size, disease resistance etc. Each rootstock must be compatible with the desired fruit, for example a Bramley Apple cannot be joined to a plum rootstock, they aren't from the same genetics and so can't grow together. Once the rootstock has been grown from a cutting and taken root, the subject fruit is then attached, this is called grafting and the part of the tree you want to eat the produce of is called a Scion. Once the scion and rootstock have joined, the tree will grow as one and start to produce only fruit of the desired type.

Below are some of the details of the varieties we've chosen:

James Grieve - Apple on M25 - Edinburgh, 1893

"Almost full yellow, slightly flushed and red striped. Grows well in the North and gives a good performance on nearly all types of soil ... remember too, that it is more subject to scab in areas of high rainfall but is very juicy and has a pleasant, crisp, sweet flavour. Probably the best September dessert apple, very prolific."



Greenup's Pippin ('Yorkshire Beauty') - Apple on M25 - Cumbria, 1769

"Found in the garden of a Mr Greenup, a shoemaker of Keswick, and introduced by Clarke & Atkinson nurserymen of Keswick in the late 1700s. This is a hardy, good yielding tree producing quality fruit even in difficult conditions of cold and wet. Known locally also as the 'Yorkshire Beauty', this is a handsome fruit, juicy, and well-flavoured and which makes wonderful baked apples when stuffed with raisins and brown sugar."

Hessle - Pear on Seedling - Yorkshire, Pre-1827

"Known locally as the 'Hazel' pear, this very old variety probably arose at Hessle near Hull, East Yorkshire and was first recorded in 1827, though is almost certainly much older. Small greenish-yellow fruit overlaid with some russetting, the flesh is white, juicy and fairly sweet. The main advantage of this pear is that it is extremely hardy and reliable, has some resistance to scab, canker, and mildew, and will grow and fruit just about anywhere."

William's Bon Cretien - Pear on Seedling - Berkshire, c.1760

"A very old and famous English variety, found in a schoolmaster's garden at Aldermaston in Berkshire in the 1760s. In 1797 it was taken to the United States and renamed Bartlett, still one of the most important pears in the US. Large thin-skinned fruit with a fine-textured flesh are very sweet and juicy with a strong musky aroma. Very hardy and reliable in the North, although slightly susceptible to scab when grown in wetter areas. A fantastic variety for eating warm straight off the tree."

Jubilee - Plum on Myrobalan B- Bedfordshire, 1905

"Raised at Bedford by Laxton Bros Ltd in 1905, and introduced in 1936. The fruit are blue-black with a bloom, and are medium-large oval-oblong in shape."

Kilnwick - Plum on Myrobalan B - Yorkshire

"Kilnwick (pronounced: Killick) is a village in the East Riding of Yorkshire, where this plum originates from."

Why we ask you to keep dogs on a lead.

If you have walked on or near Knaresborough Forest Park recently, you may have seen notices asking walkers to keep dogs on a lead. This is the policy adopted by the Long Lands Common Community, so it holds true for all of our sites.

Many of the Long Lands Community team are dog owners too, and we are aware that some people may find this policy hard to adhere to, particularly if they have been used to letting their dogs off the lead on open ground, so we wanted to explain the reasons behind the request.

We heard our first curlew on KFP during last month's guided walk, and LLC Rangers have even seen a pair, so we know that they are visiting and are likely to be nesting. They are ground-nesting birds, so it's important not to let dogs run loose where they can cause damage to the birds or the nests. There are interesting articles [here](#) from Yorkshire Dales National Park and [here](#) from the Wildlife Trusts. We also have roe deer and smaller mammals on the land which dogs might chase into the undergrowth, and injure either themselves or the wild animal.

The other reason is that if your dog is running loose, it's much harder to pick up after it. Dog poo is classed as an environmental pollutant, because of its high levels of nitrogen and phosphorus as well as parasites and chemicals from medicines and treatments.

There is a very helpful article [here](#) explaining why it is now standard policy (advocated by Forestry England and the National Trust, among many others) to 'bag and bin' rather than 'stick and flick', as some organisations used to suggest.

If your dog is running through long grass, it is also at risk of picking up ticks, which cause serious diseases in dogs and humans: [this article](#) explains that the UK tick season has now been extended from spring-autumn to all year round, due to the change in climate.

On all the Long Lands Community sites, we are treading a careful path between opening up the area for the community to enjoy, and protecting the wildlife: please help us by following the guidance and talking to your friends about it. We have mentioned it to a few dog walkers we have met on the land, and have been heartened by their positive response, so please join us in protecting the wildlife.

Thank you!

The Long Lands Common Community teams



Update from the Share issue team

We have received several messages from new shareholders, who understandably would like to know when they might expect to receive their share certificate.

We have been very busy with fundraising for the last eight months since the launch of the share scheme, but we convened the share issue team in the new year to start the process of creating the new shareholders' list and sending out share certificates.

However, this process is very complex - we have applicants who

have applied through Crowdfunder and on paper. Some of those who have applied on paper have paid by cheque and some by BACS or card reader in person. Some have paid and then filled in a retrospective form online. We need to record all the paper applicants' details on to a spreadsheet manually. We also need to write to all the Crowdfunder applicants asking them what they wish to happen to their shares in the event of their death, and record those details on the spreadsheet. Unfortunately the Crowdfunder form was a fixed template so we were unable to add this question to it.

We further need to identify whether new applicants are existing shareholders and therefore already have a member number or not. We also need to separate out the Gift share applications.

Once we've done that, we need to create the individual share certificates. Our aim is to have these ready for the AGM so that people can come and collect their certificate in person. It would be wonderful to see a lot of our new shareholders at this event!

We hope that this helps to explain why it will still be some while until you receive your new certificate. Thank you so much to everyone who has bought shares to support the Knaresborough Forest Park appeal.

If you haven't yet, it's not too late! It's an open share issue, so you can still apply by going to:

<https://www.crowdfunder.co.uk/p/long-lands-community/> or:

<https://www.longlandscommon.org/donate>.



Wildflower fundraiser

We were contacted in November by Catherine Chisholm, a Long Lands Common shareholder, who wrote to tell us about her 16-year-old son, Magnus (pictured).

He was tasked with creating a product for his sixth form LEAP project, a business project completed in lower 6th, developing and marketing a business idea.

He decided to sell wild flower seeds on behalf of the Knaresborough Forest Park appeal. He designed beautiful packaging with the help of an artistically talented friend, bought special envelopes and quality seed bulk. He envisaged making a moderate profit of perhaps £50.

The packets contained seeds of Yarrow, Common Knapweed, Greater Knapweed, Wild Carrot, Viper's Bugloss, Lady's Bedstraw, Meadow Cranesbill, Cat's ear, Field Scabious, Meadow Vetchling, Rough Hawkbit, Oxeye Daisy, Common Toadflax, Birdsfoot Trefoil, Musk Mallow, Hoary Plantain, Cowslip, Self Heal, Meadow Buttercup, Bulbous Buttercup, Yellow Rattle, Common Sorrel, Small Scabious, Red Campion, Betony, Devil's-bit Scabious, Red Clover, Dark Mullein, and Tufted Vetch.

When Catherine contacted us, he had sold about 10 packets to friends and relatives and had been hoping to sell more at Christmas fairs, but had not had much success.

We met Catherine (unfortunately we did not have the pleasure of meeting Magnus himself), who helped us sell some packets at our campaign event in Harrogate town centre in December, then we took the rest of the stock to sell at KFP events.

Magnus's story inspired a lot of interest and we sold almost all of the packets, raising a total of £178. Catherine and Magnus very generously rounded this up to £200 as a donation to LLC for the KFP appeal. The remaining packets have been given to Tanacetum Studio on Kirkgate in Knaresborough, a craft studio with a botanical theme run by Sherry Doyal, a new Long Lands shareholder, who was very impressed with Magnus's initiative and the product itself.



Alison Organ

New Bird and Bat Boxes at Longlands Common

The storms at the end of 2024 damaged our owl box which was situated in the ash tree adjacent to Henshaw's field. We are extremely grateful to Andrew Willocks and the team at RHS Harlow Carr who kindly donated a kestrel box (now sited where the owl box was) and three bat boxes (sited at the other end of the Common alongside the Greenway).

The boxes were surplus to requirements after a course, that took place in February, "Living in a Box" where participants learnt about attracting wildlife to a garden and made a number of different designs of wildlife boxes.

The boxes were put up in the appropriate places by a posse at the March working party day.

We are very grateful to Andrew and Longlands regulars Bernadette and Stewart Reid who liaised with Andrew to arrange the gifted boxes.

NB. The kestrel box up at Harlow Carr has barn owls nesting in it!!



Site Ranger Corner

The signs of spring are definitely with us and the next six weeks will see the Common transform with changes apparent almost daily.



Back in mid-February we had our first siting of catkins and by the beginning of this month we had lesser celandine and dog mercury in flower and the beautiful teeny red female hazel flowers which are easily missed if you don't have a very keen eye.



By mid-March the blackthorn had begun to flower, we have large amounts of frog spawn in the bottom pond and the trees in Wilkinson Wood and the new woodland block are putting on amazing new growth.

We have had some exciting sightings recently. A large amount of badger fur was found in the northeast corner of the common in mid-January and Ranger Mark set up a trail cam to see what we could spot. We were very excited to see a couple of badgers stroll into shot. The camera also picked up foxes and deer - amazing to see what goes on 'after hours'!!



Very recently there have been regular sightings of a group of mandarin ducks, a snipe has been spotted several times by the top pond and a pair of curlews were recently snapped exploring the east field close to the historic Bilton Park boundary.



Massive thanks to the rangers who helped with the four school groups we have had on site planting trees and to those who helped the maintenance team for two sunny but chilly days in February installing the new composting toilet.

If you would like to become a Longlands Site Ranger please get in touch to arrange a taster session on rangers@longlandscommon.org and we are hoping to arrange the next training session very soon.

Naming Forster Wood

We will be naming our recently planted woodland block Forster Wood, after Professor Piers Forster. This builds our tradition of naming parts of Long Lands Common after local heroes.

Our first woodland block, Wilkinson Wood, was named after Keith Wilkinson, who has valiantly led community efforts to protect and record the environment and wildlife around Bilton and the Nidd Gorge over many decades.



Piers Forster is also a local hero, living in Harrogate, and a Long Lands Common shareholder, but his work could not be more global. He is a professor of climate science at University of Leeds, where he is the director of the Priestley Centre for Climate Futures, and has played a leading role in developing humanity's understanding of climate change. His research tries to measure the different human causes of climate change and the way the Earth responds -

something called 'climate forcing'. This has led to the idea of 'carbon budgets' which are now a common way of understanding our impact on the climate and a tool to help plan reductions in emissions of global warming gases. The UK's Climate Change Committee on 26/02/2025 published the seventh carbon budget covering the period from 2038 to 2042, the intention being that the UK achieves net zero by 2050.

Piers is a member of the UN's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) and has contributed heavily to the writing of IPCC reports, including acting as a Lead Author for the Fourth and Fifth Assessment Reports, and a Co-ordinating Lead Author for the Sixth Report. Piers was part of the IPCC team awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 2007. He also acted as a Lead Author of the IPCC 2018 Special Report on Global Warming of 1.5 °C, the terrifying report which kickstarted the climate action movement involving Greta Thunberg and Extinction Rebellion. He leads an international effort to annually update climate indicators, the "Indicators of Global Climate Change" project.

A member of the Climate Change Committee (CCC), Piers has been its interim chair since 2023, succeeding Lord Deben. The CCC is an independent, statutory body established under the Climate Change Act 2008. Its purpose is to advise the UK and devolved governments on emissions targets and to report to Parliament on progress made in reducing greenhouse gas emissions and preparing for and adapting to the impacts of climate change.

Piers is also trustee of a UK rainforest protection charity the United Bank of Carbon, which raises funds to plant millions of trees.

Long Lands Common was set up to create a local nature reserve but it is also part of wider national and global efforts to restore and protect our ecosystems, and (most importantly) to educate people about practical ways of transitioning to a sustainable future. Through planting trees and improving biodiversity, we 'capture' carbon, and restore watersheds to reduce flooding and soil erosion.

All the above is part of the fight to tackle climate change, but we could not begin to understand the context of what we are doing at Long Lands Common without the research of scientists like Piers Forster.

Written by James McKay and Ian Fraser



Planting Day at Forster Wood.