The Longlander

SEPTEMBER 2021 ISSUE 04

Welcome

Photo Credit: Ben Skinner

Autumnal greetings all! Having been granted the truly incredible honour of election as Chair of the Long Lands Common committee at our Summer AGM, it is with the greatest of pleasure and thanks that I have this opportunity to welcome readers to our fourth quarterly issue of The Longlander.

I certainly did not expect to find myself here chairing the committee of such an exciting scheme, when I first offered to help out with the preservation campaign for our precious Nidd Gorge. Giving a few IT thoughts at a single committee meeting has somewhat snowballed, and as such I think the most important part of my appointed role now is to do my best to fade into the background most of the time, while our amazing team of expert volunteers get on with the real business of planning and executing the development of the site!

Speaking of superlatives, newsletter Editor Artemis has done another excellent job in bringing together all the recent updates from our project, and the following pages contain a mix of looking back at the Summer's events onsite, meditations on the present from contributing writers, and a glimpse or two of future plans as well.

As an element of that look forward, I would particularly like to draw attention to our ongoing *dog policy survey*; as a member-led organisation, we want to canvas opinions as widely as possible in order to form a policy that best balances the three core pillars of members' desires, the obligations of being a publicly accessible green space, and the responsibilities of stewarding a nature reserve.

For now, Long Lands Common will continue its exciting transformation from common (no pun intended) agricultural field into Harrogate and Knaresborough's most unique public woodland, and let the fruits of autumn remind us that after the hard work of establishing the site, there will come an inexhaustible harvest for the generations.

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

Ben Skinner - Chair of Long Lands Common

Contents

02 Welcome

04 News from Long Lands Common
A round-up of news since our last issue

07 Date for your Diary
The Climate Action Festival

08 Volunteer Heroes
Meet this month's Long Lands Common Champions

10 Species Spotlight
This month we look at Badgers and early findings from a Badger survey at Long Lands

12 Nature Notes
Observations and musings from the garden of contributor Ian

14 Your Nature Finds
We showcase your findings!

Contributors

Artemis Swann, Editor

Ian Murdie, Writer

Ralph Hipps, Writer

The Long Lands Common Team

News From Long Lands Common

Certificate alterations

Following all the previously mentioned problems with certificate administration, it was very pleasing to be able to get 2200 certificates printed out in time for collection at the AGM. All certificates not collected in person were then delivered in the following days by our 55 marvellous volunteers who answered the call for help so rapidly that all the rounds had been collected for delivery within the space of one mad weekend (with all out of area certificates delivered by Royal Mail). Many thanks to those delivery volunteers who responded so quickly and enthusiastically. You are also our Volunteer Heroes for September!

Artwork: Laura Crompton

Most members should now have the share certificates they paid for. For those people who have yet to receive any certificate or who have an error on their existing certificate, please get in touch using the *link below before 15th October*, when we'll be putting together the spreadsheet for the third print run.

Photo Credit: Stuart Ibbotson

Planning Application

This autumn and winter our main focus turns to site design and the planning application to the council for full planning permission for change of land use, ahead of our funding bid for woodland creation from the White Rose Forest in 2022.

A design and planning sub-group is currently being formed, of board members and volunteers, to deliver this aspect of the project. If any members have experience in this area and would like to get involved, please get in touch.

News From Long Lands Common

Permaculture Workshops

Due to our recent heavy workload and us having to prioritise more urgent and pressing jobs, it has been necessary to delay the planning and delivery of the Permaculture Workshops we announced earlier this year.

Again, if any members have any experience and knowledge of Permaculture and would like to assist us in the organisation of the workshops, please let us know.

It is likely that the organisation of the workshops will become part of the agenda for the design and planning sub-group this autumn.

Photo Credit: Artemis Swann

Photo Credit: RasselOK - Getty Images

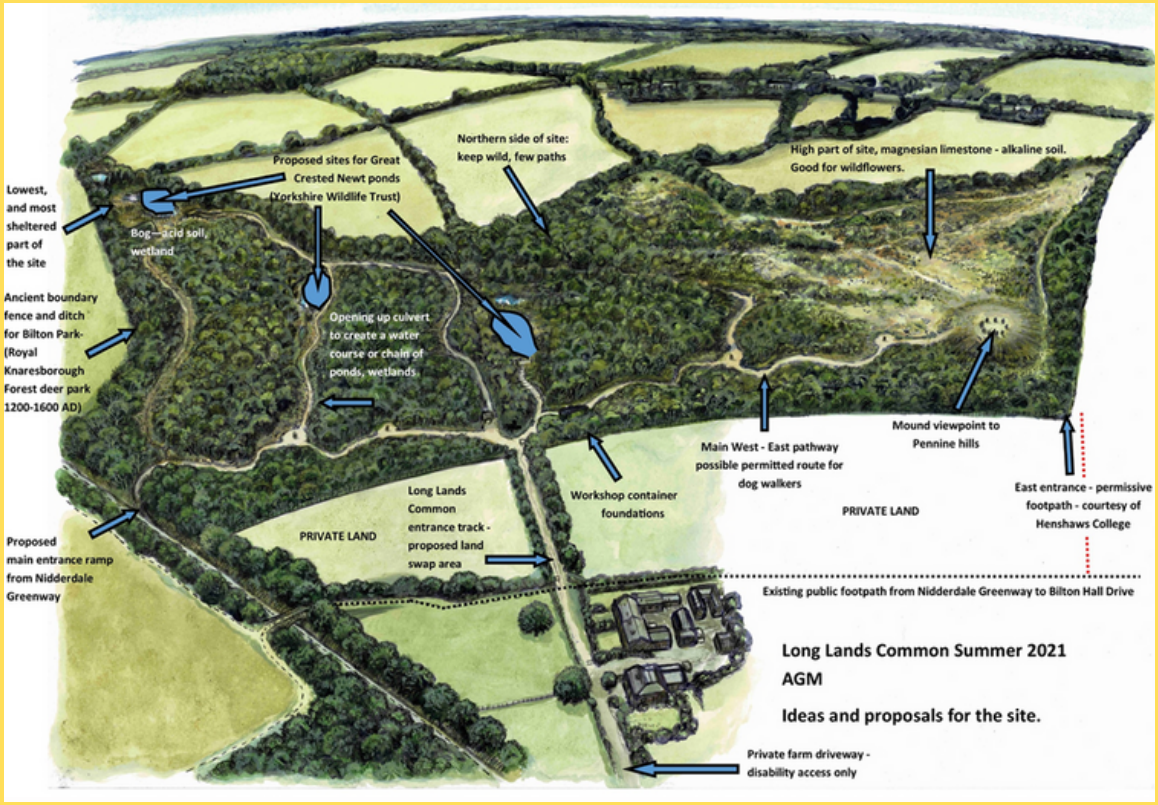
Photo Permissions

We took lots of fantastic photos at the AGM, especially of the ceremonial tree planting that we would like to use both on our website and on social media.

Many of these feature your wonderful children and we feel it's right to ask your permission before publication. If you aren't happy for your children's photos to be shared, please get in contact with us at: info@longlandscommon.org

We are currently working on a best practice policy to help identify those not wishing to have photos taken at future events. Your ideas will be most welcome!

Site Access



Artwork: James Mckay

Finally, we have had quite a few queries about site access and whether or not people can visit and how to get there.

Until the change of use to 'Public Parkland' is attained by the planning process and whilst it is still designated as 'Agricultural' land, members have every right to visit Long Lands Common whenever they wish, as shared owners, using the route from the public footpath between the Nidderdale Greenway and Bilton Hall Drive (see map above). From the footpath, members can then access the fields using either the 'entrance track' or the 'permissive path' as shown. Currently, access can only be gained on foot.

Please note: In order for us to comply with the terms of the sale covenant, the private farm driveway from Bogs Lane is not to be used to access the Common. The driveway is only to be used for disability access by blue badge holders with prior notification (please email info@longlandscommon.org to notify).

If you are visiting with your dog and until our dog policy is decided on please, respect our community woodland nature reserve by keeping your dog on a lead at all times.

Thanks for your understanding with this.

Climate Action Festival 2021

Photo Credit: BooneyAchoat - Getty Images

A Date for your Diary!

The inaugural Climate Action Festival (CAFé) rolls into the Harrogate area from 1st until 23rd October, just before the UN Climate Change Conference of the Parties UK 2021 (COP26) begins which is being held in Glasgow.

Whilst the COP26 stage hosts the world's big leaders, the CAFé event, coordinated by the Harrogate District Climate Change Coalition, brings local concerns and issues to the forefront as well as advice and information on how we can help reduce the damage being done to our climate.

Venues across the Harrogate district will be hosting events including a day for local residents and communities and a day for local businesses alongside fringe events. We are very excited to announce that the Long Lands Common Team will be exhibiting at the Harrogate Climate Action Festival (CAFé) launch event on Saturday 2nd October at Harrogate College.

We want to inspire others by demonstrating what's achievable with community empowerment. We will be showing a short film telling the story of Long Lands Common and sharing our vision for the transformation of the land, along with practical information and advice to encourage others to follow in our footsteps

To find out more about the event and what's on visit the Harrogate District Climate Change Coalition website.

Volunteer Heroes

Photo Credit: Artemis Swann

Our September Long Lands Common Champions!

You, our amazing volunteers and shareholder community!

Equinox greetings Longlanders,

September has seen a return to community action after the summer holiday season with a refreshed and bigger team on the board following the AGM elections.

Many thanks to all of you who were able to attend the first-ever Long Lands Common AGM on 24th July and make the day a memorable and historic community event. For all involved, it was a fitting way to cap off the hectic eighteen-month period that saw the ambitious idea of community land ownership actually become a reality.

To be able to celebrate our collective ownership on our own land, which two years ago was destined to become the site of a new road through the greenbelt, was a moving and uplifting day that made the hard work and struggle of the last five years worthwhile.

A special mention here for the many members and supporters who answered the call for volunteers, both in the run up to the day preparing the site, and, at the eleventh hour, when the call went out for more route marshalls and helpers in the certificate tent.

To see the cavalry arriving, en masse, through the gate at 9 o' clock that Saturday morning was a real tonic. It was a real community effort and another show of the true community spirit and energy that have got us this far. In recognition of the vital role you all played in making the day such a success, you are all this edition's Volunteer Heroes! A heartfelt thanks to one and all.

As well as offering members a chance to visit the land for the first time, the AGM also gave members an opportunity to hear about our progress so far and our future plans for the land and also offered members the opportunity to participate in the project and contribute ideas and opinions.

If you were unable to attend on the day, as a member/shareholder you can still participate in the democratic process. By clicking on *this link* you will find much of the information given out at the AGM along with a feedback form for ideas and a survey to canvass members opinions about how we manage access for dogs on Long Lands Common.

Photo Credit: Trish Sanders

Species Spotlight - Badgers

Photo Credit: Christine E-Russell - Getty Images

From Ralph Hipps, Emily & Sarah

As the autumn evenings draw in and darkness descends and we retreat to the warmth and comfort of our homes, an animal emerges from its sett to feed and to play. Badgers are one of the UK's most iconic species and have enjoyed a long history in England and Wales, with the earliest evidence of badgers dating back millions of years.

Sadly, these striking animals have been subjected to horrific cruelty and persecution over the centuries through blood sports or from displacement due to housing and building developments. The persecution level was so bad that in 1992 the UK passed the Protection of Badgers Act to criminalise the mistreatment and hunting of badgers in a bid to protect them as a species. Under the Protection of Badgers Act 1992, in England and Wales (the law is different in Scotland) it is an offence to:

> **WILFULLY KILL, INJURE OR TAKE A BADGER (OR ATTEMPT TO DO SO). INTENTIONALLY OR RECKLESSLY DAMAGE OR DESTROY A BADGER SETT, OR OBSTRUCT ACCESS TO IT. CAUSE A DOG TO ENTER A BADGER SETT. DISTURB A BADGER WHEN IT IS OCCUPYING A SETT.**

There are exceptions to this. Licences to undertake some actions can be issued if it is justified, for example where a badger sett is found on a proposed site for a road or housing development.

Despite the protection of the 1992 act, badgers still face sustained cruelty and persecution and continue to be ill-treated at some of the highest-ever rates. As a result, in 2009 badgers were made a UK Wildlife Crime Priority. You can find out more about the protection of badgers and the law here

A badger's diet is diverse and omnivore. This means it is a carnivore when it eats meat and a herbivore when it eats fruit. The favourite food of choice on the menu for badgers are earthworms which provide a great source of protein in their diet. Those may not appear tasty to our readers but in the next few decades insects, already popular across the world, may become a regular menu item here, their protein needed for our diets, and their consumption has little impact on the environment.

Photo Credit: Coatesy - Getty Images

Earlier in the summer, ecologists Emily and Sarah volunteered their time and surveyed the land for signs of badger activity and are planning to conduct further surveys in the autumn, possibly with trail cameras, to assess the population size. Autumn is a great time to survey for badgers as they are especially active, growing their fat reserves with increased foraging, and bringing in bedding for the winter when they spend most of their time underground.

Initial surveys found evidence of badger foraging (snuffle holes) on-site, showing that it presently provides a source of food for the nearby badgers. A large part of badgers' diets is usually earthworms and insects, so this is really important! Emily and Sarah also found latrines, paths, day beds and footprints. The latrines mark the boundaries of a clan's territory and the pair are currently trying to determine whether more than one clan is active near Longlands.

Photo Credit: Don Kurto - Getty Images

The paths show the routes taken by the badgers around their territory; they are well-worn as badgers are creatures of habit. Interestingly, since a footpath was cut around the boundary of the site, the badgers appear to have been using this instead of some of their original paths.

Keep a lookout for further information from the second Long Lands badger survey later in the year!

Nature Notes

Photo Credit: Niki Litov - Getty Images

From Ian Murdie

I remember as a child looking out onto a hive of activity on our lawn – mainly starlings. I looked at them as dull brown birds and common as muck. Years later I'm sitting in a biology class staring out of the window at a puddle on the roof of the next building, and there's a bird taking a bath. Crikey – that's a starling – I can't remember seeing one of those since… well since I left Yorkshire! I read in the paper that they were in serious decline and I wondered if I'd ever see one again. Back in Yorkshire again I'm relieved to find they're still as common as muck. I no longer see them as dull – I see them as gregarious chatterboxes, as highly sprung clockwork glam rockers and gravity-defying schooling fish with their synchronised aerial displays that make the red arrows look like learner drivers on their first lesson.

The UK's national bird – the robin - has a nest six feet from my front door and another 10 feet from my back door. I have to be careful not to tread on one when I'm digging the veg patch as he stands by and inspects every turn of my spade for goodies. A passing neighbour pointed up to the eaves of my house and said "looks like you might need pest control." I looked up and saw a buzzing of bumblebees that have made my home their home. Bumblebee numbers are shrinking at an alarming rate across the UK. I gave him my best dad - joke - "Nah I'll let 'em bee." He didn't get it.

Photo Credit: Kichigin

As I sit and relax on a sunny evening, the peace is shattered by gangs of screeching swifts charging around overhead, another species at risk. The light fades and a common frog hops out and sits next to me for a while. He may be common by name, but as an amphibian – a whole class of animal threatened with extinction worldwide by Chytridiomycosis, he may not be common much longer.

Anyway, he's not a great conversationalist, so I ignore him and eventually he goes away. Then a big fat hedgehog blunders around the corner and up the garden as if he owns the place. Maybe he does own the place and we are just squatters?

I feel closer to nature here in North Yorkshire than anywhere else I've lived or visited. There's so much right here on my doorstep – we are so fortunate. When they said at the AGM that there were seven bird species spotted at Long Lands that were on the red list, I was not surprised at all.

While I may curse the slugs that devour my hostas, the blackbird that scatters mulch all over the patio, the wren that has found its way into the fruit cage and can't find its way out, the woodpigeons that pooh all over the lawn and the wasps that have built a nest in the hedge I need to trim, I realise that in reality, I am truly privileged to share my living space with these creatures. That could so easily change. It could change in the blink of an eye. We probably won't properly appreciate what we have until it's gone. It is so important to protect what we have. What we are involved with at Long Lands is such an exciting project, and I'm amazed at what the team has achieved so far.

We are told a healthy diet is a varied diet – it's just the same with other creatures, from the deer and badgers down to the smallest bugs. For example, nectar and pollen varies nutritionally from flower to flower. Bees' health will benefit from there being a wide variety of flowers on which to feed. It stands to reason, the more species that exist in an environment, the stronger each individual organism can be and the more robust the whole ecosystem is. The Long Lands team's focus on biodiversity is bang on the money.

Photo Credit: SBorisov - Getty Images

But as I look at the map, Long Lands is such a tiny dot. Two fields like that could be gobbled up in minutes by a new road or housing estate. There is so much more work to be done.

At the AGM – in answer to a question from the floor "will Long Lands get bigger?", the answer "who knows? – today is just the beginning". I sincerely hope it does. Today - two fields, tomorrow - half the northern hemisphere!

Your Nature Finds

The autumn months and the spectacular colour displays mean it's a great time to be out and about for nature watching (especially Squirrels!) and photography. 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 photographs taken by Stuart Ibbotson on 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
or
tag us in your pictures on Twitter @LongLandsCommon or over on our Facebook page