



Yorkshire Wildlife Trust

Barlow Common activity review April 2019 – September 2020



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1. Executive Summary

This report covers a longer period than previously, as it makes sense to incorporate the impacts of Covid-19 and the lockdown.

Much of the regular management had to be suspended during the summer due to necessary restrictions, but we are now catching up with this during autumn.

Barlow Common has been included in YWT's bid to the National Lottery Green Recovery Fund, and if successful this should see some positive developments in 2021/22.

2. Reserve management

Fences to meadows were repaired and a further area of scrub clearance was undertaken to retain the mosaic of habitats on the site. This is primarily done with our volunteers.

As lockdown was starting a site survey of all trees and structures was undertaken with 3 trees being felled to ensure no foreseeable issues with them.

Butterfly surveys were suspended but resumed towards the end of the season so we can use these as part of our assessment on targeting management work.

As lockdown restrictions changed and we started volunteering up again the meadow cutting resumed. With the uncertainty of further restrictions we have cut and removed the annual growth on an area in each meadow, anticipating that restrictions may be brought back in and did not wish to neglect one meadow as all have different floral composition.

3. Public engagement

In common with many nature reserves, the instruction that people should keep local for exercise meant we saw unprecedented numbers of visitors to this site in the late spring and summer, but it has now fallen back to its usual levels.

In a break from meadow cutting and racking we started on the paths again at their narrowest points, again in the event of restrictions the site will as a result be accessible to a wide range of visitors.

The scouts continue to be present on site but have not opened this season due to Covid restrictions. Unfortunately, they have suffered at least one break in and two acts of vandalism in this period. Thankfully, it appears to have stopped now.

The fishing lake continues with its current lease holder who has played an ever-important role of doing his daily exercise on the site and reporting any issues. Unfortunately, the role his water bailiffs undertook of toilet daily cleaning and checking has stopped as they are all over 70 and thus currently the toilets are closed.

4. Health and safety and management issues

Following on from a comment made by a visitor who used the site regularly with people who needed assistance around the paths we decided to cut back the vegetation as shown below.



This proved a real bonus, and we completed the task before we suspended volunteering due to Covid measures.

The site was heavily used in lockdown and, again in common with patterns seen across the country, this did create teething issues through more users than these sites usually experience. However, the winter work we undertook was a real winner here as it allowed access for all with social distancing to be undertaken. We shall continue this path management for the future. We have also continued to maintain the public right of way from the car park to the site.