



Yorkshire Wildlife Trust

Barlow Common Activity Review April 2018 – April 2019



Prepared by Andrew Gibson, Living Landscapes Officer, Yorkshire Wildlife Trust
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1. Executive Summary

Barlow Common offers a pleasant space for local green exercise. Overall we are very pleased with the usage of the site and the opportunities people have to experience the natural environment.

The site continues to be used by several groups, and has an estimated 10,000 visits per annum. It is likely this level of engagement could be uplifted with investment in an engagement programme.

The fencing of the meadows is beginning to fail, and investment is needed to renew this. The floral meadows are in excellent condition and it would be a shame to lose this.

YWT continue to undertake basic maintenance of the car park and track.

6 years into the lease, it would seem sensible for both parties to meet to review our shared objectives for the site, and consider future management planning. There are several additional opportunities for activity and engagement, if we wish to pursue it.

2. Reserve management

Maintenance and management of the site continues through the volunteer group, led by YWT staff.

The three fenced meadows were cut and raked by hand again this year following a spectacular display of flora. Fences around these meadows are starting to fail and required over 70 posts this year. Renewing and upgrading these fences is required if funds become available.

The annual tree safety inspection was undertaken and a number felled following this.

Two additional benches have been added, these being constructed and installed by volunteers.

Maintenance of the car park and public footpath to the site has been undertaken by YWT with volunteer work groups. If this was not done, access for all would soon become very difficult and complaints would be received. Currently these areas are not covered by the SBC/YWT agreement. A request for a service level agreement covering this has been submitted but no conclusion has yet been received.

Barlow Common has been included in funding bids related to work at local power stations.

3. Public engagement

The site continues to function as a very accessible, level access, green space for people wishing to experience nature. However, the site has far greater potential for access and engagement events including Wild Wellbeing Days and mindfulness sessions – however additional resource would be needed to enable this.

From sample counts and user group information, we estimate that the level of usage of the site remains constant at around 10,000 visits per annum.

Groups known to use the site are:

- Forest tots on a weekly basis – this group provide outdoor education, not just for children but also introduce parents, carers and grandparents to enjoyment of the outdoors.
- Anglers – pond and parking leased annually and very well administered.
- Scouts – seasonal activity but visited weekly by management group and facility well used.
- Yorkshire Wildlife Trust – fortnightly volunteer group.
- Yorkshire Wildlife Trust – weekly butterfly surveys April to September.

- Selby Carers also use the site monthly.

Yorkshire Wildlife Trust recruiters have undertaken recruitment on the site but success was limited and this is currently being reviewed.

No specific engagement events have been undertaken this year due to lack of resources.

4. Health and safety and management issues

Wildlife monitoring undertaken the site appears to be functioning well for both people and wildlife.

To our knowledge, no complaints have been received by SBC regarding how the site has developed. Comments for this reporting period on TripAdvisor (3.6 for the reporting period, though this is brought down by complaints about the operation of the fishing lake) note that the wildlife habitats have improved, though some comments suggest facilities could be improved, for example the addition of a café.

The site has had very little antisocial behaviour incidents and no repeat incidents. The toilets have been made available daily 9am to 3.30pm and maintained in good order, which is very much appreciated by visitors. This is kindly done by the anglers for the benefit of all.

Dog walkers are a significant percentage of the site visitors and 95% adhere to dogs on leads, which is a real bonus. Pick up and disposal of dog waste is good but dog bin emptying has had to be requested on a number of occasions either due to missed collection or volume of usage.