



## Longlands Letters



### December 2020 – Christmas Edition!

It's been a strange year but we've managed to muddle through, and we're now looking forward to what 2021 will bring!



Dear All,

Welcome to my first letter from Longlands – your regular update on West Cumbria Rivers Trust's project to improve Longlands Lake and make it a real community hub.

I'm writing to let you know what we've been up to and give you a taste of the work and activities we're planning. I really hope it inspires you to get in touch and join us for some wild days out in 2021. Once we've managed to navigate our way through the Covid restrictions, I think we'll be ready for some fresh air, exercise and wildlife adventures!

Firstly, I must apologise for the recent disruption at Longlands. I know it's not the ideal time of year to be doing this work, but we finally managed to get our contractors on site, so I was definitely going to make the most of them!

#### Path Rejuvenation and Improvements

The path around Longlands has had the mud scraped off. This revealed a surprisingly wide original hard-core track, which is still in pretty good condition. We filled and resurfaced the particularly bad areas which had made access almost impossible. I hope you'll agree it's made a huge difference and access around the whole lake should now be possible. Be warned though - you'll still need yer wellies!

#### Wild Outdoor Learning Area

You have probably been wondering what's going on in the 'woodland clearing' at the top end of the park. This is still a work in progress, but we have created a wildlife pond and some rustic seating. In spring we will be adding a dipping platform wide enough for wheelchair access and we hope to hold a 'planting party' (Covid allowing) to introduce some wonderful native plants in and around the pond. They will both oxygenate the water and provide fantastic habitat for wildlife. This area will be a haven for amphibians and insects and a wonderful place for youngsters (and adults) to explore, learn and get up close to the wonders of pond life.

We have also created a Forest School/Eco therapy area at the south end of the lake where we're hoping to hold sessions in early 2021 – more on this next time!



## The Alien Odyssey Begins...

**Himalayan Balsam:** This summer we started the humongous task of tackling the invasive Himalayan Balsam on site. It was daunting to say the least. And it confirmed we need all hands on-deck with this one! We can only succeed with your help! More on this below...

**Japanese Knotweed:** We treated all the Japanese Knotweed at Longlands Lake and the Lower Keekle. This was another huge task with many hours injecting and spraying dense stands of knotweed.



## Bits and Pieces/Monitoring

**Habitat and fish surveys on the River Keekle:** This work helps us monitor improvements while also enabling us to identify projects with landowners. In 2021 we will be working with landowners to fence off the river, improve livestock crossings and access to water, and create wildlife corridors by planting hedgerows. All this work eases the management of livestock for the farmer while also improving habitat and water quality in and around the river.



## A Taste of What's Coming Up in 2021

I'll be sending out information closer to the time!  
(All activities are dependent on Covid restrictions)

- **Willow hide creation** – Living willow sculpture and hide creation – we hope you'll join us to learn what's involved and get your hands dirty
- **Spring planting** of the pond
- **Dawn chorus** – If you know any birding experts to help lead the early morning walk, please let me know. It'll be a bright and very early start though, probably around 5am zzzzzzzzzzz!
- **Balsam bashing** – This will include Invasive Species ID and information. Then let the pulling begin! But don't worry, we will have strimmers at the ready to make sure it doesn't become too overwhelming. This work is essential to reclaim the park from this alien invader and allow our wonderful native flora to flourish!
- **Pond dipping and Forest Schools** – Working with local youngsters to discover the inner wild child!
- **Boat ramp & Bank repairs** – Repairing the boat ramp and re-profiling the bank by the lake to prevent further erosion. The earth stored on site from the pond creation will be used for the bank repairs
- **Riverbank Stabilisation work** – We also hope to work on the eroding riverbank where the River Ehen is undercutting the footpath at Longlands Lake

There'll be much more happening in-between but don't worry, I'll keep you up to date with Longlands Letters!





## Background to the Project

Work at Longlands is part of our three-year People on the Keekle project funded by Sellafield Ltd. The project comprises two related strands of work: (1) inspiring local communities to get involved with the natural environment through events and improvements to Longlands Lake, and (2) improving water quality and habitats on the lower part of the River Keekle by working with farmers and landowners.

Big thanks to Sellafield Ltd. who recognise the significance of the Longlands Lake Nature Reserve in the heart of the Local Community, and for their continued support to enable us to deliver the work on the ground. And thanks to Cumbria County Council for working with us to deliver what we anticipate will be some real benefits to the health and wellbeing of the local community and wildlife, while also securing for the long-term future of the site.

To sign up to receive the e-newsletter or for more information and to get involved, contact Karin on [karin@westcumbriariverstrust.org](mailto:karin@westcumbriariverstrust.org)

## Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!

I hope we will be able to celebrate Christmas 2021 at Longlands with a mince pie and some mulled wine!



Don't try this at home!