

Lyth Hill Report for Longden and Bayston Hill Parish Councils

Site management report 2021-22

Introduction:

Bayston Hill and Longden Parish Councils have kindly signed up to a funding agreement with Shropshire Council to support the management of Lyth Hill. This report outlines the fantastic work that has been completed on site this year, thanks to the generous support of the parish councils

Site management undertaken in 2021-22:

The biggest job has been finishing replacing the boardwalk that runs along the bottom of the hill.



The boardwalk is a crucial route across wet ground. The top photo shows the state of the boardwalk when we started the replacement project. The supporting timbers, posts and decking boards were rotten making it not viable to keep repairing and replacing boards. Therefore, a wholesale replacement was the only viable option. The second photo shows the boardwalk nearing completion. By the end of October 2021, the structure will be complete. The total length of the structure is 230m. The replacement of the structure has been a significant investment, made possible thanks to the generosity of the parish councils. In recognition of this, Shropshire Council have added an extra £1000 to the site budget this year.

Much effort has been spent over the course of the site management plan to control scrub and bracken encroachment on the site, thereby allowing a more flower-rich sward to develop. Management works towards this aim have continued well this year. Dexter cattle grazing has continued. 3 days of bracken rolling has been undertaken. Both the eastern and western meadows were also mown and arisings collected. The flail mower that was purchased last year has also been used to clear scrub and thatch. More works using this machine are planned. The photo below shows the crest of the hill after it was bracken rolled and flailed. This has been identified as an important area for acid grassland (a rare habitat locally). This kind of management will allow the acid grassland to thrive.



In the area shown above there was a proliferation of ragwort during July 2021. Whilst this plant is beneficial for many species of invertebrate, it is toxic to livestock. Concerns were raised about the ragwort seeding into neighbouring farmland. A very successful community volunteer morning was subsequently arranged with an amazing turnout of over 15 volunteers. A local resident and farmer kindly offered to take the ragwort pulled from site and dispose of it. The workers are pictured in action below!



Through the course of 2021, society has slowly moved into a post-pandemic stage. Regular volunteer work parties have been able to commence again which is a wonderful example of the local community lending a crucial hand with managing the site. Over the course of winter 2021, the plan is to work with volunteers to cut scrub around a rocky exposure below the eastern field (photo below). In this area the soil is thin and there are remnants of acid grassland, threatened by scrub encroachment.



The current site management plan runs out at the end of March 2021. Generally speaking, most of the management actions listed in the plan have been successfully undertaken and one of the aspirational tasks (boardwalk replacement) has also been completed. One remaining task is to arrange an ecological survey of Spring Coppice with management advice. The plan is to commission this over the winter to guide the content of the next management plan which will also be compiled soon, for discussion with the parish councils.

Budget information:**Final budget from 2020-21**

Contractor	Task	Amount
Compass Design	Site leaflet	110
M R Owen	Fencing (Spring Coppice)	1253
M R Owen	Install boardwalk	5350
Conservation grazing (Pontesbury)	Grazing	1260
Conservation grazing (Pontesbury)	Flail cutting and fencing	400
Carnog Working Horses	Bracken rolling	600
Ron Smith Mowers	Flail mower	1500
Gavin Tree Services	Tree safety works	1220
BCW signs	No vehicles sign	105.04
SC Tree Team	Tree safety advice/surveys	600
	TOTAL spent on site	12,398.04
Budget	Contributions from parish councils (2 x £8656)	-17,312
	Carried over budget	-554.82
	Stewardship (revenue funding)	-1911.36
	Rental income (Galliers)	-350
	TOTAL BUDGET	-20,128.18
Staff time (Shropshire Council)	Assistant Parks and Countryside Sites Officer	1160
Staff time (Shropshire Council)	Parks and Countryside Sites Officer	6330
	Staff sub-total	7490
	Total budget	-20,128.18
	Total expenditure	19888.04
	Balance (year end)	£240.14

2021-22 Budget:

Contractor	Task	Amount
SC Rights of Way Contracting	Install road signs	250
M R Owen	Install boardwalk	7250
Conservation grazing (Pontesbury)	Grazing	720
Hales Sawmills	Timber for boardwalk	4347.70
Carnog Working Horses	Bracken rolling	600
Hahn Plastics	Plastic components for boardwalk	1837
Redwood Forestry	Cut and collect mowing	1250
SC Tree Team	Tree safety advice/surveys	600
	TOTAL spent on site	16,854.70
Budget	Contributions from parish councils (2 x £8656)	17,312
	Carried over budget	240.14
	Stewardship (revenue funding)	1911.36
	Rental income (Galliers)	350
	Western Power payment	4750
	One-off Shropshire Council contribution	1000
	TOTAL BUDGET	25,563.50
Staff time (Shropshire Council)	Assistant Parks and Countryside Sites Officer	1160
Staff time (Shropshire Council)	Parks and Countryside Sites Officer	6330
	Staff sub-total	7490
	Total budget	25,563.50
	Total expenditure	24,344.70
	Balance (23rd Oct 2021)	1218.80

Summary:

The budget from last year ended with £240.14 being carried over into this year. The budget this year is also benefitting from a payment from Western Power for laying power lines across the bottom of the hill that are currently on poles. The works are yet to be undertaken but the income is due sometime this financial year. There is also a £1000 payment from Shropshire Council towards the cost of the boardwalk.

At the time of writing there is **£1218.80** left in the budget.

Remaining tasks for possible completion include:

Woodland survey of Spring Coppice (as detailed above)

Replacement bench (old one has rotted and been removed)

Possibility of storm damage to trees over the winter and subsequent tree works needed

Over the last few years the boardwalk replacement has represented a significant share of the site budget. Looking ahead to future years, there will be more budget available for tasks such as fencing repairs and general maintenance.

To enable the continued good work at Lyth Hill, Shropshire Council are requesting a contribution of £8656 from Bayston Hill and Longden Parish Councils again for financial year 2022/2023.

Thanks to all the volunteers and members of Lyth Hill Advisory Group for their continued hard work. Thanks also to David Morgan for providing some of the photos in this report.

