

## GETTING INVOLVED!

**LOTS OF PEOPLE HAVE GOT INVOLVED ALREADY, IN ONE WAY OR ANOTHER, AND THEIR COMBINED INPUT IS SO VALUABLE.**

The good news is that there is plenty more scope for folk to get involved. Bear in mind that the Langdon ridge is crucial to us all – and if we don't use it, and protect it, you can predict as well as the rest of us what will happen to it. Remember that the woods and paths and meadows and streams and ponds cannot just maintain themselves – and we need to ensure that we do not, between us, unwittingly destroy what we seek to enjoy.

Let's not forget that there is a vital issue at stake. The fundamental aim of a Living Landscape is to work towards wildlife conservation across the landscape – as opposed to confining too much of the wildlife to distinct nature reserves, where experience has shown that too many creatures and plants dwindle and die out.

Other issues are closely tied in – nurturing and appreciating a beautiful landscape, stopping its degradation and neglect – and thereby striving for the sanity and happiness of people, including through physical fitness and well-being. Moreover, through joint effort comes so much personal relevance and social exchange – so much fun and pleasure. What's more, by stimulating local business, initiative and activity we get that little bit closer to a sustainable way of life and move that little bit away from always having to flog off elsewhere to find our pleasures.

## A final thought...

One of the really special things about the Langdon Living Landscape is that so many organisations are involved in its work. This is not easily achieved, in a busy world where rival agendas can sometimes get in the way of collaboration for wildlife. Without the goodwill of farmers less would be achieved, and that goes for the local authorities too. You would have to go a very long way before you would find, at the local level, another group that comprises representatives of the EWT, the Essex Field Club, the RSPB, the Essex Badger Protection Group, Basildon Heritage, the Langdon Hills Country Park, Vange Hill Open Space and the BNHS. Throw in some local government officers, and elected councillors, and an inspiring range of individual volunteers, and the support and goodwill of several churches, and you have something special. How best to represent all that collaboration? Well, take a look at our own motif at the head of the Newsletter: we have our own local artist, Sue Ranford, to thank for an excellent image of the hills. It is something special – just like the Langdon Living Landscape.

## Rod Cole

Chairman  
Langdon Living Landscape

Contact Sue Adams on 01268 419103, Rod Cole on 01268 553149 or Nick Stanley on 01268 542066 to see how YOU can get involved in the Langdon Living Landscape and the other organisations that care for our local natural environment !!

For more information on Langdon Living Landscape please visit its web-page : <http://www.bnhs.net/living-landscape>

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# Langdon Living Landscape

New Year 2015



Number 7

*Thank you!*

**Special "Thank-You" edition -  
to mark the start of the New Year 2015.**

The Langdon Living Landscape, as a major project within the county, came into being during 2011. In the three or so years in which it has been in operation a tremendous amount has been done – so it is time to express some appreciation.



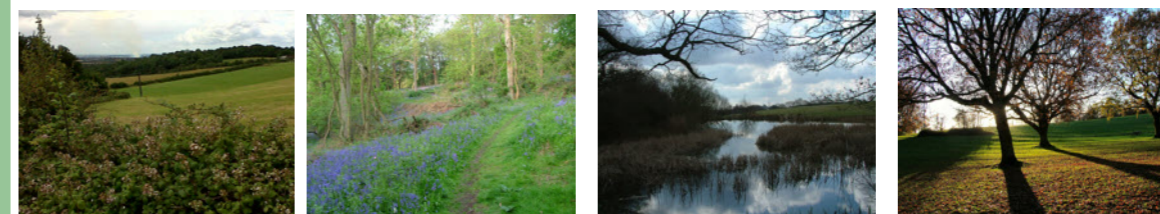
First of all, thanks to the Veolia North Thames Trust for its vote of confidence in our work, expressed at a very early stage, with a very generous grant of money. That grant was made in 2012, in the expectation that the sponsored works would be achieved by the end of 2014. A vital condition of the grant was that the money would have to be match-funded with a substantial input of volunteer hours – and we can proudly announce that the specified input of hours was massively exceeded, thanks to the efforts of so many people. We are really pleased to have been able to deliver this important project for Langdon and are looking forward to working on planning the next phase.



## Now, let's get some things clear first..

Remember that the exercise in hand is to protect and further promote some of the wildlife richness of the Langdon ridge – extending from Horndon-on-the-Hill and Dunton in the west, to Vange Heights to the east. That is best achieved by creating the right ecological conditions.

So much of the wildlife richness comes naturally from the mosaic of meadows, woodlands, hedgerows, gardens, ponds and streams on a beautifully-located ridge of high ground –



and much effort has gone in, over many years, to protect it, not least on the part of the Country Parks, the EWT, the Basildon Natural History Society, Basildon, Thurrock and Essex Councils and a whole lot of inspired landowners, tenants and gardeners. Their collective legacy is a huge one, and, vitally, it is on-going. So we're not claiming credit for what they have achieved.!

## Arthur Young got it right !

"I forgot to tell you, that near *Horndon*, on the summit of a vast hill, one of the most astonishing prospects to be beheld, breaks almost at once upon one of the dark lanes. Such a prodigious valley, everywhere painted with the finest verdure, and intersected with numberless hedges and woods, appears beneath you, that it is past description; the *Thames* winding thro' it, full of ships, and bounded by the hills of *Kent*. Nothing can exceed it, unless that which *Hannibal* exhibited to his disconsolate troops, when he bade them behold the glories of the *Italian* plains !"

Arthur Young "A six weeks tour through the southern counties of England and Wales" 1772



## So what has Langdon Living Landscape achieved with its funding?

*Thank You!*

Thanks substantially to Veolia, we can claim credit for the following:

- ✓ seven ponds, some of them hundreds of years old, restored by use of excavator, and already so very much richer in wildlife terms, after only one year;
- ✓ six volunteers equipped and trained in chainsaw use, to revitalise so much long-neglected woodland, stimulate far greater wildlife richness, and hopefully re-establish the principle that the forest can be, simultaneously, highly productive – as our ancestors understood fully.
- ✓ eight barn-owl boxes, and six kestrel boxes, created and located at strategic points along the ridge, to encourage breeding;
- ✓ several meadows fenced securely, so that they can be grazed as part of their management – for without the grazing (and haycutting) these famous Langdon wildlife-rich sites will fast revert to scrub;
- ✓ a dozen or so souls trained in hedge-laying, and already two substantial hedges in the process of being laid;
- ✓ educational courses held in wildlife gardening; wild bird survey techniques; bat-recording; butterfly, dragonfly and bumble bee ecology and identification;
- ✓ dormouse surveys undertaken at several locations along the ridge
- ✓ maps and publications produced – including this one;
- ✓ educational schemes in and for several local junior schools;
- ✓ interpretation boards being located;
- ✓ an access-for-all path at the Dunton EWT reserve, plus benches.



*Thank You!*



Oh, and thanks to so many people for volunteering their time, expertise, energy and goodwill.

*Thank You!*

First of all, let's thank all those diligent souls who deliver the Newsletter each time that it is produced – and thanks to all those establishments which make copies available – garages, restaurants, hotels, clubs, shops, libraries, dentists, vets, animal feedstuffs outlets and so on.



- Thanks to those who made the nest-boxes – and those who put them up.
- And those who turned out to assist in the ponds work, including scrub cutting and rubbish removal.
- Oh, and all those woodland volunteers – EWT, Marks Hill Wood, country park woodland – who provide the vital back-up to all that improvement of our rich inheritance of woodland.
- Ah, and the stoic hedge-layers, working in all weathers – and the volunteer assistants in the educational programmes, and in the EWT Centre at Dunton, and as Friends of the Country Park.
- Not to forget, either, those dedicated campaigners who write letters in protest against unwise and insensitive development proposals which threaten the essential green lung of the Langdon ridge, with all its vital recreational space – and those who have given generously of time and money in challenging the hugely unpopular scheme to destroy the Longwood Equestrian Centre and its associated Local Wildlife Site at Dry Street Pastures.
- Nor, of course, all those people inspired by the vision of restoring old orchards, locating traditional fruit varieties in the former plotland and cottage gardens, and creating new community orchards – including those ventures at Holy Trinity Church, at First Avenue on Dunton Ridge, and at Dry Street.



•Nor, indeed, can we forget the generous support of Dry Street Memorial Church, which makes its hall available for Living Landscape meetings. Or, indeed, the constant and implicit support of so many – staff and volunteers - at the Essex Wildlife Trust's base at Abbots Hall Farm.



- Come to that, don't forget the dedicated staff of the Langdon Hills Country Park, and those who oversee Basildon Council's work at Vange Heights – as well as all those folk in the Basildon Natural History Society, not least those who maintain the Langdon LL page on the BNHS website.



- Thanks, too, to all those concerned with producing this Newsletter - the articles, the photographs, the artwork: you know who you are! And we know where you live !! Thank you also CDL Print Solutions, our chosen print company, for a high-quality, environmentally friendly product.



You can bet your workboots that we have forgotten so many other volunteered efforts – but you get the picture, we hope.



*A special Thank You....*

*It's not usually done to single out individuals but thanks must go to Sue Adams at the EWT Langdon Reserve Centre in Dunton for the countless hours spent in administering the project over the last 2 years, and not least to the chairman of the Langdon Living Landscape, Rod Cole, likewise for innumerable hours of devoted labour and without whose continued enthusiasm, leadership and drive the LLL project would never have got as far as it has, and without whose honey-laden home-baked biscuits (chorns/chawns in the local Bells Hill Dialect) committee meetings would never have been sustained.*