



**Longbridges Nature Park
Improvement Plan
January 2025**

Longbridges Nature Park Improvement Plan

Introduction

Longbridges Nature Park, a historic bathing place now managed as a nature reserve by the city council, includes a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). Despite basic maintenance by Oxford City Council, the area has faced challenges such as neglect and anti-social behavior. However, it remains popular for swimming and other river activities like paddle boarding, canoeing, and fishing.

Established post-COVID, the Friends of Longbridges Nature Park is a dedicated and growing community group leading efforts to rejuvenate the area. Their goal is to improve access for swimmers while enhancing the site's wildlife and biodiversity value.

Recent works completed in Winter 2024 have addressed the deterioration of the previous concrete wall, which had sections falling into the river. The project involved removing the dilapidated concrete, reinforcing the riverbank with sheet piling, and regrading the area with topsoil and new vegetation. These improvements aim to protect the area from further erosion and enhance safety for visitors, although water access has become more challenging with the removal of the ladder.

The overarching ambition of this improvement plan is to encourage safe swimming and riverside recreational activities while fostering a thriving natural environment. The Friends of Longbridges Nature Park are looking to collaborate with various stakeholders, including volunteers, donors, and fundraisers, to make this vision a reality.

With continued efforts, we hope the river here will eventually be awarded bathing water status, similar to Port Meadow. This plan outlines key improvements to enhance this vital natural asset within the City of Oxford.

Longbridges Nature Park Improvement Plan

January 2025



- 1 Install access ladder
- 2 Riparian management
- 3 Meadow creation
- 4 Install signage
- 5 Path widening
- 6 Add boulder clusters
- 7 Canopy thinning
- 8 Selective scrub clearance
- 9 Reedbed creation
- 10 Bin Area Upgrade

Proposed by Friends of Longbridges

Longbridge - Proposed Works Party Activities – Sunday 23rd Feb

Aim: Scrub clearance for line of sight improvements and expand summer meadow area

Tasks:

1. Address the overgrown scrub areas highlighted below to enhance line of sight for Towpath users during the summer months while also improving visibility into Longbridge Nature Park (south side) to make it more welcoming and discourage antisocial behaviour.
2. Wider scrub clearance in surrounding areas to manage the spread of Himalayan Balsam
3. Continued litter picking in the surrounding area to enhance cleanliness and discourage future littering (we can hope!)

Tools/Equipment needed:

1. Rakes, strimmers, saws, loppers, and litter pickers, heavy-duty rubbish bags and necessary PPE e.g. gloves,

Considerations:

1. vehicle access if we need to carry equipment?
2. Dispose of waste?

1. The line of sight to the bench area is somewhat obstructed. Clear the scrub between mature trees to open up the area and encourage the expansion of the summer meadow.



2. Clear the scrub to improve the line of sight for towpath users at the bend/pinch point. Also, clear the area around the stone marker.



| No. | Name | Description | Status | Cost | |
|-----|--|--|----------------------------------|----------------------|--|
| 1 | Install access ladder | Install an access ladder into the river, facilitating safe entry and exit for swimmers, and providing a secure means of exit for individuals who may accidentally fall into the river from a high bank. Currently within ODS. IFRA has purchased the ladder and it's in store pending installation | On Hold pending ODS/OCC action | ~£3,000 Installation | <p style="text-align: center;">Longbridges Nature Park Improvement Plan</p> <p style="text-align: center;">January 2025</p> |
| 2 | Riparian vegetation management | Clear overhanging willow trees on both sides of the riverbank to improve access for bank maintenance, recreational activities and ecological health of the river. | To be planned | TBC | |
| 3 | Scrub Clearance for Meadow Creation | Clear scrub vegetation to create a larger meadow area, enhancing the ecological value and improving visibility from the towpath for better accessibility, safety and aesthetic appeal | Planned for 23 rd Feb | N/A labour only | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Install access ladder 2 Riparian management 3 Meadow creation 4 Install signage 5 Path widening 6 Add boulder clusters 7 Canopy thinning 8 Selective scrub clearance 9 Reedbed creation 10 Bin Area Upgrade |
| 4 | Install signage | Design and install a sympathetic signage that recognises the area 'Longbridges nature park and history of the area, while conveying important community messages, such as "swim at your own risk" and "take your litter home," to promote safety and environmental stewardship. | To be planned | TBC | |
| 5 | Path widening | Widen an existing path through scrub land, enhancing accessibility and visibility for users, while ensuring minimal environmental impact | To be planned | TBC | |
| 6 | Add boulder clusters | Installation of boulder clusters along riverbanks to enhance accessibility and improve wildlife habitats. | To be planned | TBC | |
| 7 | Canopy thinning | Careful thinning of canopy vegetation along riverbank to enhance visibility and improve environmental conditions e.g. increase sunlight penetration. | To be planned | TBC | |
| 8 | Selective scrub clearance | Selective clearance of scrub vegetation to establish a clearer footpath to the south end of the island to Ensuring safe and efficient access while preserving the surrounding environment. | To be planned | TBC | |
| 9 | Reedbed creation | Creating reedbeds to enhance water quality and support natural habitats. Targeted planting will filter pollutants, reduce sedimentation, and provide improved wildlife habitats. | To be planned | TBC | |
| 10 | Bin Upgrades | Upgrading the bin area with Big Belly bins to reduce litter and its environmental impact. Big Belly bins compact waste, increasing capacity and reducing collection frequency. Helping to encourage better disposal practices and improve area cleanliness and protect the environment. | To be planned | TBC | |

Proposal by Friends of Longbridges

