

# Low Barns Access and Ecology



**Durham**  
**Wildlife Trust**  
From Tees to Tyne

## Lead Partner

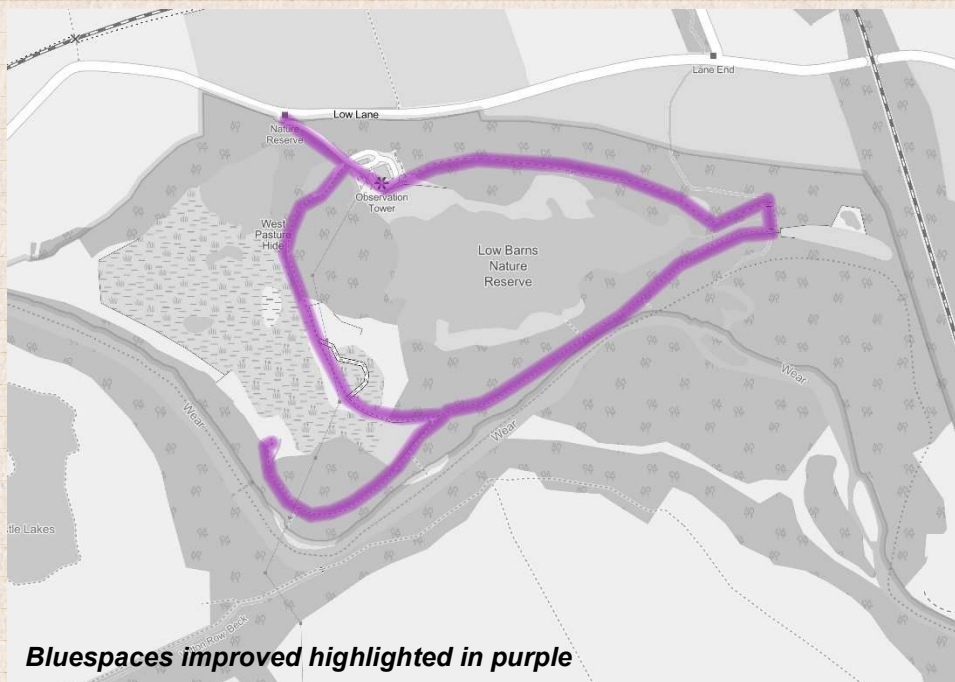
**Durham Wildlife Trust**

Location	Bluespaces improved	Delivery Year	Project Value
Low Barns, Witton-le-Wear, County Durham	2.1km	2021	£39,000

## Project Overview

The Low Barns Nature Reserve in Country Durham has received footpath and signage upgrades to a fully accessible route on the site. The construction of a new education hub called ‘The Den’ is underway – the den is always available as a place to admire the views and wildlife. Durham Wildlife Trust is trying to get more people to connect with nature and enjoy the habitats at Low Barns – by improving the site facilities and providing better information.

The Marston Lake has seen improvements too with the inclusion of desilting to maintain the habitat for freshwater species and to protect the islands breeding habitat used by wading birds.



## Partnership Information

Durham Wildlife Trust is a charity that was established in 1971, originally as the Durham County Conservation Trust in 1988. The Trust operates across the area of the old County Durham, which today includes Darlington, Gateshead, South Tyneside, and Sunderland. The Trust is there to conserve local wildlife.

The Durham Wildlife Trust is one of 46 charities across the UK that together form the Wildlife Trusts and is recognised by a badger in the logo. The Trusts are typically made up of a strong volunteering tradition – each trust was founded by volunteers.

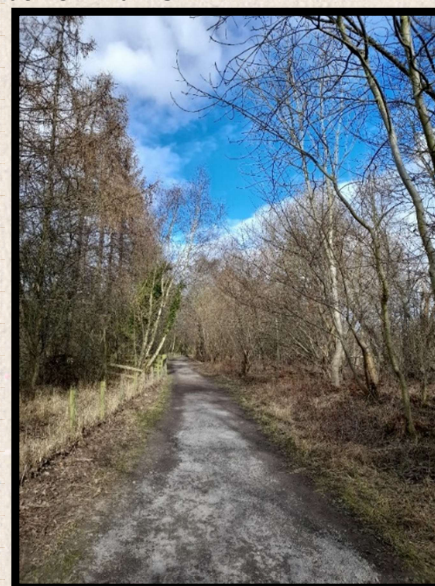
## Project Achievements

### Access, facilities, and recreation

- New signage information setting out distances between various points.
- The new footpath is flat and accessible by wheelchairs and mobility scooters – ongoing repairs to the footpath take place when flooding instances occur.
- A new bird hide known as 'The Den' was built in December 2021. This glass fronted structure can be used for schools and educational purposes but also for members of the public to enjoy the views and wildlife of Marston Lake.
- DWT is rolling out programmes for children and young people to allow them to connect with nature and learn more about wildlife.
- DWT has also run events for adults including guided walks and wellbeing days for corporate organisations to encourage a different audience to experience nature.



**Children celebrating Christmas at Low Barns**



**Resurfaced Pathway**

### Wildlife and biodiversity

- In February 2022 Aquatic Solutions spent a week in Marston Lake removing silt on the eastern side of the lake. Too much silt results in flooding – the islands surrounding provide refuge for waterfowl and wetland birds.
- The de-silting has allowed better water control and it stops the islands from flooding which allows the wildlife breeding sites to stay in use.

### Water quality

- 100m of footpath at Low Barns has been improved by using additional stone and fine dust – this will prevent erosion entering the wetland.
- 150m<sup>3</sup> of silt has been removed from three channels at the eastern side of Marston Lake – this increases the capacity of the lake allowing the storage of more sediment.



**Corporate days with local businesses.**



## Testimonials

*"Support from Northumbrian Water has been key in improving visitor access and facilities at Low Barns Nature Reserve, along with delivering crucial management of wetland habitat. This project ensures the site remains a haven for wildlife and offers increased opportunities for visitors to connect with nature and learn more about the water environment"*

**Mark Dinning, Head of Conservation, Durham Wildlife Trust**



***'The Den' overlooking Marston Lake***

