

Shelfanger Parish Council Meeting
Thursday 10th September 2026
Boyland Common Report

Boyland Common is listed as a Norfolk County Wildlife Site, and the Norfolk Wildlife Trust have always taken an interest in this Common as it has a long history of being 'unimproved' Common land, and as such, it supports a rich diversity of wildflowers.

Since the last report in May '26, when the poor condition of the Western Gate access point was reported, South Norfolk District Council Community Assets Manager, Mr Jamie Henry arranged that a contractor 'make good' that access, and on 30th June '26 both the Western and the Eastern access points were repaired. Pam Ross emailed thanks to Jamie Henry, it was a job well done.

On May 20th '26 we received two emails from the Norfolk Wildlife Trust. The first was from Robert Smith who was seeking permission to collect seed from the Common. Permission was granted and on Friday 31st July a team came to gather seed using a 'brush harvester'. This seed will be used to increase the diversity of flora on sites with similar soil conditions.

The second May 20th email was from Aaron Brown who has taken over some of Helen Baczkowska's NWT work. He was eager to visit Boyland for the first time, and it was arranged that Ron and Pam would meet him on at the Common at 4.00pm on 20th June. He explained how important this small site is, with its history of not having been farmed.

On 9th August Linda Lord reported that a small load of scrap wood, including a cable reel, had been dumped at the Western gate to the Common. This was not reported to the District Council, but was taken to the Harford recycling centre along with household recycling on a pre booked visit.

On Wed. 2nd September, Aaron made a return visit to the Common, when he met with Lynn Collett, Pat Webster, Ron and Pam Ross.

He visited the North Western section which, since the beginning of the Lottery funded Boyland Common project, has not come under any 'management scheme'. He expressed concern over the ingress of Blackthorn suckers from the hedgerow on that section, plus the willow growth, which is a constant problem.

Recognising the difficulty of vehicular access to the North Western (unmanaged) section of the Common, Pam Ross was charged with writing to John and David Brown, who farm the adjacent field, from which access to the Common may be gained.

However there was the possibility that a machine the same size as a large lawn mower would be sufficient, and that may be able to gain access over the footbridge.

On his first visit Aaron had found the patch of Dyers Greenweed, a plant that, having greatly declined since the 1940's, is now quite a rarity in many counties. On 18th August Pam had collected a few ripe seed pods to add to those that Aaron had already collected, the hope being that a few new plants might be grown to increase the number of plants on the Common.

Aaron felt that 'Natural England' would be very interested in Boyland Common, its Clayland heritage and the fact that, as a good example of historically unimproved Common land, there are several rare and unusual native plants growing there.

There may be a possibility that Natural England could pay a 'management' grant so that contractors could be employed for management work. Aaron is looking to investigate this possibility.

Currently, the cutting and removal of hay is the most effective management scheme.

It is also an effective way to discourage Blackthorn suckers from invading the grassland on the two major sections. It is not certain whether the hay on the two large sections of the Common will be cut this year, but, if it remains uncut, it will be only the second time since 2012 that the hay has not been taken. This will allow the late seeding plants to increase their numbers.

Aaron will be looking into the Natural England Management Grants to see if there is anything applicable to Boyland Common. We are very lucky to be able to benefit from the enthusiasm and expertise of both the Norfolk Wildlife Trust and the District Council. It's comforting to know we're in good hands.

Pam Ross, for the 'Friends of Boyland Common' group

