

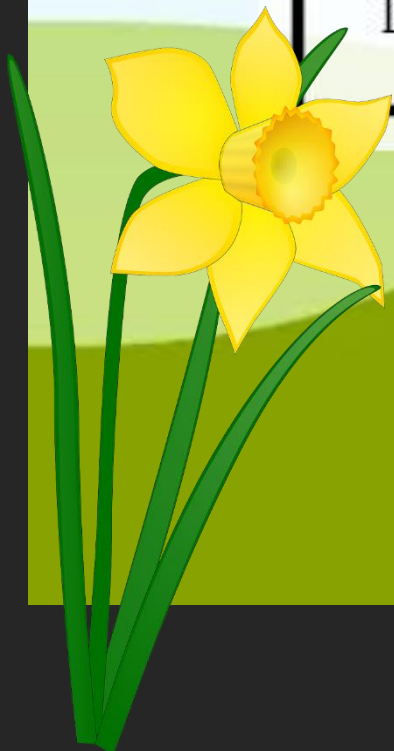


THE POST

LMEHA NEWSLETTER



LIFESTYLE - NEWS - FUN



March 2022

Hello and welcome to the March edition of **THE POST** – our LMEHA newsletter. This is an extra edition, with a special focus on events, new clubs and schemes and wildlife

We *usually* publish 3 newsletters a year in May, August and November. Please send us anything you wish to include by end of the month before the publish date. This could be a review, a wildlife question, a good news story, a new club, or a suggestion of what else you'd like to see in our community newsletter.

Catherine & Tony Graham

cgraham770@gmail.com

or you can drop us a hard copy in at 64 Mill Village – thanks!

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Message from our Chair

Welcome to our first LMEHA Newsletter of 2022.

Now the challenges of the pandemic are hopefully behind us we can look forward to maximizing the enjoyment from our time at Lower Mill.

It was good to see lots of homeowners enjoying the Welcome Drinks evening in February, these events always seem to have the positive feeling associated with a reunion with members meeting up again renewing friendships and sharing experiences. It may well be that these evenings may become more frequent in the future.

As an association we are looking forward to organizing more events and activities for members. We are about to launch the Nature Club, Photography Group and we have two Rugby trips planned for April (details of all these are included later in this newsletter). All these activities are organized by members and if anyone has some new ideas for an activity, please don't be shy. We are also about to launch our Sustainability Group. Sustainability as we all know is becoming increasingly important and at Lower Mill, we have the opportunity to be a leader in this area. I hope you have all had an opportunity to read Mike McKeown's initial report and now Mike is forming a group that will drive this initiative further and faster.



Message from our Chair – cont'd

As I write this piece Ballihoo is launching its new season of homeowner evenings. The autumn events were a great success and Matt and his team have some new ideas going forward. As with the welcome drink these evenings are a great way to get to know other homeowners.

Thank you to all members who gave their views on the Homeowners Bar idea. It was very encouraging to have so many responses. We will use this medium again as a way of gaining feedback from members on ideas and proposals.

Before our last two committee meetings we have asked members if they have any issues and concerns that they would like the committee to discuss and raise with the Estate Management. I hope that this is proving useful for members and we will continue to do this.

Our **AGM will be on Saturday 30th April** starting at 9.30am at the Somerford Keynes Village Hall. Be good to have a good turnout for the AGM and the Members drinks in the evening.

Graham
LMEHA Chair

LMEHA - Social events



You should have recently received an email informing you that one of our committee members, Nic Dowler, has kindly offered to organise two trips to Kingsholm Stadium to watch the following games:

Gloucester v Wasps: Saturday 2nd April

Gloucester v Bath : Saturday 30th April

- Kick-off for both matches will be 3pm, leaving LME at c 1pm, returning by c 6pm.
- Transport via minibus will be arranged by the LMEHA. Depending on numbers, LMEHA may be able to fund the cost of the transport or may ask for a small donation.
- Ticket prices for each match: £39 adults, £32 concessions (NHS, Students with student card, over 65) £15 Juniors. Sitting in Stowford Press stand.
- Once numbers are confirmed, Nic will buy the tickets (hopefully all in one block) and you will be asked to repay him.

Please note that availability is limited this season as they do not have many home games left and as the Bath game is a local derby and will be a sell-out, we will need to book the tickets very soon!

If you would like to come along, please reply directly to nic.dowler@btinternet.com by Friday 18th March.

LMEHA - social and clubs



LMEHA Photography Club

We have restarted the LME photography club. Suitable for anyone who wants to learn more about taking and editing photographs or just chatting and taking photos with others. If you'd like to join, please sign up [here](#).

The first meeting will be on **Sunday morning 24th April**.

Mike McKeown



Wildlife news and a new Nature Club

LMEHA Rural Sub-Committee

Nature Walks

Last December homeowners were invited to a walk around the rural estate with self-confessed “nature nerd” Lucy Lapwing ([instagram.com/lucy_lapwing/](https://www.instagram.com/lucy_lapwing/)) About ten homeowners attended and feedback was very positive.

Highlights included Lucy passing around twigs from the winter cache of our resident beavers showing toothmarks where the bark had been gnawed off, a fascinating magnified view of the eggs of Brown Hairstreak Butterflies on Blackthorn branches, and a variety of amazing wasp galls on fallen oak leaves. Birds pointed out by Lucy included Redwing, Great White Egret, a Marsh Harrier and Buzzard flying together, and Wigeon on Flagham Fen.

We are excited to hear that Lucy will return in 2022, and eagerly await dates and times!

A nature club was first suggested by a homeowner during the walk with Lucy. LMEHA’s committee strongly endorsed the idea and asked the rural subcommittee to run with it.

NEW!

LMEHA Nature Club

The nature club will provide regular opportunities for homeowners and their families to have fun while exploring, sharing, and learning about LME's wonderful nature and wildlife.

Activities will be driven by club members, but will likely involve a variety of walks, from informal rambles, to more-focused strolls with a knowledgeable guide. Also expect some of the walks to take place in the early morning or early evening, when wildlife is more active.

Other suggested activities include hosting a wildlife sightings board, excursions to other local nature reserves, helping with wildlife surveys and other volunteer projects, social events, etc.

Dates for your diary.....We are kicking things off with a series of informal weekly walks starting on **Friday, March 25 at 10:30 am**, and **Sunday, March 27 at 3:00pm**. At this time of year, waterproof boots are highly recommended, and don't forget your binoculars if you have a pair. Walk duration will likely be around 60 to 90 minutes, but this can be fine-tuned by the group on the day. Reminders for the walks (or bad weather cancellations) will be posted to the Homeowners WhatsApp group. The meeting point will be 54 Howells Mere, just around the corner from the entrance to the wider estate. Please join us when you can!

LMEHA Nature Club - cont'd



We are also planning a short survey and two meetings in April (one via zoom and one in person) when we will explore preferences and make decisions about the club. More details to follow.

In the meantime, if you are interested in helping to organize the club, or are willing to help with, or lead, walks, we would love to hear from you.

Also feel free to text or WhatsApp **Hilary Collins at 07592 914075** to express interest, or for more information.





WILDLIFE UPDATE

Spring update from Phoebe Carter, HFG Chief Ecologist

Spring is coming and we can now hopefully put the recent storms behind us. The Estate did not fair too badly despite the best efforts of Eunice and Franklin. There was some tree damage around the Estate which was swiftly dealt with by the ever efficient grounds team.

With spring in the air the woodpeckers have already started 'drumming'. This action of pecking loudly on trees is the males trying to establish their territories and trying to attract a mate. They drum around 10-15 times per second! Thankfully the birds are well equipped with a large shock-absorbing muscle in their skull which protects their brains and stops them getting concussed. A good place to hear them is around Swill Meadow.

I was fortunate enough to spot three kingfishers competing for territory the other week. It was a special moment as their activities went on for a good five minutes allowing really good views. Normally they only offer a streak of blue passing you by. It won't be long before many of our summer visitors start arriving. We are hoping it will be a better year for the swallows, swifts and martins and that their passage from Africa isn't hit by the storms they have faced in recent years. Both house martins and swifts have recently been added to the Red-list of Birds of Conservation Concern.



WILDLIFE UPDATE - cont'd

The RSPB states that we have lost over half of our house martin population (-57%) since 1969 and the number of swifts in the UK has fallen even faster, with over half of the UK population (-58%) disappearing from our skies in the last 25 years. Our efforts to help conserve these species at Lower Mill include the addition of swift bricks to many of the new properties, a swift nesting tower on Minety Lake Island, and of course your invaluable help with our house martins by leaving their nests in place over winter to encourage them back each year. Thank you.

As mentioned before the Cotswold Water Park (CWP) is now a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). As part of the Cotswold Water Park Nature Conservation Forum we have been involved in the production of the Cotswold Water Park Nature Recovery Plan. This is available to view in full or summary form here:

<https://www.cotswold.gov.uk/planning-and-building/landscape/cotswold-water-park/>

The plan has been put together to guide new and ongoing nature recovery and biodiversity enhancement initiatives across the CWP, in response to the global climate and ecological emergencies.



WILDLIFE

Question Corner

The following are questions sent in for me to ask Phoebe:

Q1 - Some of the trails around Somerford Lagoon are closed over the winter months. Could Phoebe explain why this happens and why it is important to respect the closure?

A - When Lower Mill was created 25 years ago, Somerford Lagoon was one of the largest and most important lakes for wintering waterbirds in the Cotswold Water Park. As such, there is a planning condition (a condition imposed on a grant of planning permission (in accordance with the Town and Country Planning Act 1990) or a condition included in a Local Development Order or Neighbourhood Development Order), which dictates that we close the footpath between Freeth Mere, Flagham Fen and Somerford Lagoon over the winter months to minimise disturbance to wintering waterbirds. Although there are now many more lakes in the Water Park for visiting waterbirds over winter, Somerford Lagoon remains important for many species at different times of the day. The restriction applies to everybody with the exception of our grounds team who need to access the area for winter habitat management works. Sadly, an increasing number of people seem to think they can use the path all year in contradiction to our planning condition. The closure does mean an extra-long walk around the Estate over winter but that gives a greater opportunity to spot more of our amazing wildlife.

Question Corner- cont'd

Q2 - Recently, a beaver was seen just behind the fence, next to footpath, between Swillbrook Lakes and Flagham Fen, in the afternoon. There was concern that this was unusual behaviour since the beavers are shy and usually less active during the day. Anything to be concerned about here and any advice on such sightings? People are also curious as to how many beavers there are at LME.

A - Although beavers are normally active by night and asleep by day, in places where there is little disturbance and no threats, they may be seen during the day. Events such as the recent storms may also affect their normal activity and could have resulted in them coming out to forage during the day. The beavers have a lodge as well as underground burrows. If water levels rise rapidly, as with recent rains, it could have resulted in flooding in these burrows/lodges with the beavers moving out and looking for drier shelters.

We now only have 3 beavers left. When the beaver trial in Scotland began it was decided that only Norwegian beavers would be used for all future trials, as they were thought to be the most closely related to the beavers that used to exist in the UK. Our beavers were originally from Bavaria and their young (kits) were no longer wanted for setting up new trials. As our enclosure could not sustain an ever increasing population at around 3-4 kits per year, we took the decision to sterilise our beavers in the first ever operation of its kind on the species. The reversible sterilisation was carried out by the incredible wildlife vet Romain Pizzi <https://romainpizzi.org/>

While we have no plans to add more beavers to the lake as it would result in significant territorial disputes, we are fully supportive of a wider release of beavers in the Upper Thames Catchment area if it were ever to happen.

Question Corner- cont'd



Q3 - Owners have noticed that an area of blackthorn bushes (or other bushes) has been trimmed to the ground and fenced off near the narrowing of Swill Meadow south of the path between Flagham Fen and Freeth Mere. Similar trimming has happened nearby where sections of hedge have been laid. We understand these bushes are where butterflies lay their eggs. What is the purpose of these sections being cut back?

A - Working closely with Butterfly Conservation we continue to carefully manage the Estate for the Brown Hairstreak butterfly. It has been great to see egg numbers increasing over the last few years. These butterflies like to lay their eggs on young blackthorn shoots (1-2 years old). When blackthorn gets too old the butterflies won't use it for egg-laying. In order to create suitable habitat for the Brown hairstreak, as well as managing the needs of other wildlife such as nesting birds, we coppice different areas of blackthorn annually. Coppicing involves felling trees/shrubs at the base (or stool), and allowing them to regrow. The regrowth is vigorous and will provide lots of fresh blackthorn of the right age for the Brown hairstreaks to lay eggs on. The recent works were all carried out after we had done our annual egg searches so that only blackthorn without eggs was coppiced.

Dr Phoebe Carter MEnvSc

Chief Ecologist

pcarter@habitatfirstgroup.com

W: www.habitatfirstgroup.com

LMEHA NetZero Sustainability Plan



LMEHA

Sustainability Plan (Draft) – Taking LME to Net-Zero

Sustainability@lmeha.com

LMEHA is developing a NetZero sustainability plan with three goals:

- Reduce LME's Green House Gas (GHG) footprint to NetZero
- Reduce homeowner's running costs
- Increase LME home values due to the positive image of a NetZero community and the reduced running costs

Our focus for the plan is a community wide initiative that can achieve more at a better price than individual action. However, we will also be developing advice to help homeowners on actions they can take themselves.

LMEHA NetZero Sustainability Plan cont'd

The plan is assessing community renewable energy generation including solar, wind, hydro, and storage. NetZero home, building and pool heating including community heating, heat pumps, electric and hydrogen. EV charging infrastructure, estate services, land management, waste management and home improvements.

We are meeting HFG/LME and HML on the plan soon to start collaborating with them.

The plan has been created by a sub-committee who can be reached on:

sustainability@lmeha.com

We would love to expand the committee, so please contact us if you'd like to join. The amount of time put in is very flexible. We'd particularly welcome anyone with industry or personal experience in sustainability technologies and financing.

You can view the draft plan and recording of the recent homeowner's briefing here:

[LMEHA NetZero Sustainability Plan – LOWER MILL ESTATE HOMEOWNERS' ASSOCIATION](#)

We will update this as the plan develops and will be adding sections on FAQs and advice for homeowners.



NEW SCHEME!

As part of your Cotswold experience, whether that's as a homeowner at Lower Mill or on behalf of your guests visiting the Estate, we are pleased to offer you and your guests the opportunity to enjoy products and services that local makers and businesses have to offer.

On behalf of the LMEHA Committee, we would like to introduce the team at flexy with whom we are working closely to onboard local retailers to service all members and their rental guests.

By accessing the [flexy](#) website you will be able to organise deliveries of high quality locally produced food and drink. From [bbq meat boxes](#), locally produced [beer](#), [fresh fruit & veg](#), wine and [spirits](#).

Enjoy all the Cotswolds makers and local businesses have to offer! You can even book a private chef to cook the perfect dinner party or organise a mobile [spa treatment](#)!

flexy has also selected some of the finest, award-winning food and drink makers across the UK that can deliver to the Estate.

[Fresh Grimsby fish](#) from boat to box to savouring English fine wine from the one of the oldest and most established [UK vineyard](#). Industry award winning [olde English pork sausages](#) and [bbq boxes](#). To small batch crafted [Hunter & Grey](#) premium cocktails, Great Taste [award-winning kombucha](#) and more!



Go to the website
[The Cotswolds Experience](#)

THE COTSWOLDS EXPERIENCE

Enjoy all the Cotswolds makers and local businesses have to offer and more!

Enter **LMEHA30** at checkout for 30% off your first order

flexy. In partnership with Lower Mill Homeowners Association



flexyapp.uk



LOCAL EVENT - GALA BALL

This is a really fun event that raises a good amount for charities.

We already have one LMEHA table of 10 people booked – contact me by end of April if you'd like to see if we can get another table of 10 people organised! (first come basis).

Or you can contact Cotswold Lakes Trust direct to buy tickets.

Catherine Graham

cgraham770@gmail.com

Cotswold Water Park | 2022
BALL

Sparkling Wine Reception
3 Course Dinner with Wines

After Dinner Entertainment
Charity Auction and Raffle

Dancing to the Curious Little Big Band
Black Tie

Saturday 15th October 2022 | De Vere Cotswold Water Park Hotel | Ticket Price: £70 Table of 10 £650

Tickets can be bought online at www.cotswoldlakestrust.org or www.waterpark.org or contact CWPBall@cotswoldlakestrust.org
DISCOUNTED OVERNIGHT ACCOMMODATION AT THE DE VERE HOTEL, SUBJECT TO AVAILABILITY

Cotswold Lakes Trust is a registered charity 1120518

Each edition we introduce someone involved with the Estate.



Introducing Katie Chick

Katie is the Operations Director for Habitat First Group (HFG) and is responsible for overseeing all operating aspects of the business, including Habitat Escapes, Ballihoo, Habitat Housekeeping and Habitat Maintenance.

Katie sits within the Senior Leadership Team at Lower Mill Estate and sits on the Board of HFG. She is always happy to hear from homeowners about what we do and don't use on the Estate. Katie is also keen to learn what could be done to support us further.

Katie can be reached on:

kchick@habitatfirstgroup.com