

Longacre School in Shamley Green opened their new Badger Wood wilderness area today (Monday, 13th September).

The project is an initiative of the school's pupil-led Green Team and Community Service clubs and has been three years in the planning.

Located next to the school's woodland area which is used by the children for their Forest School lessons and playtime, the Badger Wood had previously been fenced off to protect the badgers' habitat.

Following consultation with ecologists, the school was given the go-ahead to develop the area with a walkway and a viewing hide for the children to observe wildlife from, as long as they were a good distance from the badger setts.

The observation hide has been set up with equipment such as bird spotting sheets, bug pots, binoculars and an outdoor learning space. A special wildlife camera has also been installed in the area in order to capture the activities of the badgers and other nocturnal wildlife.

Longacre teacher and Head of the Green Team, Mrs Penny Macfarlane said: "The concept of the area is for the children to have a quiet space where they can enjoy and learn from the incredible nature around them. We hope that the children at Longacre will enjoy this special quiet place for many years to come."

The project has been funded by the school's PTA as well as through the fund-raising activities of the school's Green Team such as car boot sales and Christmas market stalls. The project would also not have been possible without the amazing dedication of Mr Cox and Mr Taylor from our Estates and Facilities team, as well as our ICT manager, Neil Duprés.

Longacre Head, Matthew Bryan added "Badger Wood gives children the chance to make inspiring discoveries and enrich their understanding of the natural world around them, while also emphasising our collective responsibility to look after our environment. The wild and tranquil space belies the time, effort and expertise which went into its creation and I am very grateful to the children on the Green Team, the Longacre staff, our wonderful PTA and our expert ecologist advisors for making this vision a reality."

This new wilderness area forms part of the school's ongoing drive to increase environmental awareness and follows the recent addition of a resident bee colony at Longacre in 2020.