



Epsom & Ewell

Biodiversity Action Plan



Progress report for 2014

Introduction

During 2014 the Epsom & Ewell Local Biodiversity Action Plan (LBAP) Working Group oversaw significant progress in implementing the plan which can be viewed here:

<http://www.epsom-ewell.gov.uk/EEBC/Environment/Biodiversity.htm>

The importance of Biodiversity:

Biodiversity encompasses the whole variety of life on Earth. It includes all species of plants and animals, their genetic variation, and the complex ecosystems of which they are part. It is not restricted to rare or threatened species but includes the whole of the natural world from the commonplace to the critically endangered.

The intricate network of ecosystems, habitats and species comprising biodiversity provides the support systems that sustain human existence. It provides many of the essentials of life, our oxygen, water, food, clothing, health and relaxation. Consequently, humanity must adopt sustainable ways of living that ensure the protection of biodiversity.

Today we live in a world where the economic activities of an ever increasing human population threaten biodiversity which is being lost at an ever increasing rate. Britain alone is known to have lost 100 species during the twentieth century.

There is a broad consensus around the world that we need to act now, or risk handing our children a world we would not recognise as planet Earth!

The 'Working Group' currently comprises the following individuals:

Mark Berry: Head of Planning, Epsom & Ewell Borough Council

Stewart Cocker: Countryside Manager, Epsom & Ewell Borough Council

Sarah Clift: Senior Countryside Officer, Epsom & Ewell Borough Council

Peter Howarth: Countryside Officer (Ecologist) Epsom & Ewell Borough Council

Jeremy Young: Tree Officer, Epsom & Ewell Borough Council

John Edwards: County Ecologist, Surrey County Council

Alastair Kirk: Surrey Biological Record Centre Manager, Surrey Wildlife Trust

Conor Morrow: Project Officer, Lower Mole Countryside Partnership

Kevin Morgan: Locally based ecologist and environmental consultant

The plan agreed in 2010 contains 7 objectives, comprising 23 targets with 45 actions. It should be noted that the 'Working Group' has no set budget to directly assist in implementing the plan and consequently is restricted to a coordinating/prioritising role with the plan as an essential guide and tool. That said, members of the 'Working Group' continue to be able to contribute to the implementation of the plan through the course of their normal duties

The plan does have suggested dates for the achievement of actions which assists in prioritisation but does not at this stage provide a measure of success or failure, especially given the current time and resource constraints on those working to implement the plan.

This report summarises progress made during 2014 under the plans seven objectives. Where appropriate updates from previous reports are given along with new items for 2014. **Please note activities reported on can contribute to and be relevant to more than one objective.**

Foreword

TV presenter and naturalist **Chris Packham** is a wildlife expert, photographer and author with a passionate concern for conservation and the environment. In 2012 Chris agreed to write the foreword for the Epsom & Ewell Local Biodiversity Action Plan.



When you are a kid size matters and thus the magnificent male Stag Beetles emergence was an eagerly anticipated annual event. A nearby street had some monstrous oaks and a diversion from the normal route to school would pay dividends and fill my jam jars. To be fair these creatures have lost none of their allure over the years but now it's not just their size that matters, it's their importance as a flagship species - they along with the Oaks which nourish their peculiar larvae. So I'm not surprised that you have chosen them as your local heroes to champion the Biodiversity Action Plan - and you have impressive numbers of these giants too!

In simple terms any communities' biodiversity is a measure of its health and stability. The more niches that are filled the better the natural machine will function and prosper. Thus nationally, regionally and locally we have constructed plans which aim to protect and enhance the richness of life at these respective levels. All have their roles but local strategies are tremendously important because they are implicitly governed by those who live, work and influence that community - these are formulated, enacted and enjoyed by those 'on the ground'. They are about 'personal wildlife conservation'!

In these days where doom and gloom are a constant temptation, I remain optimistic about our abilities to make a difference because we have such a well-stocked armory of abilities to effectively conserve life. We have studied it, tested it, we know what we need to do. The introduction of grazing on Epsom Common has seen superb revivals in butterfly and plant diversity and



even established a future for a population of the charismatic Yellowhammer. This has only been achieved by many years of tireless volunteer endeavor - an essential component of contemporary conservation.

And ultimately this success is good for us too. We uniquely have a conscience so we have to try to do what we know is right, but also we can enjoy a better quality of life as a result, the sight of a Stag Beetle whirring across the dusk sky or the charming song of the Yellowhammer with its 'little bit of bread but no cheese' can make your day. And that's the real key here; it will make your day and not mine, because the borough of Epsom and Ewell is yours. You mend it, restore it and protect it and you can revel, be proud of and enjoy it! Superb!

Chris Packham 2012

Progress during 2014

Objective 1: *Develop partnerships to ensure that the conservation and enhancement of biodiversity in Epsom and Ewell is maintained in the long term.*

Update:- During 2014 the Surrey Local Nature Partnership (SNP)-Biodiversity Working Group has been formed to assist the SNP board with identifying biodiversity priorities and to promote better coordination of biodiversity initiatives across the County. EEBC are represented on the Group which replaces the former Surrey Biodiversity Partnership. Priorities for the working group are how best to achieve the governments 'Biodiversity 2020' targets, formal adoption and revision of Biodiversity Opportunity Areas, revision of criteria and formalising the process of designating Sites of Nature Conservation Importance and supporting volunteer recording efforts across the County. The proposed service level agreement (SLA) between the Surrey Biological Records Centre and Epsom & Ewell Borough Council (EEBC) remained on hold during 2014 to enable some IT issues to be overcome. The aims of the proposed SLA are to improve knowledge and information exchange regarding all species and in particular European protected species which should assist with planning applications, Surrey BAP habitat mapping and invasive exotic species.

Update:- EEBC continues to strongly support local groups actively involved in conserving and enhancing biodiversity within the Borough. For example, the Epsom Common Association and the Lower Mole Countryside Partnership (LMCP), formerly the Lower Mole Countryside Management Project. The name change reflects changes made following a review of the Surrey Countryside Management Projects. There is now one board overseeing the work of the Lower Mole, Downlands and Heathlands Countryside Partnerships with EEBC continuing to be a funding partner in the Lower Mole Countryside partnership. The EEBC Countryside Team has continued with a weekly conservation task held on Thursdays, during 2014, 439 volunteer days were recorded, carrying out practical conservation work closely aligned to the LBAP which has a value of approximately £24,000 using the Heritage Lottery valuation of unskilled volunteer work at £55 per day per

volunteer (Please note some work is classed as skilled and valued higher)



Countryside Team Volunteers preparing to remove invasive Sycamore seedlings from Epsom Common LNR autumn 2014



Countryside Team Volunteers laying a hedge in Horton Country Park LNR Winter 2014

New:- During 2014 the Woodland Trust purchased a very large area of land at Langley Bottom Farm to create a First World War memorial woodland. This is a major initiative for the Trust who aim to have a memorial wood in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. The farm is partly in the Boroughs/Districts of Epsom & Ewell, Mole Valley and Reigate & Banstead. The initiative will protect and hopefully enhance the biodiversity of this land in perpetuity. The Trust has held public consultation events for local residents and has consulted with EEBC and neighbouring Districts and guided site tours have been conducted. The first public tree planting event took place in December 2014. The Epsom & Ewell Biodiversity Working Group are supporting the Woodland Trust, the meeting room at West Park Farm, Horton Country park was made available for a meeting with local recorders and the Lower Mole Countryside Partnership carried out their first volunteer task in December 2014 helping to coppice some of the existing woodland and offers of further volunteer assistance have been made by the EEBC Countryside Team.



View across Langley Bottom Farm Spring 2014

New:- During 2014 the new Surrey Wildlife Trust (SWT) Nature Reserve and SNCI at Priest Hill was opened by the Rt Hon Chris Grayling MP. This is a huge gain for biodiversity in the Borough. The reserve was set up following negotiations between the Developer, EEBC and SWT and allowed for a small number of houses to be built on 'Green Belt' whilst protecting the vast majority of the land in perpetuity through the creation of the nature reserve which SWT have agreed to take on and manage. The Developer has constructed a house and storage/workshop facilities that enable a Ranger to live and work on site. Again the Epsom & Ewell Biodiversity Working Group are supporting with offers of volunteers assistance and EEBC Members were given a guided tour by SWT Ranger Rachael Thornley during summer 2014.



The Rt Hon Chris Grayling MP opens Priest Hill Nature Reserve Summer 2014

Objective 2: *Ensure the conservation and enhancement of habitats and species, as specified nationally and in the Surrey Habitat Action Plans*

Update:- In 2012 EEBC and the City of London paid jointly for a National Vegetation Class (NVC) survey of Epsom and Ashted Commons as a follow up to the 2001 NVC survey. The survey highlighted the progress made in diversifying habitats especially through the re-introduction of grazing. However, the report also highlighted the continuing loss of areas of species rich grassland to scrub encroachment. To address this the Countryside Team Volunteers commenced a restoration programme during late summer 2013 which will continue with the aim of both restoring areas and ensuring long term maintenance. This process was continued in 2014 with the largest area at Railway Meadow worked on in January 2014 as part of the annual “Joint Task” with over fifty volunteers from the EEBC, City of London and the Lower Mole Countryside Partnership involved.



Epsom Common LNR, Joint task at Railway Meadow Winter 2014

Update:- Grazing on Epsom Common took place again during 2014 with 35 cattle from early May to late August. Volunteers played a vital role again during 2014 in daily checking and also continue to play a crucial role in maintaining the grazing area which is the Borough's flagship habitat conservation and enhancement initiative. The nature conservation benefits of grazing continue to surprise and delight all those involved. Of particular note are the significant increases in butterfly populations and flowering plant species and strong indications that grazing is benefiting the reptile population in particular Adders.



Epsom Common LNR view of High Meadow summer 2014

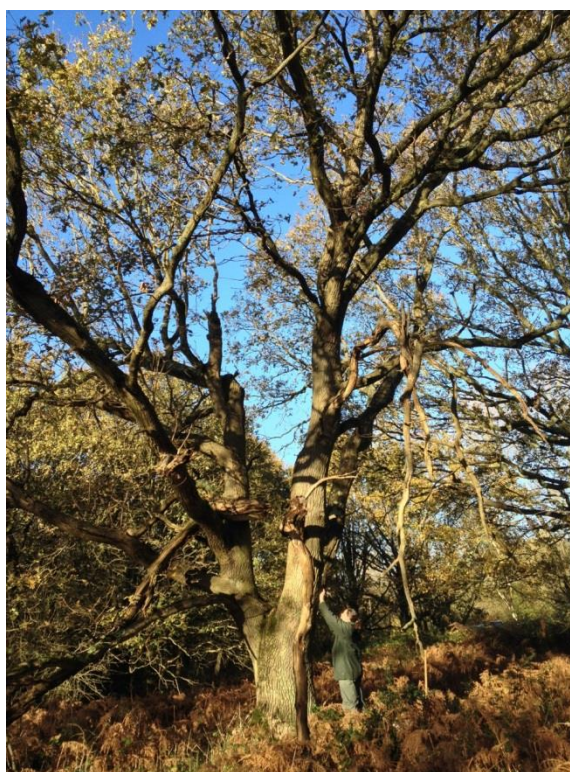


Countryside Team volunteer cleaning out a trough spring 2014



Epsom Common Day July 2014 the volunteer recruitment cow 'Daisy' provides milk for teas and coffee!

Update:- Work to restore and protect veteran trees on Epsom Common LNR and Horton Country Park LNR took place again during winter 2013/2014 with canopy reduction work carried out on veteran trees on Epsom Common and Horton Country Park. This twenty year programme of works is carried using funds secured through the Environmental Stewardship Higher Level Scheme 2010-2020.



Epsom Common LNR veteran tree
survey work Autumn 2014

Update:- Woodland management at Horton Country Park LNR under the Environmental Stewardship Higher Level Scheme continued during 2013/2014 with volunteers playing a vital role planting of over 500 hazel trees and erecting deer fencing following felling work carried out by themselves and contractors. For the first time in many years horses were used to haul timber in Pond Wood.



Horton Country Park LNR horse hauling
timber in Pond Wood winter 2014



Horton Country Park LNR Countryside Team
volunteers erecting deer fencing at Lambert's
Wood early spring 2014



Horton Country Park LNR contractor forwarding timber in Lambert's Wood early spring 2014



Horton Country Park LNR Lower Mole Partnership volunteers coppicing in Pond Wood winter 2014



Horton Country Park LNR Pond Wood following coppicing by Lower Mole Partnership volunteers winter 2014

Update:- Since the 1960's more than 90% of orchards have been lost in England. During 2012/2013 EEBC worked with the London Orchard Trust to restore two orchards in Horton Country Park LNR both formerly within the Long Grove Hospital Grounds. Restoration of the orchards is an aim of the site management plan. During 2014 work has continued with volunteers working to clear scrub from around both older trees and recently planted trees



Horton Country Park LNR Countryside team volunteer clearing scrub in Long grove Orchard autumn 2014



Horton Country Park LNR Countryside team volunteers clearing scrub in Lambert's Orchard autumn 2014

Update:- Work to conserve and enhance rough grassland has been taking place since 2008 using a rotational approach which prevents the grassland disappearing under encroaching scrub. 2014 saw the continuation of this vital habitat maintenance work carried out by both volunteers in the most sensitive areas (Ant Hills) and by an EEBC tractor using a hired flail collector. At Horton Country Park LNR a hay crop continues to be taken in cooperation with the Equus Equestrian Centre. Flower rich meadows have declined by 97% since the 1930's making the hay meadows in the Country Park an unusual and special sight.



Horton Country Park LNR Countryside
Team volunteers clearing rough grassland
management summer 2014



Horton Country Park LNR hay making
summer 2014

New:- During 2014 work was carried out to help conserve a very species rich area of Chalk grassland (internationally scarce) at Juniper Hill on Epsom & Walton Downs. The Downs Keepers having been keeping scrub from encroaching for many years and to assist this year two volunteer tasks were carried out with plans to make it a regular annual task.



Juniper Hill, Epsom Downs chalk grassland management summer 2014

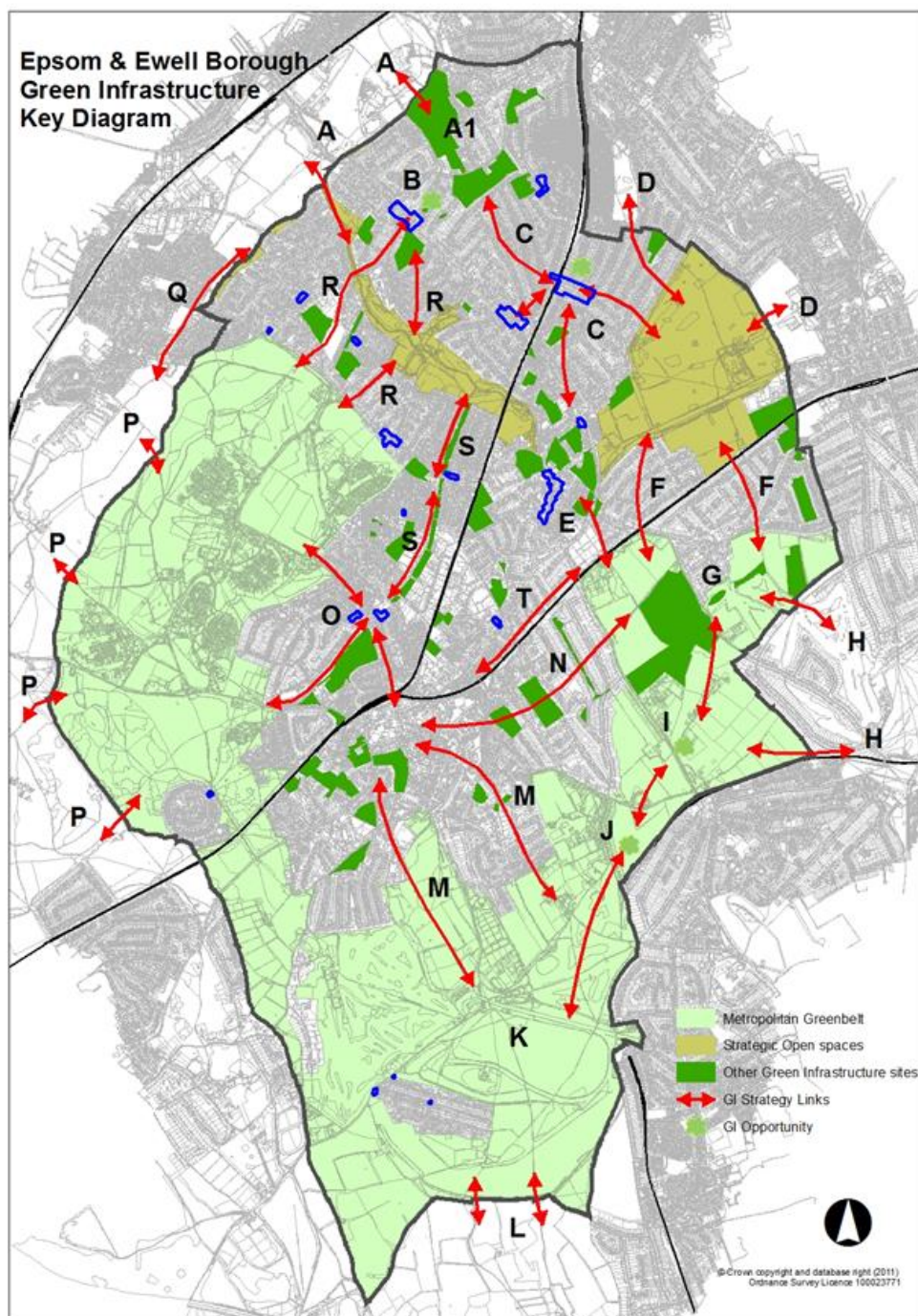
New:- During 2014 further work to conserve the Small Blue Butterfly was carried out by volunteers from the Lower Mole Countryside Partnership with the creation of further scrapes on Epsom Downs. The scrapes where soil is removed by a small excavator to encourage the growth of Kidney Vetch which is the larval food plant for the butterfly. In addition at their new Priest Hill nature Reserve, Surrey Wildlife Trust have also been creating suitable habitat by removing the tarmac from former tennis courts and spreading Kidney Vetch seed from nearby Howell Hill Nature Reserve on the exposed chalk. With known breeding populations now identified at Warren Farm, Howell Hill Nature Reserve and Epsom Downs the prospects for this butterfly are improving within the Borough.



Howell Hill Nature Reserve, Small Blue Butterfly laying an egg
on Kidney Vetch

Objective 3: *Ensure opportunities for the conservation and enhancement of the whole biodiversity resource in Epsom and Ewell are identified considered and acted upon*

Update:- During 2013 progress was been made via Planning Policy with the drafting of a Green Infrastructure policy which identifies potential green corridors across the Borough and links to neighbouring boroughs and Greater London. The policy was due for implementation during 2014 but a delay means implementation will be in 2015.



Update:- During late spring and summer of 2013 re-surveying of the Borough's existing Sites of Nature Conservation Importance (SNCI) and surveying for new SNCI took place. This resulted in the whole of Horton Country Park LNR and Epsom & Walton Downs be designated (formerly each site had several separate SNCI), along with two new SNCI Northey Fields and Livingstone Park. Further recommendations were made by the "Local Sites" committee and during 2014 this included the consideration of a small Thames Water site on Epsom Downs that was known to be botanically rich. A site visit in summer 2014 discovered the presence of the Small Blue Butterfly which along with several species of orchid make the site notable and suitable for designation as an SNCI. During 2015 the recommendations for further investigation of Woodcote Park and Langley Bottom Farm will be pursued. The current situation means that under the government's 'Single Data Set' which uses the measure of SNCI in active conservation management to monitor the current condition of the nation's biodiversity the Borough still has the highest proportion of SNCI in active conservation management in Surrey.



Pyramidal Orchids at the Thames Water
site with Queens Stand in the background
summer 2014

Update:- Site management plans continue to play a crucial role in coordinating work across our open spaces and helping to secure funding. During 2014 work commenced on re-writing plans for three of the Boroughs largest open spaces, Epsom Common, Epsom Downs and Nonsuch Park. The plans are due to be approved in early 2015 ensuring a consistent and planned approach to the management of biodiversity in the Boroughs open spaces.



Horton Country Park LNR work to implement the current management plan Countryside Officer Lindsay Coomber applying herbicide to stumps cut by volunteers summer 2014

Objective 4: *Raise awareness, appreciation and involvement in the conservation and enhancement of biodiversity in Epsom and Ewell*

Update:- During 2014 there were articles in the Borough Magazine 'Insight' and local press on the use of horses to remove timber from Pond Wood, Epsom Common Day (celebrating 40 years of the Epsom Common Association), the new 20 mile "Hike & Bike" route linking the Boroughs five main open spaces, the management of Epsom Downs, including its wildlife, the Woodland Trust purchase of Langley Bottom Farm and the opening of Priest Hill Nature Reserve by Surrey Wildlife Trust. All helping to raise awareness of the Boroughs natural environment and the opportunities to get actively involved.



Epsom Common Day photo competition
prize giving July 2014



Start of the Round the Borough Bike May
2014

New:- In association with a need to protect the ecology of a pond in Horton Country Park LNR from constant daily disturbance by dogs a new notice was placed on the gate leading to the fenced off pond, explaining the need for dog owners to stop their pets entering the pond. The notice was experimental in that it also highlighted another issue of disturbance to woodland ground flora such as Bluebells which are disappearing from areas close to paths due to constant trampling. The notice is still in place after several months which is positive as the issue of long term incremental damage to habitats on nature reserves due to public access needs addressing both locally and nationally.

WE NEED YOUR HELP!

Recently a decline has been noticed in some of Horton Country Park Local Nature Reserve's most treasured plant and animal life. Bluebells in Pond Wood are being replaced by plants that thrive on disturbed ground and Field Pond, once rich in aquatic life is now a shadow of what it was only a few years ago.

WHAT IS HAPPENING!?

The evidence points to **US**, all of us, **day after day, year after year**, constantly visiting with dogs and children, running off the paths, through the woods and in to ponds. The change is **SLOW**, hard to notice year on year but the signs are clear and if we continue to constantly disturb the woodland floor, treasured sights like the sea of bluebells in Pond Wood during April and May could end up being just a memory.

WHAT CAN WE DO TO HELP?

We believe the key to stopping the decline is to reduce disturbance by **keeping to paths**. We know that it is a **BIG ASK** especially for dog owners but we also know that dog owners love the Country Park for its wildlife, the sights and the sounds and will be as concerned as anyone to know that a **decline** is taking place. We recognise the need to provide areas where dogs can be let off the lead and we want to keep things **simple!**

THE BIG ASK!

-Remember there are extensive areas of mown grass and un-fenced meadows where it is fine for dogs and children to run around.



-Please keep to the paths when within or walking past woodlands and don't let dogs go running off through the undergrowth or in to ponds which tramples sensitive plants and fungi and can disturb nesting birds, small mammals, insects, reptiles and aquatic life.

-Please help ensure that our use of the Country Park is sustainable over the long-term, so that future generations can continue to enjoy the wonders of nature at Horton Country Park Local Nature Reserve.

If you have any questions please call 01372 732000 and ask to speak to the Countryside Team.

Update:- EEBC continues to raise awareness and encourage active participation in site management. This is achieved through walks, talks,

leaflets, the web site, regular weekly conservation tasks, through working with 'Friends Groups', local youth initiatives and support for the Lower Mole Countryside Management Project.



Round the Borough Hike September 2014
tired hikers receiving their certificate and a medal if they also completed the bike in May



The 'Big Challenge' local youth recovering
after clearing scrub encroaching on chalk
grassland on Epsom Downs, September 2014



One of two new information boards
erected in the Hogsmill LNR 2014



Horton Country Park LNR, new fence to
protect Great Crested Newts erected
summer 2014



Timber from woodland management is
milled to provide seat benches and backs



Objective 5: *Provide on-going monitoring of biodiversity in Epsom and Ewell*

New:- Epsom Common is a nationally important site for invertebrates especially those associated with veteran trees which are of international importance. During summer 2014 a moth survey was carried out which revealed an abundance of moth species present including three nationally scarce species the Festoon (*Apoda limacodes*), Great Oak Beauty (*Hypomecis roboraria*), Square-spotted Clay (*Xestia rhomboidea*). Some spectacular moths such as the Elephant Hawk Moth, Poplar Hawk Moth and Buff Tip are pictured below. Further surveys are planned for 2015. The night time expedition to set up the moth traps also revealed the presence of a colony of glow worms alongside a main track and subsequent nocturnal investigations found them distributed widely across the common.



Epsom Common LNR, Elephant Hawk Moth
(*Deilephila elpenor*) summer 2014



Epsom Common LNR, Buff tip Moth
(*Phalera bucephala*) summer 2014



Epsom Common LNR, Poplar Hawk Moth
(*Laothoe populi*) summer 2014



Epsom Common LNR, Glowworm (*Lampyris noctiluca*) summer 2014

Update:- The project to monitor reptiles on Epsom Common Local Nature Reserve set up between the Countryside Team and the Surrey Amphibian and Reptile Group (SARG) continued during 2014. Results again confirm that Epsom Common is a very important site for Adders and there is a very widespread distribution of Grass Snakes.



Checking a refuge on Epsom Common LNR



Adder on Epsom Common LNR

Update:- The Countryside Team and volunteers continued to monitor butterflies on a weekly basis over the summer using agreed transects and submitting records to the national database for our three Local Nature Reserves, 2014 was an average year following the bounce back of 2013 and the poor year of 2012.



Epsom Common LNR Brimstone butterfly
on Bluebell Spring 2014

Update:- Through work associated with the 'Planning & Biodiversity in Epsom & Ewell' document and via the 'Working Group' EEBC and Surrey Wildlife Trust are working to produce both priority habitats and species maps for the Borough. Work to produce draft priority habitat and species maps for Epsom & Ewell was delayed during 2014 but it is hoped that they will be available in 2015

Update:- The Countryside Team is continuing to develop and improve its monitoring role within the Boroughs three local nature reserves with a view in future to covering the Borough more widely with the assistance of volunteers. During 2014 approx. 30 volunteer days of biological monitoring was provided valued at approx. £3000. The monitoring for Dormice described previously has continued with the discovery during autumn 2014 of two Dormouse nests in tubes placed in Four Acre Wood. This discovery will help to inform the future management of the wood and means further survey work is required to map the distribution of Dormice across our nature reserves.



The Dormouse found on Epsom Common LNR
February 2012



Volunteers positioning Dormouse boxes on
Epsom Common LNR winter 2013/14

New:- During 2014 the Zoological Society of London (ZSL) approached the Countryside Team and Lower Mole Countryside Partnership to ask for volunteer assistance with their "Riverfly" project which monitors aquatic invertebrates to warn of poor water quality in rivers. Subsequently a small volunteer network has been formed to help monitor water quality in the Hogsmill River.

The Hogsmill Needs You!

Volunteers needed for river monitoring



The Zoological Society of London is offering training in the River Monitoring Initiative (RMI) sampling method. The RMI is a national scheme for monitoring the health of rivers developed by the Riverfly Partnership.

In order to be trained in the RMI you must be able to sample the river for at least 6 months. Once at the river, samples take about 20 minutes and are taken a minimum of every 2 months.

In the Training you will learn;

- The background of the RMI.
- How to kick sample a river.
- How to identify river invertebrates.
- What to do with the RMI data.

You will also meet other volunteers working up and down the Hogsmill River. Everyone involved in the scheme will have a day out at London Zoo.

The training will take place at Kingston University, Knights Park Campus on

Saturday April 26th
11am to 3pm

To book a place or for more information please contact : Joe.Pecorelli@zsl.org

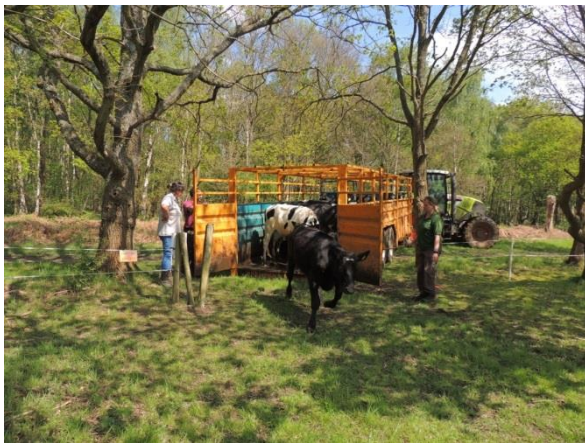
New:- During 2014 the Countryside Team started to use the recently updated national “Biodiversity Accounting & Recording System” inputting information on the activities to manage and enhance biodiversity across the Borough. The system is intended to monitor progress towards the aims of the government’s 2020 biodiversity targets.



Countryside Officer Pete Howarth surveying Blakes Pond Epsom
Common LNR for Great Crested Newts spring 2014

Objective 6: *Seek to increase the funding available for the long term conservation, enhancement and monitoring of biodiversity in Epsom and Ewell*

Update:- Currently funding for biodiversity management is in place for both Epsom Common and Horton Country Park Local Nature Reserves until 2020. The key source is the 2010-2020 Environmental Stewardship Higher Level Scheme along the European Single Farm Payments Scheme. The Single Farm Payments scheme ends in 2014 with a new scheme called “Countryside Stewardship” from 2015, there is some doubt at present over whether or not local authorities will be eligible for the new scheme, so there is a possibility of reduced funds available to manage our Local Nature Reserves in 2015/16.



Epsom Common LNR, the grazing areas were all created using grant aid funds here the cattle arrive late spring 2014 and the dogs can't wait to help!

New:-

Following on from work in 2013 to remove two large weirs from the Hogsmill River during 2014 the South East Rivers Trust (Formerly the Wandle Trust) have naturalised the confluence where the Green Lanes Stream joins the Hogsmill River by removing the concrete bed and stone walls constructed around 1960. EEBC made a contribution of £4500 towards the project. EEBC Countryside Team volunteers will once again assist the trust in securing the banks by planting during spring 2015. Further improvements are planned for 2015.



Beginning August 2014



Middle August 2014



End November 2014

Update:- Surrey County Council allocated £10,000 to the Stones Road Project to make the Stones Road SSSI more resilient and to improve the security of the adjacent allotment. During 2012 this project experienced serious delays due to problems with both water and gas services running across the site. Some work did take place in 2012 with the planting of a hedge following on from previous work to construct a Newt hibernaculum. During 2013 the major part of the project that involves the digging of a new pond took place, carried out by contractor under the supervision of the Lower Mole Project. During 2014 a further £8000 was secured by EEBC and a new fence has been erected that separates the

pond from the allotments. The next stage is to work out the best way to bring the allotments back in to use whilst at the same time providing much needed terrestrial habitat for Great Crested Newts.



Lower Mole Countryside Management Project volunteers planting a hedge at Stones Road Allotment in 2012 and work to construct the new pond in 2013.

New:- Another significant biodiversity improvement was carried at Field Pond on Horton Country park LNR by the Lower Mole Countryside Management Partnership volunteers in Summer 2014. This very old pond was subject to constant daily use by dogs and what had once been a very diverse pond used for educational pond dips had become a shadow of its former self with Great Crested Newts still present but clearly under threat. Using funds received via a Surrey County Councillor, the Friends of Horton Country Park and EEBC a fence was constructed around the pond with a notice explaining the importance of reducing disturbance and keeping dogs out of the pond. In addition the EEBC Countryside Team volunteers have cleared overhanging willow trees to promote the growth of aquatic vegetation that the newts can use to lay eggs on. Indications are currently positive with much clearer water.



Horton Country Park LNR, Field Pond with new fence and work to vegetation around the pond carried out by the Lower Mole Countryside Partnership and EEBC Countryside Team volunteers autumn/winter 2014

Objective 7: *Seek to identify the wider benefits to the community of improving biodiversity*

Update:- Both nationally and internationally there is an increasing understanding that we need to incorporate the benefits (services) provided by biodiversity and natural processes in to our economic models. The government recently published a watershed document the 'UK Ecosystem Assessment' which shows very clearly how we undervalue our natural resources and the services they provide. The result of under valuing our natural resources is ultimately an unsustainable future. Addressing this issue demands a long term approach that recognises the delicate balance of the ecosystems that provide us with vital ecosystem services such as clean air, fresh water and fertile soils. This concept is as applicable to Epsom & Ewell as anywhere else on the planet.

It is undoubtedly a big and complex subject however it is possible to identify local issues to illustrate the challenge we are facing. For example, biodiversity on our local open spaces provides a range of vital ecosystem services and in particular a cultural ecosystem service providing residents with well recognised and significant psychological and health benefits.

Some of our open spaces in Epsom & Ewell are showing signs of strain due to high visitor numbers with woodland wildflowers and aquatic life in ponds under pressure from constant daily disturbance as described above.



Horton Country Park LNR Pond Wood, photograph shows bluebells receding from the path edge with the much loved carpet of bluebells now some distance from the path spring 2014

A recent example of the actual costs that can accrue was the need to restore Great Pond Dam on Epsom Common in 2012 as illustrated in the photos below, due to erosion caused by dogs entering the pond.



Erosion damage to the dam of Great Pond on Epsom Common LNR caused by dogs. Autumn 2012 repairs cost £18500

The UK Ecosystem Assessment shows clearly that sustainable management of our open spaces today not only helps protect their biodiversity but also ensures that wider and in some cases very costly environmental impacts are avoided.

Ecosystem Services are very relevant to the development of the Epsom & Ewell Green Infrastructure Policy and the implementation of the 'Community Infrastructure Levy' that has replaced Section 106 funding for new development.

Conclusion:

2014 has seen further significant progress in implementing the plan. **A BIG THANK YOU from the Working Group to all the volunteers who have helped progress the plan during 2014!**

If you have any questions or you would like to find out more about the implementation of the Epsom & Ewell Local Biodiversity Action Plan please call 01372 732000 and ask to speak to the Countryside Team or email countryside@epsom-Ewell.gov.uk