



# **EPSOM AND WALTON DOWNS**

## **A STRATEGY FOR THEIR MANAGEMENT AND USE**

**Published by the Epsom and Walton Downs  
Conservators**

**2006**

**David Smith  
Clerk to the Conservators**



## **CONTENTS**

1.	Introduction	<b>Page 5</b>
2.	History and Background	<b>Page 6</b>
3.	The Conservators	<b>Page 8</b>
4.	Borough Leisure Strategy	<b>Page 9</b>
5.	Habitat Management	<b>Page 11</b>
6.	Grounds Maintenance	<b>Page 12</b>
7.	Footpaths and Bridleways	<b>Page 15</b>
8.	Car Parks	<b>Page 15</b>
9.	Protection of Boundaries and Downland	<b>Page 16</b>
10.	Signs	<b>Page 17</b>
11.	Marketing, Publicity and Tourism	<b>Page 17</b>
12.	Downskeepers	<b>Page 18</b>
13.	Downskeepers' Hut	<b>Page 19</b>
14.	Refreshment facilities	<b>Page 19</b>
15.	Toilets	<b>Page 19</b>
16.	Waste and Litter Disposal	<b>Page 20</b>
17.	Emergency Arrangements	<b>Page 20</b>
18.	Roads	<b>Page 21</b>
19.	Policies for Individual Users	<b>Page 21</b>
	- Racecourse	
	- Racehorse Training	
	- Hack Riding	
	- Golf	
	- Model Aircraft	
	- Kites	
	- Dog Walking	
	- Cyclists	
	- Walkers, Joggers and Picnicking	
20.	Health and Safety	<b>Page 27</b>
21.	Resources, Implementation and Monitoring	<b>Page 28</b>

## **APPENDICES**

A	Glossary and Publications	<b>Page 29</b>
B	Rights and Responsibilities	<b>Page 30</b>
C	Signed Map	<b>Page 31</b>





## **1. INTRODUCTION**

The Conservators, consisting of six Borough Councillors, three representatives of the Racecourse and one from the training industry, are responsible under the Epsom and Walton Downs Act for the maintenance and control of the Downs. The funding is split in the same proportion as the representation.

The Downs Consultative Committee advises the Conservators on a range of matters and consists of representatives of the Borough Council, the Racecourse, racehorse trainers, hack riders, ramblers, model aircraft flyers, cyclists, the Epsom Protection Society and the residents associations from the areas adjoining the Downs.

The Conservators have sought views on the balance of existing uses, the policies relating to the regulation of those uses, the protection of its natural beauty and the aspirations of users and the local community. These views have been taken into account in this Strategy.

**Cllr. Jean Smith**  
**Chairman**

**David J. Smith**  
**Clerk**

## **2. HISTORY AND BACKGROUND**

Before the passing of the 1936 Act, the Downs were the subject of conflicting interests – the interests of the public, as represented by Epsom and Ewell Borough Council (EEBC), who viewed with concern the encroachment of the racing industry on the heritage of the people to find health and exercise on the open Downs, and the interests of the Epsom Grandstand Association and Mr. Stanley Wootton (the Owner) which inclined towards the development of the Downs for racing and training purposes. The difficulty was that the Council had limited powers to safeguard the public's interest. They could make representations to the Association and the Owner and they could resist any permanent enclosures, but generally they were dependent on the goodwill of the Association and the Owner and could take no active part in the preservation of the Downs.

After much discussion, the conclusion was reached that the only way to secure a measure of regulation and control of the Downs, to obtain powers for the continuance of horse racing and training and at the same time extinguish all rights of common or pasturage, was to promote a private bill which was duly done and that bill received Royal Assent on 31 July 1936.

Thirty years later there was much concern locally that the Act was not appropriate for modern conditions and in 1966 a report was published called 'The Downs Report', prepared by a joint committee of the Epsom Protection Society, the College Ward Residents' Association, the Woodcote (Epsom) Residents' Society, and the Surrey Downs Association (subsequently Tattenham Residents' Association). This Report called for the outright repeal of the 1936 Act and its replacement by a new and simpler act.

After further reports and working parties, a new Act was promoted which became the Epsom and Walton Downs Regulation Act 1984 and is now the statute governing the use of the Downs.

The Epsom Grandstand Association was founded in 1828 when it obtained a 90-year lease of an acre of the Downs from the then Lord of the Manor for the purpose of building a stand. In the 1960s the Association became a subsidiary of United Racecourses Limited and in 1969 the Horserace Betting Levy Board, through its wholly owned subsidiary Metropolitan and Country Racecourse Management and

Holdings Limited, acquired the freehold interest of Epsom Downs. In 1994, United Racecourses was sold by the Levy Board and, as Epsom Downs Racecourse (“the Racecourse”), became part of Racecourse Holdings Trust (*RHT*) who own and run thirteen English racecourses. RHT is a wholly owned subsidiary of The Jockey Club, which is a non-profit distributing organisation committed to furthering the interests of racing. No dividends are paid and all of RHT’s profit is available for reinvestment in its courses.

Mr. Stanley Wootton purchased Walton Downs from the Epsom Grandstand Association on 5 July 1926 and also acquired a lease of part of Epsom Downs as winter training gallops. The 1936 Act empowered Mr. Wootton to train racehorses on Walton Downs and to grant leases or licences to train horses there. In 1969, Mr. Wootton granted a lease of Walton Downs to the Horserace Betting Levy Board for a period of 999 years at a peppercorn rent in order to secure the future of the Downs for the purpose of training racehorses in Epsom. In 1970, a Management Trust was formed to administer these training gallops, and at 2006 this body (the Training Grounds Management Board (*TGMB*)) comprises representatives of Epsom Downs Racecourse, Epsom Trainers Association, the Borough Council, the County Council and the Conservators. In 2005 the Racecourse acquired the Horserace Betting Levy Board’s lease of Walton Downs.



EPSOM DOWNS ON DERBY DAY  
FRANK McCANN 9 THE SQUARE KENILWORTH CV8 1EF 01926 864437

The 1984 Act enabled the Racecourse to enclose the strips of land adjoining the racecourse between Tattenham Corner and the Grandstand, to construct temporary stands and to make charges to the public for admission. This was intended to provide more income from the few days of racing on Epsom Downs and in particular the Derby Race Meeting in order to secure the future of racing at Epsom.

In 1992 the development of the Queen's Stand triggered the exclusion from the Downs of the triangle of land behind the Grandstands, and its replacement with land adjoining the Warren, as provided for in the 1984 Act.

### **3. THE CONSERVATORS**

The Epsom and Walton Downs Conservators regulate, preserve and control the Downs by virtue of the Acts of 1936 and 1984 and in accordance with the provisions of the 1984 Act.

The Conservators consist of 10 people, six Councillors from Epsom and Ewell Borough Council, three representing the Racecourse and one the Owner (which is now the Racecourse). Councillor representatives are appointed for a four-year term, others have no time limit.

Section 4 of the 1984 Act defines the rights of the public over the Downs.

“ 4 Subject to the provisions of this Act and of any bye-laws made under this Act, members of the public shall have right of access for air and exercise on foot over the Downs. Provided that nothing in this section shall authorise any interference with the training by the Company, the Levy Board or the Owner or their lessees or licensees of horses on any part of the Downs or with any other rights conferred upon the Company, the Levy Board or the Owner by this Act, or with the use of the Downs for events permitted by the Conservators under Sub-section 2 of Section 10 (duties and Powers of Conservators) of this Act.”

Section 10 puts a duty upon the Conservators to preserve the Downs as far as possible in their natural state of beauty and is extended to include the desirability of conserving fauna, flora and geological features of special interest.

The Conservators have the right to make byelaws for the prevention of nuisances, for the preservation of order, for the prevention of damage to the land and for securing that users behave themselves so as to avoid undue interference with the enjoyment of the Downs by others.

The expenses incurred by the Conservators are borne in the same proportion as the right to appoint members (60% EEBC, 40% Racecourse).

The five-year strategy for the use of the Downs and the resolution of the inevitable conflict of interests which will from time to time arise, all fall to be determined within the context of these sections of the 1984 Act. In particular, whilst the right of the public to obtain access for air and exercise on foot is enshrined within the Act, it is subject to not interfering with the training of race horses which takes place up to 12 noon daily.

#### **4. BOROUGH LEISURE STRATEGY**

In 2002 Epsom and Ewell Borough Council adopted a Leisure Strategy for the Borough. The aim of the Strategy was to provide a framework of planned policies, objectives and actions to guide the provision and opportunities for leisure within the Borough over the following five years. The specific objectives of the Strategy are:

- To ensure that there is a coordinated range of leisure and cultural activities in the Borough.
- To ensure services are provided to a good standard and accessible to all.
- To encourage people living, working and visiting the Borough to enjoy and participate in activities which enhance their quality of life.

The Strategy is intended to cover all aspects of leisure and culture in the Borough and not just facilities provided by the Borough Council. The seven themes of the Strategy are set out below with some examples of how the Conservators have contributed to these and will continue to do so.

**Publicity and Marketing** – “To provide a service for all leisure and cultural activities in Epsom and Ewell, to effectively promote and publicise their activities through the Borough”. The Conservators intend to use the Borough Council’s website to host pages promoting the Downs and will also use other avenues (e.g. Borough Insight magazine) to promote appropriate events or activities.

**Health** – “To ensure that the Borough is proactive in its involvement in health promotion”. Current use of the Downs by walkers, cyclists and riders contributes to healthy lifestyles and the Conservators will, in partnership with others, encourage appropriate activities to promote health.

**Environment** – “To promote environmental responsibility”. The Conservators will contribute to the production of a biodiversity action plan for the Borough. They will also ensure that their working methods on the Downs are environmentally friendly and sustainable through the implementation of the Habitat Management Plan.

**Access** – “Increasing access to everyone living, working and visiting the Borough to promote participation by the whole community”. The Conservators will develop an access policy with particular emphasis on use of parts of the Downs by those with a disability.

**Young People** – “Endeavour to meet some of the needs of young people at different ages through projects that have been carefully researched”. The Conservators are seeking to develop an educational and interpretation facility in the Prince’s Stand in conjunction with the Racecourse and external funding is being sought to support this.

**Community Safety** – “To improve users and non users’ perceptions of safety within the Borough’s parks and open spaces”. The Conservators have recently cleared areas of scrub to reduce the opportunities for antisocial and illegal behaviour and will continue to work with the Police and others as appropriate.

**Sport** – “To help sports clubs and voluntary organisations develop and grow to provide new opportunities”. The Conservators have encouraged and assisted in the creation of a model aircraft flying club on the Downs.

## **5. HABITAT MANAGEMENT**

The powers of the Conservators to preserve the Downs in their natural state of beauty requires more than a passive or restrictive regime of management. In order to retain grassland with its rich variety of plant species, invasive shrubs will be removed. If woodland regeneration is threatened by exotic non-native tree species, they will be weeded out.

Epsom and Walton Downs covers some 232 hectares (573 acres). This is a substantial area of open space on the edge of the urban area and represents a significant proportion of Surrey's chalk grassland resource.

The lowest point on Epsom and Walton Downs is approximately 85 metres in the south west rising to 150 metres in the north east. This gives a gentle to moderate west facing slope with a moderate to steep south east facing slope over Walton Downs. The entire area has shallow, well drained, calcareous silty soil over chalk.

There are a number of rare plant species present in some locations on the Downs, including three National scarcities – Round-headed Rampion, Bastard-toadflax and Chalk Hill Eyebright. The variety of habitats provide breeding and feeding places for several declining bird species such as Skylarks, and important populations of Small Blue and Chalk Hill Blue butterflies are also present.

Whilst much of the site is used for gallops or for golf “there is an impressive array of habitats present including unimproved calcareous grassland, rough semi-improved calcareous grassland, secondary woodland with associated scrub” (Habitat Management Plan, 2003). Juniper Hill is unimproved chalk grassland and was described in 1989 as “the most species rich stand of its type found in the County.”

A comprehensive Habitat Management Plan (a copy of which is available for inspection at the Town Hall, Epsom) was prepared for the Conservators in 2003 by the Surrey Wildlife Trust. This document analyses in detail the various parts of the Downs describing their ecological importance and contains a number of management recommendations which have been agreed by the Conservators.

An Action Plan to support the Management recommendations in the Habitat Management Plan was adopted in 2003.

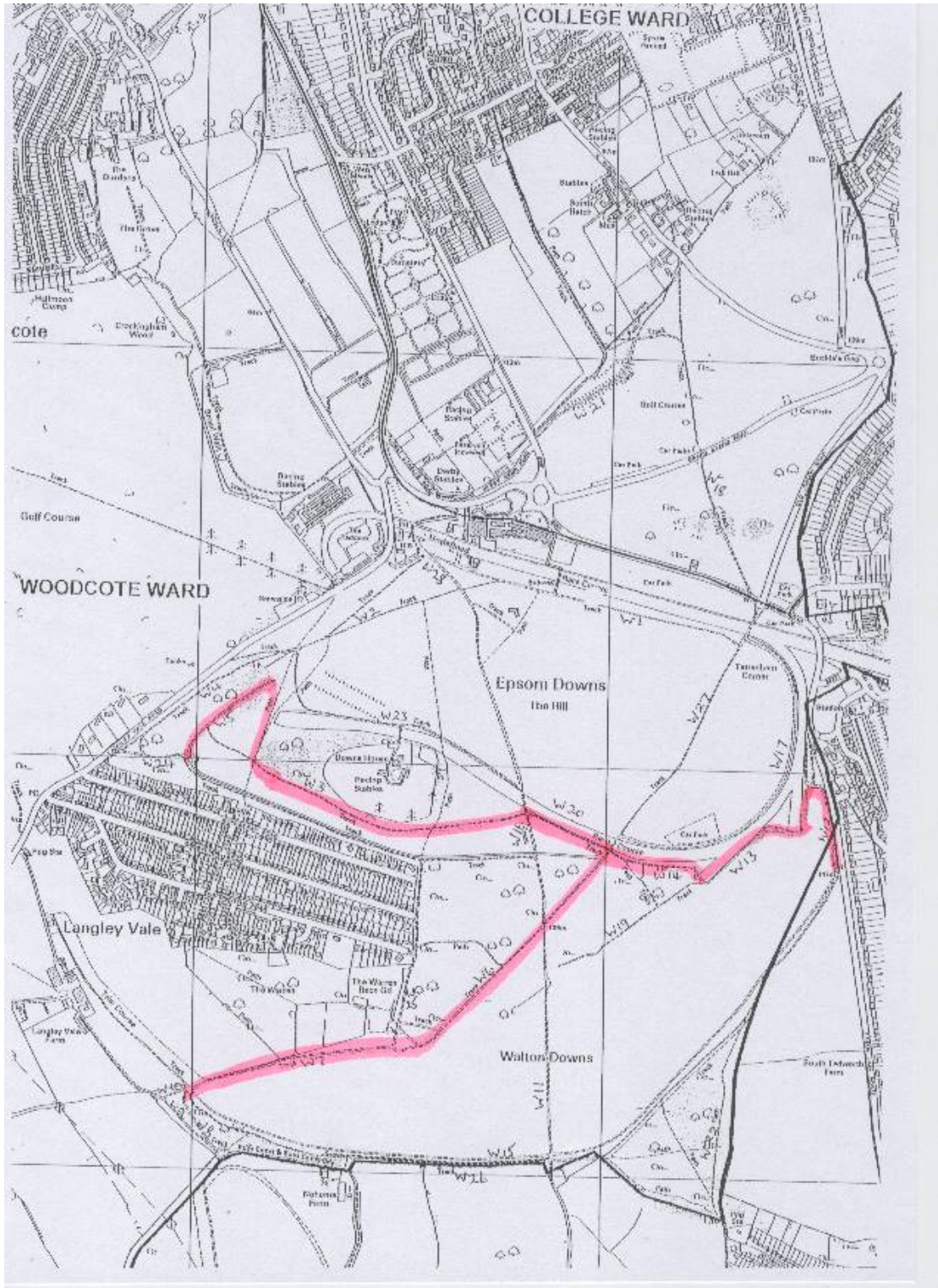


## **6. GROUNDS MAINTENANCE**

Work on the ground including maintenance of the various paths and horse rides is carried out partly by the Downskeepers and partly by outside contractors. The carrying out of work in the past was very much on an ad hoc basis – usually reacting to complaints from one or more users of the Downs. There is now a planned maintenance programme for the Downs (incorporated in the Action Plan referred to in the previous section) which seeks to balance the requirements of nature conservation with the needs of users of the Downs. Although the resources available (particularly for employment of contractors) are very restricted, this Strategy requires a continuation of the planned approach to the carrying out of maintenance work and (where appropriate) improvements to existing facilities.



In 2000 significant improvements were carried out to tracks and horsewalks used both by racehorses and hack riders funded with the aid of a grant of £111,000 from the Horserace Betting Levy Board. It was a condition of that grant that the Conservators maintain the work to the satisfaction of the Board. Regular weekly maintenance of the tracks is carried out partly by the TGMB and partly by the Conservators. Those tracks for which the TGMB are responsible are shown on the attached plan. The TGMB is also responsible for the maintenance of the racehorse all-weather gallops and the grass gallops.



*Ordnance Survey*

## **7. FOOTPATHS AND BRIDLEWAYS**

The aim of the Conservators is to:

- Ensure that all public rights of way are properly maintained.
- Ensure that all public rights of way are adequately signposted.
- Survey all footpaths on Downs and develop a policy for their future use where they are not public rights of way.
- Maintain and sign all footpaths agreed to be retained.
- Maintain appropriate footpaths in a condition facilitating access by the disabled to a variety of locations on the Downs.

In order to complete the last of these aims the Conservators will develop an Access Policy in consultation with appropriate user groups.

## **8. CAR PARKS**

The Conservators are required under the 1984 Act to ‘set apart areas for use as car parks’. They may, subject to the approval of the Council, make such charge, if any, as they think fit but if they do charge, the income may only be applied to the maintenance of the car parks.

The Conservators do not at present intend to introduce car parking charges but will reconsider this if necessary for financial reasons (i.e. the need to raise money to maintain the car parks) or in order to control parking.

The Conservators will:

- Keep under review the number and location of car park spaces required.
- Make available that number of spaces in appropriately surfaced car parks.

- Improve the general appearance and landscaping of car parks.

The appropriate surface for a car park on the Downs has been debated for a number of years. It is necessary to find something which is durable but not too urbanised – tarmac is generally not acceptable. The Conservators propose to develop a statement setting out their long-term intentions with regard to surfacing and landscaping and to agree an Action Plan to achieve these.

## **9. PROTECTION OF BOUNDARIES AND DOWNLAND**

As with many open spaces there is a risk that, over time, there is encroachment by adjoining owners. The Conservators will, therefore:

- Survey all boundaries and access points.
- Protect boundaries against encroachment.
- Regularise existing and control replacement of private accesses to minimise damage to the Downs whilst facilitating their use.
- Encourage proper maintenance of routes leading to the Downs.

Within the area of the Downs the Conservators will:

- Secure that all land within the Downs is maintained in a natural condition (i.e. grass, or woodland) unless it has an approved current use for some other purpose (e.g. highway).
- Encourage the owners of open land adjoining the Downs to maintain their land in a natural condition.
- Ensure that any land previously used as highway is returned to Downland when no longer needed for that purpose

(including road shoulders where road widths have grown through accident of maintenance or erosion).

## 10. SIGNS

The existing signposting on the Downs is not of a consistent style. This does nothing for the appearance of the Downs and in some instances is not best suited to imparting the required information. A new house-style incorporating the logos of Epsom and Ewell Borough Council and Epsom Downs Racecourse was adopted in 2005 and all warning and general information signs will be replaced in this style.

The Conservators will signpost and waymark the Downs in a consistent style and in a way which balances sensitively the information needs of users with the appearance of the Downs. In particular they will:

- Ensure that all warning signs are in place.
- Replace existing signs in the new house-style.
- Review the content and placing of byelaw signs and then renew and maintain them.
- Review and replace as necessary all right of way signs and those waymarking hack rides and areas.

An action plan, with timescales, will be developed in the light of current proposed alterations to the right of way network and the resources available for the necessary improvements to signs.

## 11. MARKETING, PUBLICITY AND TOURISM

The Downs are heavily used by the public for a variety of purposes. Historically, they have at least a regional significance with all the pressures that this entails. The Conservators, in pursuance of their principal duty to preserve the natural beauty of the Downs, will seek to provide a high standard of amenity for all users **but will not generally promote significantly higher levels of usage**. They will, however, encourage limited activities which contribute to the unique character of the Downs and its traditions such as Horseman's Sunday.

The Conservators may permit the Downs to be used for events other than horse-racing provided that this shall be on no more than five days per year involving a significant interference with the rights of public access and no more than 25 hectares shall be set aside. The Conservators have used this power very infrequently and would not intend to do so more frequently in the future.

The Conservators will develop web pages on the EEBC site to promote and give information on the Downs, with links to other relevant web-sites which give further information. The web pages will incorporate appropriate leaflets to be made available on the Downs and through other appropriate outlets.

## **12. DOWNSKEEPERS**

The Conservators employ a Foreman and six Downskeepers whose duties include patrolling the Downs, maintenance of grounds, boards and barriers, woodland management and litter clearance.

Two Downskeepers are on maintenance duties and work Monday – Friday. Four are on patrol duties covering three shifts (early, middle and late, seven days a week). During the morning there are two on duty to control potential conflict between racehorses and other users of the Downs and to respond to any incidents.

Downskeepers will aim to guide and inform users of the Downs wherever possible, but the Conservators will prosecute breaches of the byelaws in appropriate cases.

Three Downskeepers are fully trained in First Aid and the remainder have a basic knowledge. The Conservators intend that all Downskeepers should be fully trained.

Downskeepers wear a uniform so that they can be readily recognised by users of the Downs, and similarly their vehicles are appropriately badged.

Historically the Downskeepers have often shared equipment with the Gallops staff employed by the TGMB or with the Racecourse, but in the recent past they have been more self-sufficient. The Conservators intend to examine carefully the possibility of pooling vehicles and equipment with other Borough Council services.

### **13. DOWNSKEEPERS' HUT**

The hut is structurally stable, weather tight and meets basic health and safety standards though there is currently some investigation of the washing facilities. It does not, however provide good quality restroom facilities for the Downskeepers; it looks shabby, and it provides no information for the public.

The Conservators intend to carry out a condition survey and then instigate either the refurbishment or replacement of the hut, possibly linked with other facilities, to provide information for the public better accommodation for the Downskeepers and proper storage/workshop facilities to replace those lost when Tattenham Corner Stables were sold.

### **14. REFRESHMENT FACILITIES**

The only public facility on the Downs for refreshment is the Tea Hut at Tattenham Corner. This is leased to a private operator by the Racecourse.

In the past this was the only site considered to be suitable for such facilities and the Conservators identified a need to upgrade it, possibly in conjunction with other facilities such as the toilets or Downskeepers' Hut.

Funding for this might have been available through planning gain in connection with appropriate planning applications or through lottery funding. The Conservators were not able to allocate sufficient from their own budget.

If an opportunity for a major enhancement of visitor facilities were to arise the Conservators would be prepared to consider this, but for the foreseeable future it is anticipated that a facility of the present type would continue and this is considered to be an appropriate facility for users of the Downs. Consideration will be given to the improvement of footpaths and bridleways in the immediate vicinity of the Tea Hut and car park.

### **15. TOILETS**

The Borough Council has a power but not a duty to provide public conveniences. It would have closed those on Tattenham Corner Road

some years ago if the Conservators had not agreed to assume full responsibility for them.

In the past the Conservators have tried to relocate the conveniences to the Tattenham Corner Car Park, with the refreshment facilities, but have not been able to secure funding. The intention for the foreseeable future is to maintain the existing use in its current location and the Conservators will commission a condition survey to ensure that the facilities remain fit for purpose.

## **16. WASTE AND LITTER DISPOSAL**

Litter picking and disposal forms a significant part of the day-to-day duties of the Downskeepers. The implementation of this work has a significant impact on the preservation of the natural environment of the Downs.

One of the keepers on work duties empties litter bins (currently 40) three times a week.

Litter picking is carried out by those on patrol duties and all litter is placed in large bins in the car parks for weekly collection. In addition the Downskeepers have to deal with the occasional instance of fly-tipping.

The Conservators will seek opportunities (in conjunction with the Racecourse) to recycle litter so long as this is consistent with the speedy and effective removal of material from the Downs.

## **17. EMERGENCY ARRANGEMENTS**

There is a plan in existence to guide the emergency services to different parts of the Downs in the event that they are required.

Facilities for the reception of members of the public requiring first-aid are provided within the Downskeepers' Hut.

Emergency arrangements on the Downs during race meetings are the responsibility of the Racecourse but the Conservators will offer assistance as required.

## **18. ROADS**

The Conservators have in recent years worked successfully with the County Council, which is the Highway Authority, to improve signposting to the Downs and to introduce safety measures on and around the Downs. Examples include the “Welcome to the Home of the Derby” signs, the 40 mph speed limit, a number of horse crossings (such as Langley Vale Road) and traffic calming measures in Langley Vale Road.

The Conservators will continue to press for improvements in road safety to protect racehorses travelling to and from the gallops and other road users, including walkers and riders.

In addition, the Conservators have responsibility for certain roads on the Downs – Walton Road, part of Old London Road and Downs House Road. It is not the intention to seek changes to the legal status of these roads but wherever possible to reduce potential conflict between users by appropriate signposting.

## **19. POLICIES FOR INDIVIDUAL USERS**

A number of policies relating to individual users are set out below. In addition, there is a statement of rights and responsibilities for each of those users set out in Appendix B.

## – RACECOURSE



The first recorded race meeting to be held on the Downs was in 1661 and the tradition continued until 1779, when the Oaks was established. The following year saw the inaugural running of the Derby. The first winner was Diomed, owned by Sir Charles Bunbury – some consolation for losing the toss of a coin to the Earl of Derby for the naming of the race.

Race meetings on the Downs are restricted to a maximum of 16 days in any one year by the 1984 Act but in practice the number of racing days is fewer.

The 1984 Act was drafted to protect the future of racing on the Downs and gives the Racecourse a number of rights, some of which need to be exercised with the consent of the Conservators. The Conservators attach considerable importance to the historic traditions and current needs of the Racecourse and will continue to exercise their discretion with that in mind, but will wherever possible seek to maintain a balance between racing and other users of the Downs.

## **- RACEHORSE TRAINING**

The maintenance of the Downs in their present condition is enhanced by the presence of the racehorse training industry. In recognition of this and its importance to the local environment and economy, the Conservators seek to work with the Epsom Trainers Association to sustain the long-term viability of the industry and to secure further improvement to the appearance of the Downs.

There have been horses in training in Epsom for over 200 years with 175 people employed by the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. There has been a significant decrease in racehorse training in Epsom over the last 30 years, during which many yards have been redeveloped – mainly for housing. In 1970 there were 19 active trainers with 520 horses – today there are 12, with just over 200 horses.

The Conservators will manage the Downs to respect the needs of the training industry and will seek to reduce potential conflict with other users. Most of these issues are covered in the 1984 Act and the Byelaws. The areas designated for training are shown on the Signed Map (Appendix C).

The Conservators will consider favourably proposals for the improvement of training facilities on the Downs but will also take into account the Habitat Management Plan and the needs of other users.

The Conservators will also lobby and advise other bodies on issues which affect the viability and vitality of racehorse training – for example:

- Planning policies for the protection of existing establishments or governing applications for new ones.
- Highway improvements such as speed limits, horse crossings and signs.

## **- HACK RIDING**

The rights of hack riders for access on horseback are set out in the 1984 Act, and representatives of the British Horse Society and the Epsom Downs Riders' Protection Association sit on the Downs Consultative Committee.

There are extensive hack areas marked on the Signed Map (Appendix C) and over 20km of rides. In addition there is access along several roads and public bridleways. Use of some of the hack areas and rides is restricted until noon to reduce conflict with racehorse training. Hack areas and rides are marked by posts with blue arrows (allowing riding), red crosses (no hack riding) and yellow arrows (riding allowed after noon).

The Conservators have a number of responsibilities in relation to grounds maintenance and signposting which impact on the use of the Downs by the hack riders and they will seek to discharge those responsibilities to improve facilities and to reduce the potential for conflict with other users (in consultation with the Consultative Committee).

In particular they will:

- Maintain hack areas and rides to prevent encroachment.
- Maintain facilities such as the sand tracks through the woods and at the foot of Walton Downs.
- Improve signposting (see section 10 above).

## **– GOLF**

Epsom Golf Club has a lease of part of the Downs from the Racecourse. It was established in 1889 following the mapping of a rudimentary course by a group of masters from Epsom College the previous year. Today it has over 700 members. The Club has a plan for maintenance and improvement of the course which has previously been agreed by the Conservators and any proposals for change to the existing landscape will be considered in the light of the Club's needs, any health and safety requirements, and the effect on the overall appearance of the Downs and on other users.

## **– MODEL AIRCRAFT**

The area for the flight of model aircraft and rules relating to their flying are contained in the byelaws. A new club, the Epsom Downs Model Aircraft Club (EDMAC), was formed in 2005 with the support of the Conservators, and the Downskeepers will work with the Club to ensure compliance with the Byelaws. Anyone flying a model aircraft (whether radio controlled or free flight) on the Downs is required to be a member of this Club.

The area for flying is controlled under the Byelaws to reduce the risk of conflict with other users. All Club members are required to have insurance and hold membership cards to verify that they are entitled to fly on the Downs. For safety reasons some types of flying – e.g. rocket and turbine powered aircraft, control line and bungee launches are prohibited.

A positive Health and Safety Audit was included within an independent Risk Assessment of model aircraft flying on the Downs carried out in 2006. The conclusions of this risk assessment were considered by the Conservators and included within this Strategy.

In order to avoid conflict with other users, particularly horse-riders, the area for flying kites is restricted under the byelaws to that part of the Downs enclosed by the Old London Road to the north, east and south and to the west by Public Bridleway 127. There are also prohibitions on flying on race days and before 12 noon and on the size of kite.

The use will continue to be regularly monitored by Downskeepers through staff deployment, the periodic issue of advisory leaflets and, if necessary, legal action. No changes to the present arrangements are anticipated.

## **– DOG WALKERS**

A significant number of people use the Downs for walking dogs and this can give rise to problems, particularly in the vicinity of car parks, of dog-fouling and conflict with horses. The Conservators will continue to address these issues primarily through the provision of appropriate receptacles, the deployment of Downskeepers, and the periodic issues of advisory leaflets but will, if necessary, take legal action.

## **– CYCLISTS**

Cyclists may use public roads and bridleways but may only go onto other land with the consent of the landowner.

The mountain bike with its all-terrain tyres and multi-gearing, can take people to areas inaccessible on conventional bikes. These include large parts of the Downs. Chalkland soils are particularly susceptible to erosion damage from such use.

Particular problems have been experienced on the golf course, with substantial damage to greens. There are also a number of areas where cycling (some legitimate and some not) causes conflict with other users – particularly racehorses.

It is the policy of the Conservators to encourage cycling on appropriate routes through signposting and surface treatment and to discourage use, by legal measures in some cases and by provision of better alternatives in others, of routes which are likely to lead to conflict with other Downs users.

## **- WALKERS, JOGGERS AND PICNICKERS**

Walkers and other casual users of the Downs are well represented in the formal consultative machinery relating to the Downs. The Ramblers' Association have a representative on the Consultative Committee and the three Residents' Associations and Epsom Protection Society include walkers in their membership. The Conservators are concerned that this Strategy (e.g. through the development of a policy relating to footpaths which are not rights of way), should have proper regard to the interests of those who walk on the Downs as an end in itself as well as those who ride or who only walk for the purpose of, for example, playing golf or flying a model aeroplane.

The aim is to ensure that adequate facilities exist for those who wish to walk, sit or picnic on the downs including appropriate locations where there is easy access for the disabled.

Use of the Downs by joggers contributes to the health theme of the Borough Leisure Strategy and generally does not conflict with either the

preservation of the habitat or with other users. There are, however certain locations (particularly adjacent to horse-riding tracks), where a conflict can arise and this will be managed by appropriate signs and patrolling.

The Conservators periodically receive requests for memorial seats and have adopted a policy which prevents the placing of plaques, commemorative seats etc. on the Downs other than in the most exceptional circumstances in order to prevent any deterioration in the rural aspect. They are, however, prepared to consider proposals which respect the environment and ecology of the Downs such as the gift of nesting boxes for an area of woodland, and have on occasions approved rustic seating without a plaque.

## **20. HEALTH AND SAFETY**

The Conservators have a responsibility for the health and safety of their own staff and of all users of the Downs.

One concern raised by some local residents in the past related to bonfires on the Downs, the most common reasons for the occurrence of bonfires on the Downs being:

- Burning of vegetable detritus in accordance with accepted land management principles.
- Malicious or spontaneous combustion of accumulated grass cuttings.

The Conservators' policy for any bonfires on the Downs enshrines the following principles:

- Vegetable detritus from land management work continues to be disposed of by burning. Bonfires should be limited in size to no more than 2-3 cubic yards in volume before lighting and must be monitored at all times whilst alight to ensure a steady supply of fresh material for 'bright burning', such that smouldering is not allowed to continue. Where necessary, more than one small bonfire should be set at one time rather than one large one so as to encourage efficient combustion with minimum smoke generation. A policy with regard to lighting of bonfires linked to wind direction is not practical.

- The accumulated decomposing grass cuttings must be regularly disturbed and aerated by forking over. This has two benefits: it exposes the heated core to ambient air, reducing the internal temperature, and exposes insect life to the bird population. Unfortunately, only a 24-hour guard on the dump can prevent the malicious setting of fires.
- Controlled burning on the Downs by any individual or group may only be performed with the express permission of the Conservation Officer.

Many of the previous sections of this strategy cover issues of health and safety – e.g. potential conflicts between racehorses and other users, kite and model aircraft flying and Emergency Arrangements. Health and Safety issues form a key part of the role of the Downskeepers and are regularly reviewed with a view to increasing public safety wherever possible.

## **21. RESOURCES, IMPLEMENTATION AND MONITORING**

The intention is to produce from this Strategy an Action Plan with specific targets and timescales. The Action Plan will be constrained by the resources available to the Conservators and will, therefore, be reviewed each year with proposed budgets. An annual report will be prepared detailing progress against the Action Plan and presented to the Conservators and the Consultative Committee.

## **APPENDIX A**

### **Glossary**

EDMAC	-	Epsom Downs Model Aircraft Club
EEBC	-	Epsom and Ewell Borough Council
RHT	-	Racecourse Holdings Trust
TGMB	-	Training Grounds Management Board

### **Publications**

Epsom and Walton Downs Regulation Act 1984

Deposited Map

Signed Map

Byelaws

Report of the Working Party – Epsom and Walton Downs, their present and future regulation (1981)

Report on the promotion of the 1984 Act

Habitat Management Plan 2003

General leaflet on the Downs and its management

Leaflet for dog owners

Nature Trail

Websites	-	EEBC ( <a href="http://www.epsom-ewell.gov.uk">http://www.epsom-ewell.gov.uk</a> )
	-	EDMAC ( <a href="http://www.edmac.org.uk">http://www.edmac.org.uk</a> )
	-	Epsom Downs Racecourse ( <a href="http://www.epsomderby.co.uk">http://www.epsomderby.co.uk</a> )
	-	Epsom Golf Club ( <a href="http://www.epsomgolfclub.co.uk">http://www.epsomgolfclub.co.uk</a> )
	-	Hack riders ( <a href="http://www.craddocks.co.uk">http://www.craddocks.co.uk</a> )

Copies of these document may be inspected (and in some cases, copies obtained) at the Town Hall, Epsom (01372 732000 or [contactus@epsom-ewell.gov.uk](mailto:contactus@epsom-ewell.gov.uk))

## APPENDIX B

### Rights and Responsibilities

	<b>Rights</b>	<b>Responsibilities</b>
<b>Racecourse</b>	To hold up to 16 race meetings per year (s.14). To exclude the public, erect temporary stands and fencing and to charge the public on and around race days (s.17).	To meet 40% of the Conservators budget. To comply with restrictions on their activities imposed by the Conservators under the Act. To respect the rights of other users of the Downs.
<b>Racehorse Training</b>	To use the areas shown on the Signed Map for training, to maintain training gallops (s.17, 20)	Individual trainers to pay fees to the Training Grounds Management Board for a licence to use the maintained facilities on the Downs. To respect the rights of other users of the Downs.
<b>Hack Riding</b>	Right of access for air and exercise on horseback over the rides and areas shown on the Signed Map and such other rides and areas authorised by the Conservators, subject to a restriction in a number of areas prior to noon. (s.15)	To comply with the restrictions on access both in relation to the time of day and those areas or rides designated solely for racehorse use. To respect the rights of other users of the Downs.
<b>Golf</b>	To play on the golf course other than when it is in use for racing purposes.	To comply with the rules of Epsom Downs Golf Club and to respect the rights of other users of the Downs.
<b>Model Aircraft</b>	Members of Epsom Downs Model Aircraft Club to fly model aircraft on the Downs	To comply with the byelaws and Club rules and to respect the rights of other users of the Downs.
<b>Kites</b>	To fly kites in the area allowed under the byelaws.	To comply with the byelaws and respect the rights of other users of the Downs.
<b>Dog Walkers</b>	To walk on the Downs other than the racecourse and all-weather surfaces provided for horse riding.	To control dogs so that they do not interfere with or cause danger to other users of the Downs, particularly horse riders. To ensure that dogs do not foul the Downs.
<b>Cyclists</b>	To use public roads, and bridleways across the Downs.	To restrict cycling to approved routes and to respect the rights of other users of the Downs.
<b>Walkers, Joggers and Picnickers</b>	To walk on the Downs other than the racecourse and all-weather surfaces provided for horse riding.	To respect the rights of other users of the Downs.

APPENDIX C

SIGNED MAP

