

About Epsom and Walton Downs

Epsom and Walton Downs, famous for its racecourse, is an area of 600 acres of unspoilt downland. The view takes in the whole of London as well as large areas of rural Surrey.

The area is an important chalk grassland habitat and there are a number of rare plant species present in some locations on the Downs. These include three national scarcities: the Round-Headed Rampion, Bastard-Toadflax and Chalk Hill Eyebright. The variety of habitats also provides breeding and feeding places for several declining bird species such as the Skylark. Important populations of Small Blue and Chalk Hill Blue Butterflies are also present.

A Brief History

Before the passing of the Epsom and Walton Downs Act 1936, the Downs were the subject of conflicting interests. These included the interests of the public, as represented by the Council, and the interests of the Epsom Grandstand Association and Mr Stanley Wootton which inclined towards the development of the Downs for racing and training purposes.

As the Council had limited powers to safeguard the public's interest and were reliant on the goodwill of the Association and the Owner, they could take no active part in the preservation of the Downs. The conclusion was reached that the only way to secure a measure of regulation and control of the Downs was to promote a private bill which received Royal Assent on 31 July 1936.

The Act has since been replaced by the Epsom and Walton Downs Regulation Act 1984, which is now the statute covering the use of the Downs. The Act gives the general public right of access for 'air and exercise' on foot over the Downs, although racehorse training activity has priority over all other users before midday each day.

Management

The Conservators are responsible for managing Epsom and Walton Downs and they employ a dedicated team of Downskeepers who manage the Downs on a day to day basis. The documents that govern the use, management and maintenance of the Downs can be found below.

- [Epsom and Walton Downs Regulation Act 1984](#)
- [Epsom and Walton Downs Byelaws](#)
- [Epsom and Walton Downs Strategy 2006](#)
- [Epsom and Walton Downs Habitat Management Plan](#)
- [Epsom Golf Course Habitat Management Plan](#)

Code of Conduct

To ensure the enjoyment and safety of all those using Epsom and Walton Downs, the Conservators ask that you respect the [Code of Conduct](#) and be aware of other users on the Downs at all times. Please ensure the use of headphones and mobile phones does not affect your ability to hear or see other users as this could have serious health and safety consequences for all involved.

Racing

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. This may have given him 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.

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 19th Century. There has been a significant decrease in racehorse training in Epsom over the last 30 years. Many yards have been redeveloped for housing. In 1970 there were 19 active trainers with 520 horses. Today there are 9 trainers with around 150 horses.

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 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 afternoon).

Further information can be obtained from the riders' representative, Hugh Craddock, by visiting Hugh's [website](#).

- [Hack Riding Information for Epsom and Walton Downs](#)

Model Aircraft

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

- [Model Aircraft Information for Epsom and Walton Downs](#)

Golf

Epsom Golf Club has a lease for 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. Any proposals for change to the existing landscape are 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.

Parking and Refreshment Facilities

The only public facility on the Downs for refreshment is the Tea Hut at Tattenham Corner which the Racecourse lease to a private operator. Free car parking is available in areas on Grandstand Road, Tattenham Corner Road, the Mile Post and Ebbisham Lane.

- [Epsom Downs Car Parking Map](#)

Metal Detecting

Metal detecting is only permitted on Epsom Downs in designated areas, and you must have a valid and authorised licence issued by the Conservators before doing so.

Applications and payments for metal detecting licences are made online from the first working day in January each year. A maximum of 25 licences are issued on a first-come, first-served basis. Each licence costs £40 and is valid for one year.

Metal detectors must not be used on parts of the Downs which are used as racecourse training grounds, golf fairways or greens. Metal detecting is only permitted in designated areas, which are shown in green on the map provided below.

To make an application for a metal detecting licence, please apply on the Epsom and Walton Downs [website page](#). When all licences have been sold, the on-line application process will be closed.

Application for licence - Status: OPEN

Events

Applications to hold events on the Downs are considered by the Conservators twice per year, at their meetings in April and October.

If you would like to submit an application to hold an event on the Downs, please read the Event Management Strategy and Fees and Charges for holding events on the Downs below. An event application pack is available below or from the Council's Downs Manager. All event applications must be received by the Downs Manager at least 28 days in advance of either the April or October meeting of the Epsom and Walton Downs Conservators.

- [Fees and Charges for Events on the Downs](#)
- [Epsom and Walton Downs Event Application Pack](#)
- [Epsom and Walton Downs Event Management Strategy](#)

Dates of Meetings

Dates of the confirmed meetings of the Epsom and Walton Downs Conservators during 2019 are as follows (more dates may be added later in the year):

28th January

15th April

17th June

22nd July (special meeting)

28th October

All meetings of the Conservators are held at 6pm at the Town Hall, The Parade, Epsom, KT18 5BY. Agendas and Minutes are available from Epsom and Ewell Borough Council's [website](#).

Further Information

The following leaflets provide information on a variety of activities on the Downs:

- [General Information and Map](#)
- [Cycling on Epsom and Walton Downs](#)
- [Kite Flying on Epsom and Walton Downs](#)

Volunteers and Community Groups

Friends of Epsom and Walton Downs Contact: Peter Murray, 01372 722931
Lower Mole Countryside Management Project Contact: 01372 743783
Woodcote Residents' Society [website](#)
Tattenham Residents' Association [website](#)
Surrey Ramblers Clubs [website](#)

Data Protection and Freedom of Information

The Epsom and Walton Downs Conservators are covered by Epsom & Ewell Borough Council's [Data Protection policy](#).