

## Horton Country Park Local Nature Reserve



**Welcome to the Horton Country Park Local Nature Reserve Webpage.**

### Access

Horton Country Park Local Nature Reserve is situated in the northern half of the Borough. There are many access points to the site. The main car park for access to walk/cycle and explore is off Horton Lane towards the southern end of the Country Park. There are also car parks for the Golf, Farm and Equestrian Centre's.

View a [Map and Tour](#) of the park.

The site is accessible by pedestrians, cyclists and horse riders from the following locations:

- The main public car park off Horton Lane
- The public footpath at the entrance to West Park Hospital leading to 'Park Farm' - pedestrians only
- The entrance from Noble Park opposite the wetland and balancing ponds
- The lane leading to the Guide camp and cottages off Horton Lane
- The public footpath off Horton Lane adjacent to the rear entrance of the main public car park, leading to Green Lane, Chessington - pedestrians only
- The public footpath leading off McKenzie Way, leading to Green Lane, Chessington - pedestrians only
- Footpath from 'Castle Hill Nature Reserve' in the Royal Borough Of Kingston - pedestrians only
- Footpath from Collier Close - pedestrians and cyclists only
- Footpath off Chessington Road opposite the end of Ruxley Lane - pedestrians and cyclists only
- Footpath off Chessington Road midway between Ruxley Lane, Chessington Road roundabout and the Hook Road/Chessington Road roundabout - pedestrians and cyclists only
- The Golf Centre from the car park - pedestrians and cyclists only
- Equestrian-only entrance off Horton Lane from Horton Farm Stables and from the Riding for the Disabled stables on Hook Road.

Horton Country Park is open all year round. The paths and tracks on the site are for pedestrians, horse riders and cyclists only. Please remember to act responsibly and show consideration for wildlife and other visitors. Dog walkers are welcome on the site but are reminded to keep their dogs under close control and that it is an offence to allow a dog to foul any open space. Please put all dog faeces in a bag and place

it in a dog waste bin or litter bin. For more information about responsible access to the countryside, please take a look at [The Countryside Code](#)

### Activities

Activities that visitors to the reserve can enjoy include:

- Walking
- Cycling (noncompetitive)
- Running (noncompetitive)
- Horse riding
- Dog walking
- Nature watching
- Events
- Kite flying
- Orienteering
- Golf (call 020 8393 8400)
- Polo (call 01372 743084)
- [Guided walks](#)
- [Volunteering](#) (call 01372 732000 or email [contactus@epsom-ewell.gov.uk](mailto:contactus@epsom-ewell.gov.uk))

### Facilities

Horton Country Park Local Nature Reserve covers 400 acres. The site is divided into four distinct areas. Around half of the Country Park is public open space designated as Local Nature Reserve and Site of Nature conservation Importance. It is managed, where possible, to maintain and improve ecological diversity and maintain good public access. The remaining area within the Country Park is divided between three centres, these are Hobbledown Farm a privately run public golf course and Equestrian Centre.

- [Hobbledown Farm](#) is themed around a story and offers children an adventure experience along with a chance to meet animals. There is also a cafe and shop. Hobbledown can be contacted on 01372 743984
- The Golf Centre is called '[Horton Park Country Club](#)' and offers an 18 hole course, driving range, crazy golf and restaurant. Horton Park Country Club can be contacted on 020 8393 8400
- The Equestrian Centre is called '[Equus](#)' and offers livery, pony trekking and polo. Equus can be contacted on 01372 743084.

For those wishing to explore on foot, by bicycle or by horse, Horton Country Park is a wild and wonderful site full of wildlife.

### History

The recorded history of Horton Country Park goes back to medieval times. The Council provides an annual history walk taking you on a three hour trip around the site. To check the date please view our [Events Calendar](#).

Click [here](#) to go on a virtual journey through time at Horton Country Park.

## Leaflets

There are currently three leaflets available for Horton Country Park Local Nature Reserve. The leaflets are available free of charge from the Information Centre at Horton Country Park, the Town Hall and can be requested via Customer Services on 01372 732000. They are:

- The general site leaflet 'Horton Country Park Local Nature Reserve' showing paths and giving information on the wildlife and history of the site
- 'Days of Steam' giving the history of a railway line that used to supply the complex of hospitals in the area

## Management Plan

Epsom & Ewell Borough Council have produced a management plan for Horton Country Park Local Nature Reserve commencing in 2006. To view the plan please use the link below.

[Horton Country Park Local Nature Reserve Management Plan \(pdf - 3.81mb\)](#)

Working in accordance with this plan, the habitats on Horton Country Park are managed to improve their value for biodiversity. If you would like any more information about the management plan or the wildlife on Horton Country Park, please contact a member of the Countryside Team on 01372 732000 or email [contactus@epsom-ewell.gov.uk](mailto:contactus@epsom-ewell.gov.uk).

## Projects

Epsom & Ewell Borough Council are continuing with the management of woodland on Horton Country Park Local Nature Reserve. In January 2011, a ten year programme of woodland restoration works agreed with both Natural England and the Forestry Commission commenced.

## Why are we doing this?

Horton Country Park is a Local Nature Reserve and Site of Nature Conservation Importance (SNCI). Its variety of habitats harbor rich and varied plant and animal communities. Of particular importance are the communities associated with woodland.

Much of the woodland on the Country Park is known to be 'Ancient' coppice woodland meaning that it was present before 1600. Since the 1980's the Council with the help of Volunteers from the Lower Mole Partnership have been slowly but surely restoring the ancient woodland by recommencing coppicing. After the country park was created in 1973 there was a great deal of tree planting and today these young plantations are being managed with some being managed to become future hazel coppice and some fire wood coppice. Managing the woodland encourages a diverse flora on the woodland floor which in turn attracts a variety of wildlife including butterflies, birds and small mammals.

Please note that the tracks will be used by large vehicles for several weeks during the winter period. Please keep dogs under close control and out of the cleared area where there will be fires and machinery in use.

## Coppicing Explained

Coppicing is a traditional form of woodland management where trees and shrubs are cut down to ground level. This results in strong regrowth which produces a regular, sustainable supply of timber products suitable for a variety of uses. Coppicing has enormous benefits for nature conservation due to the increased amount of light that is allowed to reach the woodland floor. This promotes a greater variety of ground flora and enhances the biodiversity throughout the coppiced area.

There is evidence that Coppicing was practiced in Butcher's Grove, Horton Country Park from medieval times. [The Lower Partnership](#) has been working on the restoration of this Coppice Woodland since the early 1980's.

To find out more about Coppicing at Horton Country Park, or other current projects on the Reserve, please call 01372 732000 and ask to speak to a member of the Countryside Team.

## Volunteers & Community Groups

For many years Horton Country Park has benefited from the efforts of volunteers. Three groups in particular are currently active:

- Epsom & Ewell Borough Council Countryside Team Volunteers
- The Friends of Horton Country Park
- The Lower Mole Partnership

The [Countryside Team volunteers](#) carry out a conservation task every Thursday on either Horton Country Park, Epsom Common or the Hogsmill Local Nature Reserves.

The Friends of Horton Country Park were formed in October 1999 to provide a line of communication between Epsom & Ewell Borough Council (the owners) and members of the general public interested in improving Horton Country Park. The group is well established with regular newsletters and conservation tasks. To find out more visit the 'Friends' web site at [www.friendsofhorton.co.uk](http://www.friendsofhorton.co.uk).

The [Lower Mole Partnership](#) have been working on Horton Country Park for many years carrying out work to improve public access and for nature conservation. The partnership has been managing the reintroduction of coppicing in Butcher's Grove. The partnership offices are based in West Park Farm House on the Country Park and the partnership are actively seeking new volunteers.

## Wildlife

The starting point for anyone wishing to study the Country Park's wildlife is to know its geology. Horton Country Park lies on a very thick layer of London Clay unlike the nearby chalklands of Epsom and Walton Downs.

Today we manage the Country Park to allow good public access whilst at the same time maintaining and improving the ecological diversity of the site. The Country Park has an assortment of distinctive habitats ranging from Ancient Woodland to open grassland, streams and ponds. Much work has been carried out in recent years to reintroduce coppice management in to the woodlands. There are many species of trees and other plants, which provide habitats for a number of mammal, bird and

insect species. The Country Park holds many wildlife treasures, such as bluebell woods and the Green Woodpecker, the symbol of Horton Country Park. Throughout the summer, an abundance of butterflies is to be found among the varied grasses and other flowering plants. Look out for Roe deer in the meadows and Heron on 'Meadow Pond'. Each time you visit, you are sure to see something different.