



Epsom & Ewell Biodiversity Action Plan



Progress report for 2015

Introduction

During 2015 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 and today over 40% of priority habitats and 30% of priority species are declining nationally.

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 2015 under the plans seven objectives. Where appropriate updates from previous reports are given along with new items for 2015. **Please note activities reported on can contribute to and be relevant to more than one objective.**

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 to. 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 2015

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 2015 the Surrey Local Nature Partnership (SNP)-Biodiversity Working Group continued in its role of assisting the SNP board with identifying biodiversity priorities and to promote better coordination of biodiversity initiatives across the County. EEBC are represented on the Group. Priorities for the working group are how best to achieve the governments 'Biodiversity 2020' targets, formal adoption and revision of Biodiversity Opportunity Areas (BOA's), revision of criteria and formalising the process of designating Sites of Nature Conservation Importance and supporting volunteer recording efforts across the County. In 2015 the working group via Surrey Wildlife Trust have produced policy statements for all BOA's which in Epsom & Ewell includes a woodland and a chalk grassland BOA. BOA are recognised in EEBC planning policy and the policy statements are set to play a role in defining the Boroughs forthcoming 'Green Infrastructure' policy.



Northey Fields Site of Nature Conservation Importance designated in 2013

Update:- The proposed service level agreement (SLA) between the Surrey Biological Records Centre and Epsom & Ewell Borough Council (EEBC) remains on hold whilst EEBC considers the on-going financial commitment that would be required. However, during 2015 a no cost data exchange was agreed for the Borough's Open Spaces, with all newly recorded data sent to the records centre from which it is freely accessible by EEBC. 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, Nonsuch Voles 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 volunteer conservation task held on Thursdays, during 2015, 429 volunteer days were recorded, carrying out practical conservation work closely aligned to the LBAP which has a value of approximately £23,500 using the Heritage Lottery valuation of unskilled volunteer work at £55 per day per volunteer (Please note some work is classed as skilled and could command a higher value of £100 per day per volunteer)



Lower Mole Volunteers re-surfacing a path in Horton Country Park LNR autumn 2015



Countryside Team helping the Friends of Rosebery Park to manage their wildlife area spring 2015



Countryside Team helping the Epsom Common Association ECOVOL John Turner move charcoal made on Epsom Common LNR to the store at Horton Country Park LNR spring 2015



Countryside Team Volunteers scalloping a Black thorn hedge line to benefit Brown Hairstreak butterflies, Lawn Barn Meadow, Horton Country park LNR winter 2015



The Brown Hairstreak butterfly pictured opposite (photo by Richard Featherstone) in Lawn Barn Meadow, Horton Country Park LNR lays its eggs (above) on young Blackthorn



Update:- 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 now 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. In 2015 the Trust were informed by the Forestry Commission that an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) was required due the scale of the tree planting proposals. Similarly an

EIA has also been requested by the three district planning authorities (Epsom & Ewell, Mole Valley and Reigate & Banstead) for the car parking and visitor centre proposal. The Epsom & Ewell Biodiversity Working Group continues to support the Woodland Trust, by providing the meeting room at West Park Farm, Horton Country. In November 2015 the EEBC Countryside Team Volunteers assisted the Trust by carrying out woodland management work to clear future paths through a wood that was once part of a First World War Canadian camp where the original flag pole still stands!



Countryside Team Volunteers helping the Woodland Trust at Langley Bottom Farm to manage Gaskills Wood where the flag pole still stands from the WW1 Canadian Camp Autumn 2015

Update:- In 2014 the new Surrey Wildlife Trust (SWT) Nature Reserve and SNCI at Priest Hill was opened. 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. In January 2015 the EEBC Countryside Team volunteers assisted SWT Ranger Rachael Thornley

by removing invading scrub from chalk grassland on what is set to become an annual task for the volunteers.



Countryside Team Volunteers clearing scrub at Priest Hill Nature Reserve winter 2015

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

New:- During the Autumn of 2015 Horton Country Park Local Nature Reserve received a potentially very significant habitat enhancement. To assist the developers of the adjacent former West Park Hospital the Council were agreeable to the creation of two off-line balancing ponds to manage excess surface water run-off from the former hospital site that has been redeveloped for housing and is now called Nobel Park. In return the developers agreed to the creation of a new wetland using the Greenman Stream that flows through the Country Park from its source on Epsom and Ashted Commons. Both the balancing ponds and the wetland have the potential to provide a significant habitat enhancement and both will be closely monitored and managed to maximise their benefit.



New wetland in Horton Country Park LNR immediately after completion November 2015



New wetland in Horton Country Park LNR before and during construction October 2015



New balancing ponds in Horton Country Park LNR during construction October 2015

New:- Managing public access plays a very important role in protecting fragile habitats especially on busy urban fringe sites like Epsom Common LNR and Horton Country Park. During the summer of 2015 the remaining 3 km of the 4 km circular bridleway on Epsom Common Local Nature reserve were restored using inert sandstone as approved by Natural England and funded by externally sourced funds. On Horton Country Park LNR the Lower Mole Countryside Partnership Volunteers restored two large sections of footpath and bridleway, through Pond Wood and another section of bridleway leading from Orchard Meadow across poplar Meadow to Meadow Pond. The provision of good quality footpaths and bridleways is helping to protect the nationally and

internationally important wildlife on the Epsom & Ashted Common Site of Special Scientific Interest as well as the rich biodiversity of Horton Country Park LNR.



Horton Country Park LNR restoration of main
bridleway by Lower Mole Partnership
volunteers summer 2015 BEFORE



Horton Country Park LNR restoration of main
bridleway by Lower Mole Partnership
volunteers summer 2015 AFTER



Epsom Common LNR restoration of main
bridleway summer 2015 BEFORE



Epsom Common LNR restoration of main
bridleway summer 2015 AFTER

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 is continuing with the aim of both restoring areas and ensuring long term maintenance. This process was continued in 2015 with volunteers returning to Churchside Meadow, Baron's Meadow, Railway Meadow, Great Pond Meadow and Wells Glade.



Epsom Common LNR Great Pond Meadow Autumn 2015 BEFORE



Epsom Common LNR Great Pond Meadow Autumn 2015 AFTER

Update:- Grazing on Epsom Common took place again during 2015 with 27 cattle from early June to mid-October. 2015 saw a change of farmer with a herd comprised of Belted Galloway and Dexter crosses. Volunteers played a vital role again during 2015 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 summer 2015, cattle grazing in Rye Meadow, cattle helping the volunteers to clear scrub and volunteers erecting the electric fencing

Update:- Work to restore and protect veteran trees on Epsom Common LNR and Horton Country Park LNR took place again during winter 2014/2015 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 2014/2015 with volunteers playing a vital role planting hundreds of hazel trees and erecting deer fencing following felling work carried out by themselves and contractors. In 2015 for the first time since Lower Mole



Horton Country Park LNR contractor forwarding timber in Hollymoor Grove winter 2015



Horton Country Park LNR contractors timber stack at Hollymoor Grove winter 2015



Horton Country Park LNR volunteers erecting deer fencing at Sherwood Grove winter 2015



Horton Country Park LNR volunteers planting future hazel coppice at Sherwood Grove winter 2015

Volunteer's recommenced restorative coppicing in Butcher's Grove in 1983, coppicing was carried out by a contracted woodsman at no cost to EEBC. After 30 years of volunteer effort the value of the coppiced Hazel is now high enough to cover the contractors cost of coppicing, however it

should be noted that the cost of deer fencing to ensure future coppice has to be covered by grant aid and installed by volunteers.



Woodsman John Sinclair processing coppiced Hazel 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 2015 work has continued with volunteers erecting protective deer fencing around recently planted trees in Lambert's Orchard.



Horton Country Park LNR Countryside team volunteer clearing around a young fruit tree in Lambert's Orchard late summer 2015



Horton Country Park LNR Countryside team volunteers erecting deer fencing in Lambert's Orchard late summer 2015

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. 2015 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 in Slip Meadow summer 2015



Horton Country Park LNR hay making in Little Westcotts summer 2014

Update:- During 2015 work was again 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 again this year volunteer tasks were carried out creating several new scapes, cutting and clearing both grass and encroaching scrub.



Juniper Hill, Epsom Downs chalk grassland management summer 2015

Update:- During 2015 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. Creating scrapes involves using a small excavator to remove top soil and expose the less fertile chalky substrate which encourages the growth of Kidney Vetch, 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 identified at Warren Farm, Howell Hill Nature Reserve and Epsom



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

Downs it was hoped that the Small Blue would colonise the Priest Hill scrapes. During the summer of 2015 Small Blue were discovered on the reserve. **SUCCESS!**

New:- As part of the creation and development of the new Priest Hill Nature Reserve by Surrey Wildlife Trust two very rare in Surrey, wild

plants (Broad leaved cudweed and Cut leaved germander) have been successfully introduced on to the chalk scrapes that were former tennis courts. In addition conservation grazing is now established helping to conserve and enhance the chalk grassland and its rare flora and fauna.

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

New:- In January 2015 the Countryside Team took on the role of scrutinising and advising on the ecological aspects of planning applications in the Borough, making better use of the available in house expertise. A number of applications have already been significantly improved with regard to biodiversity following the Team's scrutiny and input.

New:- In September 2015 the Council published its new Development Management Policies Document. The first seven policies relate to the Borough's Green Infrastructure including DM 4 Biodiversity and New Development (See below) Along with the provision of the 'Planning and Biodiversity Guidance in Epsom & Ewell' document in 2011 and the new Countryside Team role, this consolidates a key aim of the LBAP, Target 3.1 'Ensure conservation and/or enhancement of biodiversity become a key part of the decision making process within the planning function of Epsom and Ewell Borough Council'.

DM 4 Biodiversity and Nature Conservation

2.16 The term '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. Maintaining biodiversity helps to promote the stability, sustainability and resilience of ecosystems, is an important national objective and a 'Duty' for all public bodies as defined by the Natural Environment & Rural Communities Act 2006. The Borough's location on the edge of the countryside is strategically important, with the Green Belt and the many

green spaces within the built up areas acting as reservoirs for flora and fauna.

2.17 Conserving and enhancing biodiversity are important objectives in meeting the Borough's aim of achieving no net loss of biodiversity, in line with Paragraph 118 of the National Planning Policy Framework. Development that fragments existing habitats will be avoided and, where possible, opportunities to create links (green corridors) to those habitats that are already isolated will be identified and realised. We will actively seek opportunities to increase biodiversity within the Borough, which will include, where possible, the creation of new habitats. For example, within the Hogsmill Local Nature Reserve a number of stretches of the River Hogsmill have been identified in the South London River Restoration Strategy as potential sites for river enhancement or restoration.

2.18 In cases where there is no alternative location for the proposed development, the applicant must provide evidence that a sequential approach has been applied and that there will be no net loss of biodiversity. We consider reasons of overriding public interest as being related to human health, public safety and the beneficial consequences of primary importance for the environment.

2.19 The Council has adopted a document entitled "Biodiversity and Planning in Epsom and Ewell" for development management purposes. The guide assists in the process of identifying when and where biodiversity in Epsom and Ewell will need to be protected by the planning system, as well as assisting in identifying opportunities to deliver biodiversity enhancements.

Policy DM4: Biodiversity and New development

Development affecting existing or proposed nature conservation sites and habitats of international, national or local importance will only be permitted if:

- (i) The development would enhance the nature conservation potential of the site or is proven to be necessary for the conservation management of the site; or

(ii) there is no alternative location for the development and there would be no harm to the nature conservation potential of the site; or

(iii) there are imperative reasons of overriding public interest for the development

Elsewhere in the Borough:

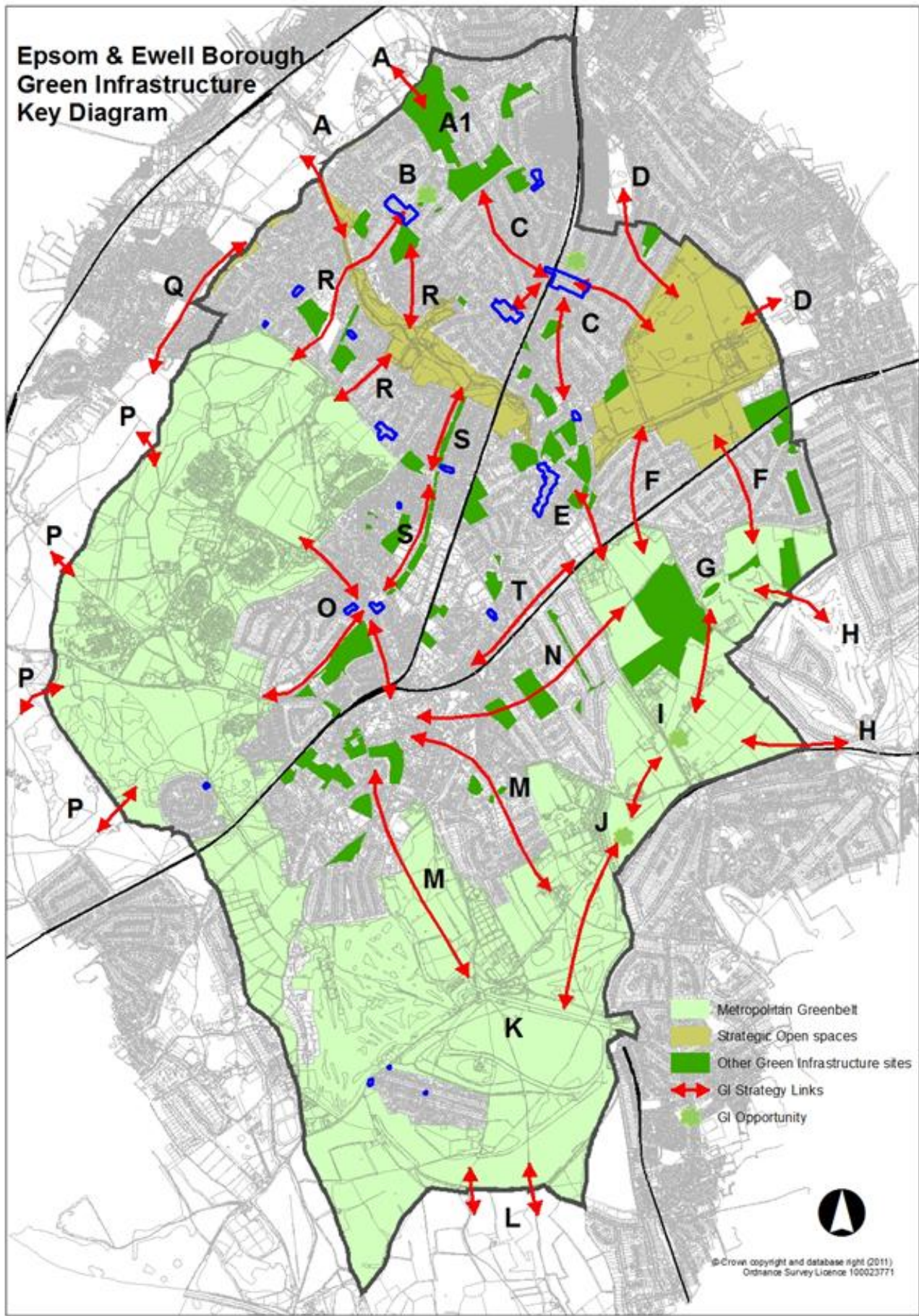
Development affecting any site or building that supports species protected by Law, including their habitats, will only be permitted if appropriate mitigation and compensatory measures are agreed to facilitate the survival of the identified species, keep disturbance to a minimum and provide adequate alternative habitats to ensure no net loss of biodiversity.

Mitigation and compensatory measures will be secured through planning obligations or conditions, with priority for such measures to be provided within the development.

Whether or not there are any species or habitats that enjoy statutory protection, every opportunity should be taken to secure net benefit to the Borough's biodiversity. To this end, an assessment of the existing nature conservation assets on a development site should be undertaken at the application stage and suitable biodiversity enhancements proposed.

Update:- During 2015 further progress has 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 is due for implementation during 2016.

**Epsom & Ewell Borough
Green Infrastructure
Key Diagram**



Update:- In 2015 the Borough still has the highest proportion of Sites of Nature Conservation Importance (SNCI) in active management in Surrey. The government’s ‘Single Data Set’ uses the measure of SNCI in active conservation management to monitor the current condition of the nation’s biodiversity. The Borough currently has 13 SNCI with 10 currently under active conservation management giving Epsom & Ewell the highest score in Surrey, 77% (Average 44%). During 2015 the “Local Sites” committee designated two new SNCI in Epsom & Ewell. These are the small Thames Water covered reservoir site on Epsom Downs where a site visit in summer 2014 discovered the presence of the Small Blue Butterfly, along with several species of orchid. Langley Bottom Farm now owned by the Woodland Trust was also designated with approximately one third of the farm located in Epsom & Ewell. The farm is of particular note for its arable plants and also includes ‘Ancient’ Woodland.



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 2015 updated plans for Epsom Common, Epsom Downs and Nonsuch Park were approved ensuring a consistent and planned approach to the management of biodiversity in the Boroughs open spaces. The Epsom Common plan is of particular note as it is the first management plan for an open space in Epsom & Ewell that has an agreed **100 year** approach, emphasising the need to take a very long term approach to managing biodiversity.



Epsom Common LNR the return of Ragged Robin resulting from the reintroduction of grazing guided by the current management plan summer 2015

New: During 2015 the South East Rivers Trust became the hosts for the Hogsmill Catchment Partnership, facilitated by both DEFRA and the Environment Agency. The partnership aims to work with stakeholder's,

including EEBC to influence the management of the water environment and to coordinate projects, partnership working and funds more effectively to realise multiple benefits (for example, biodiversity, flood risk management, local amenity, enhancing health and wellbeing)

The Trust has already held several stakeholder workshops to identify what stakeholders value and like about the Hogsmill that can be fed in to for example the partnerships response to the Environment Agencies Water Framework Directive River Basin Management Plan (RBMP)



Hogsmill LNR former location of weir just after removal summer 2013



Hogsmill LNR former location of weir summer 2015

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

Update:- During 2015 there were a range articles in the Borough Magazine 'Insight' which goes to all households in the Borough. These included a feature on the work of nature conservation volunteers in the Borough including a front cover photo (see below), the Green Flag Award, Countryside Guided Walks and 20 mile "Hike & Bike" route linking the Boroughs five main open spaces. All helping to raise awareness of the Boroughs natural environment and the opportunities to get actively involved.



Countryside Team volunteer Mark Doughty features on the front cover of the Borough Insight magazine summer 2015

Start of the Round the Borough Bike May 2015

Update:- In 2014 this report highlighted the need to protect the ecology of a pond in Horton Country Park LNR from constant daily disturbance by dogs. The pond which is used for pond dipping had become a shadow of its former self with very few aquatic species able to tolerate the constant daily disturbance. Using a small grant from a local County

Councillor the pond was fenced by the Lower Mole Partnership volunteers and a new notice was placed on the gate leading to the pond, explaining the need for dog owners to stop their pets entering the pond. In the summer of 2015 a pond dip for a local Beaver Group discovered an astonishing recovery with the return and much greater abundance of aquatic life. The notice is still in place after a year which is very positive and an indication that visitors are willing to help address the issue of long term incremental damage to habitats on nature reserves due to public access.



Horton Country Park LNR Field Pond new gate and fence winter 2015

New:- The Lower Mole Partnership volunteers carried out a very public task in 2015 returning to the Hogsmill Local Nature Reserve beside Ruxley Lane to lay the hedge planted in 2006 which replaced a broken fence and narrow litter strewn verge. Hedge laying is a very old rural skill and the task attracted a lot of local interest!



Hogsmill Local Nature Reserve, Lower Mole Project Volunteers planting a hedge and erecting a protective fence in 2006



Hogsmill Local Nature Reserve Lower Mole Partnership Volunteers laying the hedge planted in 2006, winter 2015



Hogsmill Local Nature Reserve Ruxley Lane 2006 with wider easier to maintain grass verge and new hedge with temporary fence



Hogsmill Local Nature Reserve Ruxley Lane 2015 the wider verge worked, the temporary fence is gone and the hedge has grown and been layed!

Update:- EEBC continues to raise awareness by encouraging 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 groups and support for the Lower Mole Countryside Partnership.



Horton Country Park LNR Countryside Team volunteers team photo summer 2015



Annual Epsom & Ashted Common Joint Task BBQ January 2015



Horton Country Park LNR Countryside Officer Sarah Clift investigating mini beasts with local children summer 2015



Epsom Common Association ECOVOL Tom about to empty a Charcoal kiln on Epsom Common LNR summer 2015

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

Update:- The Countryside Team is continuing to develop and improve its monitoring role within the Boroughs three local nature reserves and has also started to record the Borough more widely with the assistance of volunteers and local experts. During 2015 67 volunteer days of biological monitoring was provided valued at approx. £3,700.

Update:- Epsom Common is a nationally important site for invertebrates especially those associated with veteran trees which are of international importance. During summer 2015 a second moth survey was carried out following on from the 2014 survey 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 from 2015 are pictured below. Further surveys are planned for 2016.



Epsom Common LNR, Pine Hawk Moth (Hyloicus pinastri) summer 2015



Epsom Common LNR, Poplar Kitten moth (Furcula bifida) summer 2015



Epsom Common LNR, Green Arches Moth (Anaplectoides prasina) summer 2015



Epsom Common LNR, Black Arches Moth (Lymantria monacha) summer 2015

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 2015. 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. 2015 has turned out to be an average year with a cool wet end to summer following the warm dry start. This year a significant



Horton Country Park LNR Ringlet butterfly on the edge of Great Ridings hay meadow Summer 2015

increase in Marbled Whites was recorded on Horton Country Park LNR, one of the volunteer recorders also had a good sighting of a Purple Emperor which is a rare treat!



Marbled White butterfly



Epsom Common LNR Purple Emperor butterfly
feeding on cow poo!

Update:- Through work associated with the 'Planning & Biodiversity in Epsom & Ewell' document and via the 'Working Group' Surrey Wildlife Trust are aiming to produce both priority habitats and species maps for the Borough. Work to produce draft priority habitat and species of principle importance maps for Epsom & Ewell has been delayed during 2014 and 2015 but it is hoped that they will be available in 2016. To assist with the process of mapping species of principle importance as defined by the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006, Countryside Officer Pete Howarth has identified 53 species during 2015. Whilst the list is now thought to be comprehensive it is likely that a few more species will be identified in future.

Update:- The monitoring for Dormice described previously has continued during 2015 with results proving negative with no Dormice found in any boxes or tubes on Epsom Common or Horton Country Park. It is hoped that with a relatively small number of boxes and tubes in place that future years will continue to record their presence. The discovery of Dormice is informing the future management of woodland 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:- Countryside Officer and expert ecologist Pete Howarth has made some notable discoveries during 2015. Pete has been surveying ponds around the Borough for Great Crested Newts for several years as well as assisting the City of London staff on Ashted Common, and he discovered a large population of Great Crested Newts in Blakes Pond on Epsom Common LNR. Pete is a well-known regional expert in identifying mosses and liverworts and has recorded several new and scarce species during 2015, these include *Platygyrium repens* (moss) found on both Epsom Common LNR and Horton Country Park LNR and which is uncommon in the south east of England. The liverwort *Ptilidium pulcherrimum* (liverwort) has also been found on Epsom Common LNR and is also uncommon in south east England. Pete’s work also involves



Countryside Officer Pete Howarth



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

liaising with local experts and during 2015 several very rare fungi were discovered by Mr B. M. Spooner for 'Nonsuch Watch' in Nonsuch Park, these include *Asteromella arbuticola*, *Septeria ornithogali* both new to Great Britain and *Phanerochaete jose-ferreirae* new to England!

Update:- 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 and this has continued to operate successfully during 2015 with results helping to inform the Environment Agency about the quality of water in the 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

Update:- During 2015 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.

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

Update:- Currently externally sourced funding is in place helping deliver management of biodiversity 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 with the new Countryside Stewardship Basic Payments Scheme which is the successor to the European Single Farm Payments Scheme.



Tools and equipment used by the Countryside Team volunteers are paid for and maintained using externally sourced funds



The extensive annual programme of cutting and clearing rough grassland is all paid for using externally sourced funds

New:- Following on from work carried out in 2013 to desilt half of Lambert’s Pond in Horton Country Park Local Nature Reserve, the Lower Mole Partnership volunteers having secured £1500 of grant aid from the Lower Mole Trust, a Surrey County Councillor, Epsom & Ewell Borough Council and the Friends of Horton Country Park. This enabled them to successfully restore the whole pond including an arm of the pond which had almost completely disappeared.



Horton Country Park LNR Lambert's Pond the long lost arm of the pond de-silted by the Lower Mole Countryside Partnership volunteers autumn 2015

Update:- During 2015 the South East Rivers Trust (SERT) continued working with EEBC and the Environment Agency to improve the ecology of the Hogsmill River using grant aided funding. In 2015 a 'Rock Ramp' was installed just downstream from the A240 bridge which removed a concrete weir that was preventing fish swimming upstream. In addition a programme of bank side and in river habitat improvements has been agreed and in October 2015 the Countryside Team volunteers carried out the first task aimed at allowing more light to reach the river by cutting back over hanging vegetation. The work carried out in 2013 and 2014 to remove two large weirs from the Hogsmill River in Epsom & Ewell and remove the concrete bed and walls at the confluence where the Green Lanes Stream joins the Hogsmill River continues to naturalise and has been a great success. Further significant improvements are being discussed/planned.



Rock ramp by the A240 Bridge late winter 2015



Hogsmill LNR Countryside Team volunteers opening up the overgrown banks of the Hogsmill River Autumn 2015



Hogsmill LNR Countryside Officer Lindsay Coomber supervising volunteers opening up the overgrown banks of the Hogsmill River Autumn 2015



Confluence of Green Lanes Stream tributary with the Hogsmill River August 2014



Confluence of Green Lanes Stream tributary with the Hogsmill River Summer 2015

Update:- Following the progress described last year the Lower Mole Partnership has continued during 2015 to manage the SSSI using the allocated funds (£10,000) from Surrey County Council. In addition the

Lower Mole Partnership is due in late 2015 to receive a further £10,000 of S106 funds from the developers of the Lintons Lane housing development for the maintenance of the recently created pond and buffer zone inside the allotment site and adjacent to the SSSI. An issue remains regarding the former allotment and how best to bring the allotment back in to use whilst at the same time providing much needed terrestrial habitat for Great Crested Newts. During 2015 it was agreed that a survey of Great Crested Newt numbers would take place during February/March 2016 that would inform liaison with Natural England regarding and the submission of a report to the Council's Leisure Committee.



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

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.

The Surrey Nature Partnership to which EEBC is affiliated through the Surrey Biodiversity Working Group is currently championing two key projects in its effort to help to achieve its vision of a healthy, green Surrey with a prospering economy.

Valuing Surrey:- This project focuses on developing an understanding of the value of the counties natural assets which underpin the provision of ecosystem services, 30% of which are thought to be in decline in Surrey. “The majority of us are guilty of taking the natural environment and the services we derive from it for granted. In Surrey, the continued resilience of our economy is dependent on a healthy, functioning landscape. The Valuing Surrey project aims to help develop an understanding of the natural capital of Surrey and communicate this message to a wide range of organisations and individuals. We hope the project will also inform ways of working and policy in other Local Enterprise Partnerships and Local Nature Partnerships.”

Biodiversity Offsetting:- The Surrey Nature Partnership has a statutory role in strategic planning matters which means it has an overview of local plans in Surrey. This enables the SNP to have a say in where development takes place.

“In cases where development is unavoidable, biodiversity offsetting is a tool that may be used by Local Authorities to compensate biodiversity loss. This is where conservation activities – which will deliver a clear and measurable benefit to biodiversity – take place in compensation for damage caused by developments. This project will explore the possibility of Local Authorities using biodiversity offsetting in Surrey.”

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:

2015 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 2015!**



In 2015 we had to say farewell, good luck and a BIG Thank you to Jim McCulloch who for many years brought out and supervised a small team of vulnerable adults, to assist with the Countryside Team weekly volunteer tasks. Originally based at the Bentley Day Centre in Banstead and latterly the Larches in Epsom, Jim's enthusiasm for the therapeutic benefits of working in the great outdoors remained undimmed even in the face of bad weather and plants that fight back!

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