



## **Annual Report**

Report of the Board of the Lower Mole Countryside Trust for the year ended 31<sup>st</sup> August 2015.

### **Introduction**

This is the twelfth annual report produced by the Lower Mole Countryside Trust and covers the period 1<sup>st</sup> September 2014 to 31<sup>st</sup> August 2015.

The Lower Mole Countryside Trust is a company limited by guarantee, company number 4454401 and is a registered charity, number 1095771.

The registered office is 2 West Park Farmhouse, Horton Country Park, Horton Lane, Epsom, KT19 8PL.

The objects of the charity are:

- (1) To advance the education of the public on matters connected with countryside management within and around the Boroughs of Elmbridge, Epsom and Ewell, Kingston upon Thames and the District of Mole Valley (north of Dorking) and such other areas as the charity may from time to time decide.
- (2) To promote the conservation, protection and improvement of the physical and natural environment and promote the management of the countryside, wildlife habitats and characteristic landscapes by supporting, promoting and improving public access to the countryside, promoting the participation of the public in countryside management and supporting conservation projects and programmes within the area of benefit.

The Mission Statement is 'to support the provision of a high quality countryside management service for north Surrey and Kingston upon Thames for the benefit of landscape, wildlife and people'.

### **Activities and achievements**

#### **Board Meetings**

Six board meetings have been held in the reporting period, which in the main have concentrated on the formal business normally associated with boards such as membership applications, financial reports and forward planning.

In addition the Board agreed to fund thirteen projects, of which eleven have now been completed and two are in progress. The seven projects outstanding at 31<sup>st</sup> August 2014 have been completed.

#### **Business Plan**

The format of the Trusts annual action plan is to assign roles to a named trustee. The roles include; management of meetings, statutory duties, accounts, events, publicity, membership admin

## **Organisation**

The number of trustees was eight during this year. Mike Richardson is Chairman. Bryan Muddle is treasurer and membership secretary. Sarah Clayton is company secretary. At the AGM in March 2015, Mike Richardson, David Wall and Sarah Clayton stood down and offered themselves for re-election, all were re-elected.

## **Finance**

This year the Trust raised a total of £6141.80 for the general fund and £500.00 that was restricted to specified projects. The main sources of income have been from charitable sales, donations and subscriptions. By-products of conservation work carried out by the Lower Mole Project resulted in sales of woodcrafts, logs and charcoal etc., which brought in £3317.70

## **Membership**

The number of members at the end of this year was 68, including 32 individuals, 22 senior citizens, 5 families, 5 groups, 3 honorary members and 1 Local Authority. Two newsletters were sent to members, one in September 2014 and one in March 2015. One evening talk for members and volunteers was held, after the AGM in March 2015 entitled "Badgers" by Ian Tilbury of the East Surrey Badger Protection Society.

## **Publicity and Activities**

The Trust had a presence at seven public events over the year.

The Trust has its own website on [www.lowermolecountrysidetrust.org.uk](http://www.lowermolecountrysidetrust.org.uk) and has continued its presence on the web on a free site within the surrey community info pages, giving background information, news and forthcoming events and is also listed on [www.charityportal.org.uk](http://www.charityportal.org.uk) and on [www.guidestar.org.uk](http://www.guidestar.org.uk).

In the period September 2014 to the end of August 2015, 252.5 volunteer hours working for the Trust were recorded.

## **Projects and Grants**

The Trust part funded the final annual costs of the Heritage Skills Trainees for the Lower Mole Partnership, as part of the Skills for the Future scheme.

Tools were purchased on behalf of the Friends of the River Mole (Leatherhead), a newly formed group, to enable them to carry out conservation work along the river.

The Trust contributed to the cost of a new gazebo and display panels for the Lower Mole Partnership. These are for use at the various fetes and events that the Partnership attends.

A Planer/thicknesser was purchased by the Lower Mole Partnership with funds provided by the Trust. This is to enable volunteers to machine the timber for signpost finger boards etc. more easily.

An Otter Holt purchased with funds from the Trust was installed at Bluebird Island, a new site for the Partnership.

A new fence installed at Castle Hill by volunteers from the Lower Mole Partnership, was funded by the Trust from the Living Woodlands Fund

The Trust contributed to the SITA funded scrapes and scrub clearance on Epsom Downs as part of chalk grassland restoration.

A new brushcutter, to replace one that had been stolen, was purchased by the Ecovols with funds provided by the Trust.

Grants were made to the Lower Mole Partnership to enable them to purchase some Asphalt Rakes, a chainsaw, 2 chemical transportation containers for the vehicles and 2 combi drills for use on site.

A first aid course for Partnership volunteers and others was held at a venue paid for by the Trust.

A green woodworking course for Partnership volunteers and Heritage Skills Trainees was part funded by the Trust.

A training course for 12 volunteers from the Kingston Biodiversity Network on hedgerow surveying was funded by the Trust.

Chainsaw personal protective clothing for the Partnership's apprentice was purchased with a grant from the Trust

The Trust has continued to be involved in the charcoal production on Epsom Common. Volunteers from the Epsom Common Volunteers (Ecovols) carry out regular charcoal burns using wood produced as a by-product of conservation management and the Trust handles the sales of these, taking a small percentage. A total of 148 bags of charcoal and 2 bags of fines have been sold, with the proceeds split between the Trust and the Ecovols.

The Trust has agreed to raise funds on behalf of Epsom & Ewell's Countryside Team to complete the restoration of the Lamberts Orchard Pond by the Lower Mole Partnership. Donations have been received from Surrey County Council Members Allocations and also from the Friends of Horton Country Park, which, with a grant from the Trust and a contribution from Epsom and Ewell Borough Council will meet the full cost of the Project.

### **Policy for the selection of individuals and institutions who are to receive grants**

The Board will determine which projects to support based on the following:

- It must be in accordance with the aims of the Trust
- It should be visible to the public and/or of benefit to the public
- If the proposal relates to conservation interest it must be in line with the relevant Habitat Action Plan or Species Action Plan
- If the proposal improves public access it must not be detrimental to any conservation interest
- It should be supported by the local community.

The Board will consider applications for up to £500 submitted on the application form outlining the project and any other funding sources. Larger applications can be considered but the budget available is small. Forms are issued to all grant recipients to enable awards to be monitored. The total grant fund available each year is based on the total income of the Trust minus predicted annual running costs for the next two years.

## **The Future**

The Trust has been established as a charity for just over twelve and a half years and has raised £183,809.00 (up to 31 August 2015) and supported 72 different projects so far.

Following the formation of the Surrey Countryside Partnership Team by Surrey County Council, the chairman of the Lower Mole Countryside Trust is our representative on the Surrey Countryside Partnerships Board.

## **Statement of relationships**

Relationship with organisations with which the Trust co-operates

Lower Mole Partnership: The Lower Mole Partnership hosts the Trust by providing office space, meeting rooms and computing facilities. The time the staff who are employed by the Partnership spend on work for the Trust is donated by the Partnership.

Epsom Common Association: The Trust works with the volunteer arm of the ECA, the Ecovols, on the charcoal project, with proceeds from sales split between the Trust and Ecovols.

## **Names and addresses of other relevant organisations or persons**

Lower Mole Countryside Management Project, 2 West Park Farmhouse, Horton Country Park, Horton Lane, Epsom, KT19 8PL

Bankers – CafBank Ltd, Kings Hill, West Malling, Kent, ME19 4TA

## **Charity Trustees**

Chairman	Mike Richardson
Company Secretary	Sarah Clayton
Treasurer/Membership Secretary	Bryan Muddle
Member of the Board	Helen Cocker
Member of the Board	Pamela Harwood
Member of the Board	Alan Sherren
Member of the Board	David Wall
Member of the Board	Phil Greenwood