



*Promoting  
Countryside  
Management*

## **Annual Report**

Report of the Board of the Lower Mole Countryside Trust for the year ended 31<sup>st</sup> August 2017.

### **Introduction**

This is the fifteenth annual report produced by the Lower Mole Countryside Trust and covers the period 1<sup>st</sup> September 2016 to 31<sup>st</sup> August 2017.

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 nine projects, of which four have now been completed and five are in progress. The two projects outstanding at 31<sup>st</sup> August 2016 have been completed. In addition to the agreed projects, the Trust agreed a £2000.00 pledge to Butterfly Conservation for their exciting new project “Surrey Small Blue Stepping Stones”. This will be in conjunction with other funding partners.

## **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 2017, Bryan Muddle and Alan Sherren stood down and offered themselves for re-election, both were re-elected. David Wall resigned from the Board during the year.

## **Finance**

This year the Trust raised a total of £5092.42 for the general fund and £2000.00 that was restricted to a specific project. The main sources of income have been from charitable sales, donations and subscriptions. By-products of conservation work carried out by the Lower Mole Partnership resulted in sales of logs and charcoal etc., which brought in £2294.00.

## **Membership**

The number of members at the end of this year was 63, including 34 individuals, 17 senior citizens, 5 families, 5 groups, 2 honorary members.

Two newsletters were sent to members, one in September 2016 and one in March 2017.

Trust membership leaflets have been distributed at events and to libraries.

## **Publicity and Activities**

The Trust had a presence at three 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.

In the period September 2016 to the end of August 2017, 114 volunteer hours working for the Trust were recorded.

The Trust has been widely promoted through targeted tweets on the @ExploreSurreyUK Twitter account, including for Small Charity Week in June, on the Lower Mole Partnership Facebook page and on the Lower Mole Partnership web pages on the Surrey County Council website.

## **Projects and Grants**

The Lower Mole Partnership volunteers carry out a lot of construction tasks each year. Some of these involve the use of a 110volt router, their old one had become unserviceable and a new one was purchased with a grant from the Trust.

A professional tree surgeon had helped The Friends of Ashted Rye Meadows Wetlands carry out their woodland management tasks. When he resigned it was necessary for two volunteers to be certified for chainsaw use. The necessary training was part funded by a grant from the Trust.



Josh Davey, Surrey Countryside Partnerships intermediate level apprentice attended Merrist Wood College on a day release basis, to complete his formal qualification in Environmental Conservation.

The Trust together with the Downlands Trust funded this training. Josh passed with flying colours.

Photo shows Josh on task in May with the Lower Mole Partnership.

A number of volunteers with the Lower Mole Partnership are trained to operate site machinery (excavators, dumpers, rollers) and need to renew their qualification every five years. The Trust, together with member allocation funds from three local supportive Surrey County Council Epsom & Ewell members, funded this re-qualification.

The machinery is hired/used by the Lower Mole Partnership on seasonal tasks such as surfacing/access improvements and pond restoration, so it was imperative that the volunteers gained their re-qualifications alongside the staff so that several trained people can continue to be available on each task day to carry out this work safely and efficiently. If the refreshers had not been completed, the Lower Mole Partnership would not have been able to continue to carry out a significant proportion of the work that is required by the partners and is so valued locally.

One of the regular volunteers Jon Webb who completed the training course (shown in photo below) said "The use of machinery gives us the ability to achieve far more extensive tasks that make a real difference, in a shorter space of time. Also to be honest, although most of the time we prefer the peace and quiet of using hand tools, we all quite like to get out the big boys' and girls' toys on occasions! Because this tends to be quite infrequent the refresher training and re-certification of operators, which the Trust contributed to, is all the more important in maintaining safe and effective systems of work."



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 173 bags of charcoal was sold by the Trust.

The Huntingate Community Action Group are improving a part of the Chessington Countryside Walk by clearing overgrown brambles etc. They are also installing a kissing gate and new steps. The Trust has agreed to fund these improvements.

The Round Pond in Nonsuch Park was surveyed in 2005, and at that time had lots of vegetation and rare plants. A recent survey has shown that all the plants have been lost. To help it return to its former glory it is necessary to erect a fence to encircle the pond to keep dogs, etc. out of it. A grant towards the cost of the fencing has been agreed by the Board.

Both of the above projects are in the process of completion and the photo below shows Lower Mole Partnership task work at Nonsuch Park in progress.



Funds to cover the costs of work to the Field Pond in Horton Country Park, the Thorncroft Manor hedge and Young Street verge have also been agreed.

**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 fourteen and a half years and has raised £201,720.00 (up to 31 August 2017) and supported 97 different projects so far.

**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.

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

Councillor Liz Frost was elected Mayor of Epsom & Ewell Borough Council at its Annual meeting in May 2017. During her acceptance speech Liz announced the three charities she would be supporting during her mayoral year and the Lower Mole Countryside Trust is grateful to have been selected as one of her charities for 2017/2018. Two trustees now sit on the Charity Committee that organises the fundraising events for the year.

Trustees attended the pre-Derby party in June (photo below left of Trust chairman with Clare Balding) and hosted its own Ripple Coffee Morning alfresco at Horton Country Park in August, which was enjoyed by the Mayor, trustees, Lower Mole Partnership volunteers and friends (photo below right).



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

Lower Mole Partnership  
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  
Company Secretary  
Treasurer/Membership Secretary  
Member of the Board  
Member of the Board  
Member of the Board  
Member of the Board

Mike Richardson  
Sarah Clayton  
Bryan Muddle  
Helen Cocker  
Pamela Harwood  
Alan Sherren  
Phillip Greenwood



Lower Mole Partnership volunteers using the new LMCT funded router to make signs (house etc), sold to order in aid of LMCT at the Leigh Summer Show in July 2017