

Project Update



Lower Mole Countryside Management Project

Volume 9, Issue 1

Volunteers Hard at Work Conserving the Countryside

There are definite signs of spring out in the countryside now, and as I write this the Project volunteers are in their final week of the coppicing season. Soon they'll be back signing, fencing and surfacing again, so it's time to remember all that the hard-working volunteers have achieved in the last six months...

Volunteer numbers have been amazing again with a total of over 900 volunteer days achieved! The winter season



began back in October with scrub clearance on Rye Meadow, Epsom Common, and 300m of rideside management on Ashted Common. Volunteer numbers were boosted further when we were joined by some National Trust volunteers for coppicing in Norbury Park, and by a group from GlaxoSmithKline for birch and pine clearance on Chatley Heath.

November saw a varied task programme, which we mostly completed despite the snow! A return visit to Common Meadow saw the final 100m of shaw coppiced, and fencing repaired to protect the regrowth. Then a new site, Moles Copse, where we coppiced a highly visible area of roadside planting.

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Countryside Management in Action!

Welcome to Project Update

This is the sixteenth edition of Project Update, which is intended to keep you up to date with the work that the Project's volunteers have been doing in the previous six months.

The mainstay of the Lower Mole Project's work is the volunteer task programme. This enables volunteers from the local community to help with practical conservation and access work across the Project area. Each year about 9,500 volunteer hours are achieved.

During the 28 years that the Project has been running over 200,000 volunteer hours have been achieved.

Brainstorming...

Following the brainstorming session held in early January, the Project circulated, to all the volunteers and Trust members, a list of the suggestions made, along with the actions they would take in regard to each of these. These covered a broad range of issues from practical tasks to administration.

One of the main actions was to circulate a questionnaire to all the volunteers and Trust members. This was aimed at finding out who is available to help the Project with other tasks and what other skills volunteers can offer. This was sent out in early March, and some have already been returned to us.

If you didn't receive either the feedback or the questionnaire, please let the Project know so we can send them to you. If you have had your questionnaire and not filled it in and returned it yet, please do!

The initial results look good with several people offering to volunteer as part of a regular workshops team, and help out with publicity.

We really value your responses and will need as much help as we can get to sustain our current level of activity through this period of cut backs.

Farewell Nick...

For those that haven't heard, March 2011 marks the end of an era for the Lower Mole Project, as Nick Owen will be leaving us after almost 23 years! The Project staff and volunteers have enjoyed working with Nick over the years. We will miss his unique ability to make something new out of something old! (Although we won't miss all the clutter!) I am sure we will be bothering him with queries for a while. We all wish him the best of luck with his new venture in Dorset.

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*Countryside
Management
in Action!*

The Lower Mole Project

The Lower Mole Project was set up in 1983 and now covers an area of 143 square kilometres.

The aim of the Project is to carry out countryside improvements for the benefit of people and wildlife, by:

Improving public access to the countryside for informal recreation.

Conserving landscape features and enhancing the natural beauty of the countryside.

Increasing public knowledge and understanding of the countryside.

Encouraging greater community involvement in the countryside

Volunteers Hard at Work continued

A Sunday task to join the locals in Shadbolt Park completed the lining of the pond, as part of an ongoing project. There was then a brief spell based at our workshops to prepare the outside area for the arrival of our containers (more on that later). In the brief thaw we managed to plant 270m of hedge, for the PTES Hedges for Dormice Project, at Pachesham Park golf course, and clear 200m of overgrown vegetation on footpath 6 in Molesey.

In December it was all about coppicing at Butchers Grove and Sherwood Grove in Horton Country Park, and preparation work for coppice workers at Watercut Copse. Unfortunately the social event of the year (the Christmas BBQ) was snowed off!

Our first task in 2011 was rideside management near Woodcock Corner on Ashtead Common. This was the first half of the joint task with the Epsom Common volunteers, where we trialled the new style of fire on a raised platform to protect the ground flora in the ancient woodland. We were then joined by the Ashtead volunteers on a very wet Horton Heath, Epsom Common, where we cleared 0.4 hectares of scrub. We also cleared scrub and created scrapes on Epsom Downs to encourage kidney vetch, and planted 20m of hedge at the Epsom Riding for the Disabled centre.

We started February with a visit to Bridleway 26 in Kingston where we cleared back overgrown scrub from 300m of path, whilst carefully avoiding the gas main with our fire site! We joined the Downlands Project for a day's Rhody bashing in Banstead Woods, then returned to Horton for some hedge coppicing and surfacing on the boundary with Castle Hill. After this was our final visit of the season to Ashtead Common for some halo release. This was a small part of a much larger project to manage each of their 1700 veteran trees which all have a specific management prescription. Then it was back to one of our favourite sites—Headley Warren for chalk grassland restoration. A very wet Wednesday was followed by a beautiful spring day when we were able to treat most of the cut stumps with herbicide to prevent any regrowth.

Another volunteers' favourite is Norbury Park, where we were back to finish off the season with some more coppicing, this time along the rideside on Fetcham Downs. We also planted the remaining 60 metres of hedge at the Epsom RDA centre, and constructed the timber racking inside one of our new containers. We completed the winter's work with coppicing tasks at Watercut Copse, Princes Coverts and The Warren.