

Project Update



Lower Mole Partnership

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Volunteers Hard at Work Conserving the Countryside

It has been another successful spring and summer programme for the Lower Mole Partnership. Volunteers have endured one of the hottest summers on record taking on the usual range of tasks including removal of invasive species, installing signposts, gates, and benches, as well as surfacing, and of course, the steps! As autumn looms and we prepare for another felling season it's time to reflect on what we have achieved over the last six months. As ever, we would like to thank all our volunteers who have contributed an outstanding 887 days!

March saw the completion of the last of our scrub clearance tasks. These included work on Epsom Golf Course and along the banks of the Hogsmill River beside the Moated Manor site on Tolworth Court Farm. Hard to believe but we then had a day in the

snow, planting trees at Polyapes with the local scouts. A final week of scrub clearance was completed to restore an insect bank at Brooklands before we retreated to our workshops to mark the official start of Spring. Here we carried out some much needed tools maintenance and constructed a new noticeboard for Horton Country Park.

The workshops tasks took us through into April, with the construction of a memorial bench for Epsom Common, and several signposts for rights of way in Kingston. There was also a small production line set up to make 64 dormouse nesting boxes (see article on next page). We did manage to get out and about too, spending a week on Epsom Common helping the Epsom & Ewell team to carry out any repairs needed in preparation for the arrival of the cattle.

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Welcome to
Project Update

Project Update is intended to keep you up to date with the work that the Mole's volunteers have been doing in the previous six months.

The mainstay of the Lower Mole Partnership's work is the volunteer task programme. This enables volunteers from the local community to help with practical conservation and access work across the Partnership area. This year nearly 10,000 volunteer hours have been achieved.

During the 35 years that the Moles has been running over 300,000 volunteer hours have been achieved.

Nonsuch Park Round Pond

In summer 2017, with funding from the Lower Mole Countryside Trust, the Lower Mole Partnership constructed a fence around this pond to prevent disturbance from dogs. This was the second phase in a plan to improve the pond for wildlife. The first part involved clearing some of the trees from around the pond in autumn 2016 to allow more light, and reduce the leaf fall into the pond.

The Lower Mole Partnership originally became aware of the need for restoration work to these ponds to enhance their wildlife value, via Epsom &

Ewell's Ecologist, Pete Howarth's work to review the Sites of Nature Conservation Importance (SNCIs) in the Borough.

Since the completion of the works the condition of the pond has steadily improved, with bankside and pond vegetation returning and turbidity of the water decreasing as the sediment settles with less disturbance. This means that the oxygen levels in the water increase making it possible for invertebrates to survive, which then helps other species establish.

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The Partnership is funded by Surrey County Council, Elmbridge Borough Council, Epsom and Ewell Borough Council, Mole Valley District Council, Royal Borough of Kingston, City of London and Natural England.



The Lower Mole Partnership

The Lower Mole Partnership was set up in 1983 and now covers an area of 264 square kilometres.

The aim of the Partnership 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

May saw a brief return to workshops where we constructed four benches and a new entrance sign for the Moated Manor site on Tolworth Court Farm. The volunteers were also allowed to venture out during the workshops task, pulling Himalayan balsam on Park Farm, putting up deer fencing around the area we had coppiced in Butchers Grove, and cutting paths at Stones Road Pond. At Castle Hill the volunteers cut the meadow area, removed some deer fencing, and secured 10 dormouse boxes (made in the workshops) in the hazel coppice. The volunteers also replaced/repaired 170m of post and rail boundary fence at the Hollows in Old Malden.

June saw our most ambitious project of the summer - The steps! Start at the bottom of Box Hill and keep going for three weeks! Solid chalk, and oak risers to build the steps, and our very dedicated volunteers were pushed to their limits. 77 steps completed, and we get to go back next year and do a few more...We must also thank the Mole Valley Ramblers who assisted us in this mammoth task. After this, the final week of June seemed fairly straight forward (despite the soaring temperatures), with some Himalayan Balsam pulling at Cowey Sale and West End Common where we were joined by a team from AON.

The high temperatures continued into July for the annual bracken pulling task on Ashted Common. The

hard work here was again rewarded with several sightings of the Purple Hairstreak butterfly in the canopy of the oaks. The Moles returned to Hersham Riverside Park next for the first major surfacing task of the year, working with the Elmbridge Countryside Team. 320m of path were surfaced during the two week task, in addition to repairing a bridge and replacing some rotten steps. After this the team were back to removing invasives with a week at Papercourt Marshes pulling up Canadian goldenrod, and a week at Headley Warren pulling ragwort.

A second surfacing task was completed in August with 150m of path surfaced at Raeburn Open Space in Tolworth, working with the Kingston Environment Trust. 160m of path were also cleared at the nearby Elmbridge Meadows, and a group from Gallaghers spent the day clearing rubbish from Teazle Wood in Leatherhead.

All together another hugely varied season visiting many sites, some old some new. We would like to thank all of our hard working volunteers out on practical tasks, and working in the office, splitting logs, or out and about completing valuable survey work for us. We look forward to the winter scrub and bonfire season ahead!