



# Annual Report

## Lower Mole Countryside Trust

Report of the Board of the Lower Mole Countryside Trust for the year ended 31<sup>st</sup> August 2020.

### **Introduction**

This is the eighteenth annual report produced by the Lower Mole Countryside Trust and covers the period 1<sup>st</sup> September 2019 to 31<sup>st</sup> August 2020.

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**

Three 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 eight projects, of which all eight have now 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 and data protection.

### **Organisation**

The number of trustees was six during this year. Mike Richardson is Chairman. Bryan Muddle is treasurer and membership secretary. Sarah Clayton is company secretary.

### **Finance**

This year the Trust raised a total of £3,418.47 for the general fund. Our normal sales of charcoal, logs, signs etc were reduced as due to the impact of Covid. The office was only open one day a week to make sales and there were no fairs to attend.

### **Membership**

The number of members at the end of this year was 60, including 32 individuals, 18 senior citizens, 5 families and 5 groups. Two newsletters were sent to members, one in September 2019 and one in March 2020.

### **Publicity and Activities**

Due to the Covid crisis the Trust had a presence at only one public event over the year, a craft stall at a charity fair run by Epsom Rotary in September 2019.

The Trust has its own website on [www.lowermolecountrysidetrust.org.uk](http://www.lowermolecountrysidetrust.org.uk) giving background information, news and forthcoming events.

In the period September 2019 to the end of August 2020, 97 volunteer hours working for the Trust were recorded.

## Projects and Grants

During the year the Trust gave a number of grants including;

1. Purchase of two swivel timber carriers for the Lower Mole Partnership. The swivel timber carriers enable four people to safely lift and manoeuvre large lengths of timber on site and in the workshop, where it can then be processed into logs and furniture.
2. Purchase of 8 short pruning saws for the Lower Mole Partnership. The saws allow for greater access to the centre of the coppice stool, useful when clearing dense coppice stools in unmanaged woodlands.
3. Chalk grassland restoration on the A24 by the Lower Mole Partnership to help support a colony of Man Orchids. This included the costs of hiring a chipper and stump treatment.
4. A grant was given to the Lower Mole Partnership for hedgerow planting and restoration at Thorncroft Manor, Leatherhead.



5. A portable defibrillator for the Lower Mole Partnership to take out on task to revive someone from sudden cardiac arrest.



6. A chainsaw maintenance and cross cutting course for a volunteer intern from the Lower Mole Partnership.
7. Practical work on Epsom Downs to support the Small Blue Butterfly Project was carried out in conjunction with the Surrey branch of Butterfly Conservation. Bare ground scrapes were reinstated to allow kidney vetch the larval foodplant of Small Blue butterflies to flourish.



8. Soil testing at Kestrel Field Wetland by the Lower Mole Partnership, this was to fulfill planning requirements to allow the Kestrel Field Wetland Project to go ahead, that created a new wetland by the Rye Brook and restored the river to connect it to the landscape.

### **Policy for the award of grants to individuals and institutions.**

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 of up to £500 submitted on the application form outlining the project and any other funding sources. Larger applications can be considered but the budget is small. Forms are issued to all grant recipients to provide feedback on the outcome. 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 seventeen and a half years and has raised £225,708 (up to 31 August 2020) and supported 133 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.

Friends of Horton Country Park: The Trust administers the funds for the Friends of Horton Country Park, while they don't have a treasurer.

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.

### **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	Mike Richardson
Company Secretary	Sarah Clayton
Treasurer/Membership Secretary	Bryan Muddle
Member of the Board	Pamela Harwood
Member of the Board	Patrick Oven
Member of the Board	Alan Sherren