



*Promoting
Countryside
Management*

Annual Report

Lower Mole Countryside Trust

Report of the Board of the Lower Mole Countryside Trust for the year ended 31st August 2021.

Introduction

This is the nineteenth annual report produced by the Lower Mole Countryside Trust and covers the period 1st September 2020 to 31st August 2021.

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, the number being restricted because of the Covid pandemic. These 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 four projects, of which all four 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

During this year there were eight trustees, including Chairman Mike Richardson, Treasurer Bryan Muddle and Sarah Clayton Company Secretary.

Finance

This year the Trust raised a total of £7252 for the general fund. Included in this amount was a grant of £6298 from the City of London. This was for the first phase of work on the Rye Brook Restoration Project on Ashted Common NNR carried out by the Lower Mole Partnership.

The effect of Covid on working practices meant that the office was open on fewer occasions and our normal sale of charcoal and logs was much reduced. As there were still no fairs to attend income from sales of house signs and other items produced from recycled wood was completely curtailed.

Membership

The number of members at the end of this year was 60, including 33 individuals, 17 senior citizens, 4 families, 5 groups, 1 honorary member. Two newsletters, Mole Matters, were sent to members, one in September 2020 and one in March 2021.

Publicity and Activities

The Trust has its own website on www.lowermole.wordpress.com giving background information, news and forthcoming events. This area of work was much reduced due to the impact of Covid.

Projects and Grants

The Trust has a special relationship with the Lower Mole Partnership (LMP) supporting their volunteers with equipment, training and personal protection to enable them to carry out their valuable work.

The LMP started the habitat management work on the Rye Brook Restoration Project, funded by a grant from City of London Corporation to the Trust, in autumn 2020. The volunteers spent 6 days managing 70 metres of bankside habitat, pollarding willows and leaving a 50:50 mix of grassland and scrub to benefit biodiversity.



The LMP spends several weeks every spring/summer running workshop tasks with their volunteers. Work includes making signposts, benches and other rights of way furniture and a grant was made for a replacement 110v belt sander necessary to fulfil these tasks.



The LMP works on countryside across north Surrey, undertaking a range of practical management tasks. They rely on volunteers and need to ensure that they have sufficient personal protective equipment. Volunteers are issued with safety helmets when carrying out woodland and scrub management and a grant enabled their purchase.



During the last two wet winters the low points on the path from Filby Road into Castle Hill Local Nature Reserve flooded and become a quagmire. A grant was given to top up any low points in the

path with surfacing material, install drainage pipes under the path and dig small gullies by hand to divert any standing water to the Bonesgate stream.



The Woodcote Millennium Green Trust was set up in 2000 to protect a local area from being developed upon. The Lower Mole Trust gave a grant in 2004 towards an interpretation panel which has now rotted and needed replacing. This is a valuable green space close to Epsom District Hospital and in May 2021 the Woodcote Millennium Green Trust applied for and was given a grant towards half of the cost of a replacement board.

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 eighteen and a half years and has raised £229,542 and supported 137 different projects so far. During this year the Covid pandemic significantly reduced the opportunities for the Trust to raise funds, as well as reducing the amount of work carried out by groups that the Trust would normally support. Looking ahead to hopefully

returning to normal, the Trust will refocus its efforts to support work to enhance biodiversity and improve public access.

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.

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
Member of the Board	Ernest Rodney Shaw
Member of the Board	Dawn Fielding