



# Epsom Common Association

Est. 1974 Patron:- The Worshipful The Mayor of Epsom & Ewell

[www.epsomcommon.org.uk](http://www.epsomcommon.org.uk)

## SPRING NEWSLETTER 2015

Dear Member,

2015 marks a significant year in the management of the Common as the current 10 year plan comes to an end and a new 10 year plan will come into force.

The work of the Ecovols has been significantly impacted by the theft of the JCB Groundhog and Stihl brushcutter from the shipping container last autumn. We have now received a settlement from our insurers but this only covered the current value of the vehicle which was less than half the cost of a new vehicle. We have received several grants towards replacing our vehicle and tools including a £500 grant from the Lower Mole Trust and £1,500 from Stella Lallament. We will still have to take a significant sum from our replacement vehicle fund. We have looked into second-hand vehicles, but suitable vehicles are quite rare, so we plan to invest in a new vehicle. Security at the kiln site remains a major concern. We will be strengthening the security of the container and are considering other security measures for the replacement

vehicle. There is only so much you can do however and the isolation of the container will always be a risk.

I am pleased to report that a contract has been placed with Earth-bound Services to restore the circular path and works look set to start this Spring.

The Annual General Meeting will be held on Tuesday 28th April, and full details are given below. There is also a full programme of guided wildlife walks detailed below.

Subscriptions are now due and as some members have enquired about paying by standing order we have produced a standing order bank form and the road reps will have a supply of these when they deliver this newsletter. If you do set up a standing order I would appreciate it if you could let me know via the email address [chairperson@epsomcommon.org.uk](mailto:chairperson@epsomcommon.org.uk) so we can update the road reps lists.

I look forward to meeting you at the AGM

Thank you

Martin Gandy (Chairman)

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## 40TH ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

**TUESDAY 28TH APRIL 2014 AT 8:00PM**

Christ Church Hall, Christ Church Road, Epsom

The formal part of the evening will be held after the guest speaker's talk

### A 100 Year Vision for the Common

Stewart Cocker, Head of the E&EBC Countryside Management Team will present the new 10 year management plan for the Common. The AGM will be held after the talk, with reports by the Chairperson and Treasurer, and the election of the Committee for 2014/2015. The present officers and committee are willing to stand again. Nominations for any of the officer posts, or for the committee, seconded by a current member, should be submitted in writing to the Chairperson fourteen days before the AGM.

Refreshments available after the formalities – Doors open at 7:45pm

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## DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Please note, all walks start from the Stew Pond Car Park and last for approximately two hours.

Wear suitable footwear and clothing, and if possible bring a pair of binoculars.

### Saturday 16<sup>th</sup> May – 7:00a.m. start – Early Morning Bird Walk

Join local bird expert Tony Quinn for a walk across the Common to see and hear a variety of bird species both resident and summer visitors.

### Saturday 4<sup>th</sup> July – 2:00p.m. start – Butterfly Stroll

The annual search for the elusive Purple Emperor butterfly will be led by Alison Gilry. Join her to find, identify and record other butterflies, moths and invertebrates that inhabit our Common.

### Sunday 12<sup>th</sup> July – 2:00p.m. start – Wild Flower Wander

Eileen Taylor will lead this popular walk to find and identify many of the more interesting wild flowers and other botanical delights to be found on the Common.

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## EPSOM COMMON ASSOCIATION

**Chairman** – Martin Gandy, 2 Kingsdown Road, Epsom, KT17 3PU. t: 01372-723149; m: 07796-362923; email: [chairperson@epsomcommon.org.uk](mailto:chairperson@epsomcommon.org.uk)

**Vice chairman** - David King, 1 Lewins Road, Epsom, KT18 7TL t: 01372-722457

**Treasurer** – Marilyn Day, 78 Manor Green Road, Epsom KT19 8LN. t: 01372-743606

**Secretary** - Cynthea Blunden, 6 Isabella Cottages, Epsom **Council Representative** – Paul Ardern-Jones

**EcoVols Leader** – John Turner, 10 Hookfield, Epsom KT19 8JG. t: 01372-722580; m: 07729-235559; email: [ecovols@epsomcommon.org.uk](mailto:ecovols@epsomcommon.org.uk)

**Committee members** (in addition to the above named) – Bruce Critchley, Conor Morrow (LMCMP), Stewart Cocker (E&EBC), Roger Newman, Tony Quinn, Eileen Taylor, Gill Sanders, Vicki Rees

## Managing Epsom Common Local Nature Reserve.

A Review of the 2005-2015 management plan and what comes next by Stewart Cocker.

It's hard to believe that ten years have passed since setting out on the adventure of implementing Epsom Common's first proper management plan 2005-2015 and that now thoughts are turning to the next plan 2016-2116. Our common is a nationally important site for its wildlife and has been designated along with Ashted Common as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) since 1955 for its breeding bird habitats and also very rare insects associated with veteran trees of international importance. Not surprisingly the plans main aim was to manage and enhance the site for wildlife but also at the same time to seek public access improvements and working with the Epsom Common Association to interpret the site to visitors through walks, talks, events, signs, leaflets and web pages.

What has the plan achieved? First and foremost it consolidated and has built upon on the progress made during the late 1990's and early 2000's to re-introduce grazing on to Epsom Common as the key way of restoring a more diverse range of habitats. Today there are three separately grazed areas, with currently 22ha of pasture woodland being grazed by 30 cows. In addition over 3.3 Km of woodland edge habitat have been created alongside the main hard surfaced rides and new glades created within the remaining woodland. There have been clear signs of significant improvement:-

Butterflies:- Silver Washed Fritillary, White Admiral and Small Heath are being found in greater numbers within and along the edges of the grazing areas.

Breeding Bird surveys have indicated a rise in breeding bird species from 53 to 59.

Adders and Grass Snakes thriving within the grazed areas.

County and nationally scarce plants, Sawwort, Adders Tongue Fern and Corky Fruited Water Dropwort spreading across grazed areas.

Common Spotted Orchids have returned to the grazed areas.

Yellow Hammers breeding in the grazed areas.

Significant increase in heather plants on Horton, Bramble & Castle heaths. Grazed areas botanically more diverse.

The implementation of the plan has also lead to other significant improvements especially in how the common is managed cooperatively and in partnership between the owners Epsom & Ewell Borough Council, the Epsom Common Association, the Lower Mole Countryside Partnership, Natural England and the City of London (Ashted Common). The Epsom & Ashted Commons SSSI Forum was created in 2005 to ensure coordinated management of the whole SSSI. Achievements have included, 1.2Km of restored hard surface path, a joint leaflet and information boards, emergency access maps, joint monitoring of breeding birds and veteran trees, joint volunteer tasks, advice and the loan of equipment. In 2007 Epsom Common was the Borough's first open space to gain the Green Flag Award which means that the common is managed to nationally recognised standard for open spaces and the award will hopefully be one of the stepping stones leading to eventual National Nature Reserve status for the Common.

Of course all this progress has come at a price but the vast majority of the cost has been secured through external grant aid. In total the plan has secured approx. £264,000 of external funding for managing biodiversity a 4600% return on the £5,687 cost of the plan!!

So what of the future from 2016 onwards? How many of you spotted 2016-2116 at the end of the first sentence? It's not a typo! The current proposal that will go before the Council's Leisure committee later this year will be for a long term approach, a 100 year plan that maps out a vision for how we can manage the common over the next 100 years with regular 10 year reviews to ensure it stays relevant and is actively implemented. The draft vision is to "Manage Epsom Common, to ensure the protection, maintenance and enhancement of the wildlife and heritage of Epsom Common whilst also ensuring good public access to a wonderful place!" The vision can be achieved by focusing on the key components in managing Epsom Common which are unlikely to change in the next one hundred years which are as follows:

Managing and maintaining the features of the Site of Special Scientific Interest in 'favourable' condition.

Ensuring the protection, maintenance, monitoring and enhancement of biodiversity and cultural heritage of Epsom Common.

Ensuring good public access via a network of well-maintained and signed paths and bridleways.

Encouraging and supporting the activities of the Epsom Common Association and volunteers.

Interpreting Epsom Common to the public

Maintaining a close working relationship with the owners of Ashted Common (City of London) and other partners through the Epsom & Ashted Commons SSSI Forum

Maintaining Great Pond Dam under the terms of the Reservoirs Act.

A map has been produced which summarises the draft 2016-2116 plans main proposals for the first ten year period and that can be viewed at <http://www.epsom-ewell.gov.uk/EEBC/Leisure+and+Culture/Parks+and+countryside/Countryside/Epsom+Common+Local+Nature+Reserve.htm>

If you have any questions please do not hesitate to contact Epsom & Ewell Borough Council Countryside Manager Stewart Cocker on 01372 732000.

Finally and last but by no means least a BIG THANK YOU to our volunteers! Their contribution is immense and without their help much of what is written above simply would not be possible or have happened!

## ECOVOLS REPORT

The loss of our vehicle has been undeniably hard on us and we've had to resort back to wheelbarrows for ferrying the tools around. This isn't easy on the common's terrain - especially with the wet weather making the ground rather boggy! We are looking into getting a replacement vehicle but we still have to resolve the issue of security at the container - and a little problem of funding.

Task Days

You can download a copy of our 2015 diary dates from the website ([www.epsomcommon.org.uk](http://www.epsomcommon.org.uk)).

BRAMBLE HEATH - Sunday 19th April and Monday 20th April

Our April task sees a return to Bramble Heath where we aim to thin out some of the saplings that are growing up around the established clumps of heather. The plants may suffer if it is over shaded by the taller scrub and we need heather for the late source of nectar that it provides for many invertebrates. We may also give some of the older gorse bushes a 'haircut' as they are getting a bit too leggy; this should encourage new growth from lower down and give a dense bush which should be useful for bird cover.

HAZEL COUPE - Sunday 17th and Monday 18th May

This year will be our fourth at the Hazel Coupe, where we hope to expand the planting area still further. Our efforts in planting over the last three years have been very successful, with only one or two losses. We hope to be able to remove more of the protective netting around the established plants. We've already seen a change from the previous bracken monoculture in this area to grasses and flowering plants around the base of the hazel.

Charcoal

Just a reminder that we are still making charcoal every month, usually on the first Sunday, although in April this will be on Sunday 12th, as Easter Sunday occurs the week before. Charcoal is available at £5 a bag from the Lower Mole HQ at Horton Country Park or from The Old Moat Garden Centre in Horton Lane, where it costs slightly more owing to VAT. We are still selling bags of Charcoal Fines for gardeners to aerate their compost or mulch their hostas against slug attack, at only £3 a bag it represents great value - do try some.

## CATTLE GRAZING

The cattle grazing on the Common is a regular feature from late spring to early autumn and helps to maintain the diversity of habitat which is so important to the Common's SSSI status. We are now planning for the arrival of this year's herd.

When the animals are on the Common, their health and security has to be checked daily, and volunteers from the Association assist with this vital task. We are always ready to welcome more volunteers so that we can share the load and replace those who have stood down. Those already involved find the task pleasant and rewarding. If you are interested in joining us, please contact Bruce Critchley to find out more. His email address is [bruce\\_critchley@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:bruce_critchley@yahoo.co.uk) and telephone 01372 742520.