

Epsom Common Association: A History of Conservation and Biodiversity

25 September 2023



Founded in 1974 by local residents deeply concerned about the state of Epsom Common and the looming threats to its existence, the **Epsom Common Association** has since been a stalwart defender of this natural haven. The roots of their mission trace back to the 1930s when borough and county planners contemplated the construction of an Epsom bypass, with a road cutting across the Common at the forefront of their plans.

By the 1960s and 70s, these proposals began to take concrete shape, much to the dismay of the community. In response, determined local individuals rallied to form the Epsom Common Association, a pivotal moment in the ongoing debate that would rage on throughout the following decades.

One of their early triumphs was the restoration of the Great Pond, a landmark achievement completed in 1979. Yet, their work encompassed a broader range of objectives:

1. Preserving the Common: The Association was committed to safeguarding the Common from any potential housing or construction projects, road developments, or encroachments.
2. Enhancing Amenity Value: Their mission extended to preserving and enhancing the Common's amenity value for all users.
3. Conservation of Biodiversity: Recognizing the Common's unique status as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), they sought to maintain and enhance a diverse range of habitats for various wildlife species.
4. Nature Reserve Status: Their efforts also aimed at maintaining the Local Nature Reserve status and advocating for National Nature Reserve status.
5. Contributing to Conservation: The Association played a vital role in conservation work through their volunteer team, ECoVols. These volunteers were engaged in various tasks, including scrub clearance, charcoal burning, tree planting, and bracken reduction.

To keep their members informed, the Association produces three newsletters each year, covering recent activities, wildlife observations, news, and potential threats. They also maintain an active online presence through their website and a Facebook page. See www.epsomcommon.org.uk

The Association's governance is facilitated by a Committee, elected annually during the AGM. This Committee includes representatives from **Epsom & Ewell Borough Council** and the **Lower Mole Partnership**, ensuring collaboration and effective management.

Membership of the Association is just £3.00 per household, and an additional £2.00 for postal members, making it accessible to a wide range of residents.

Epsom Common, though no longer a pristine wilderness untouched by human influence, has been integral to the local community for centuries. From its historical use for grazing animals and gathering firewood to wartime cultivation, the Common has a rich heritage intertwined with human activity.

To guide its future as a public nature reserve and promote biodiversity, the Epsom & Ewell Borough Council unveiled a Hundred Year Management Plan (2016-2116), approved by **Natural England**. The Association wholeheartedly endorsed this long-term approach and commitment to biodiversity conservation.



In their bid to create a mosaic of habitats and maintain a balance between grassland and woodland, the Association undertakes various management activities. These include the removal of young secondary woodland to restore lost grassland and heath, as well as the reintroduction of summer cattle grazing.

A success story of their strategy lies in the thriving butterfly population on the Common. It now hosts a range of butterfly species, from woodland dwellers like the Purple Emperor and White Admiral to grassland species like the Meadow Brown and Marbled White.

The diverse habitats have not only benefited butterflies but also thousands of other flora and fauna, including plants, fungi, insects, amphibians, reptiles, birds, and mammals.

The Association ensures active engagement with its members through events such as two annual evening meetings featuring guest speakers on topics related to the Common's heritage and natural history.

Additionally, they organize natural history walks led by experienced naturalists, covering topics like butterflies, wildflowers, bush crickets, birds, fungi, and bats. These walks provided valuable insights into the richness of the Common's ecosystem.

The Association's commitment to conservation extends to the welfare of cattle on the Common, with members responsible for daily health and security checks.

Another intriguing facet of their work is charcoal production, a monthly endeavor from February to November. The charcoal is made from felled trees on Epsom and Ashted Commons.

Finally, conservation task days, carried out from January to May and September to November, involve both hand tools and some power machinery. These efforts are conducted in close coordination with the Epsom & Ewell Borough Council and Natural England.

As the Association looks ahead, their plans include the removal of young trees to enhance wetland meadows, continued scrub and young tree removal to improve habitat for heathers and flowering plants, and hand-pulled bracken during the summer months to encourage grasses, meadow flowers, and heathers.

In sum, the Epsom Common Association stands as a shining example of community-led conservation efforts, dedicated to preserving the beauty, biodiversity, and heritage of the Epsom Common for generations to come.

You can get involved in the upcoming activities:

Sunday 15th & Monday 16th October at the Great Pond:

Removal of young trees along part of the eastern margin to open up a small wet land meadow for benefit of wild flowers and water fowl.

Sunday 19th & Monday 20th November at Bramble Heath:

Removal of scrub and young trees to maintain the open area and improve habitat for heathers and flowering plants.

Related reports:

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[Uncommon commitment to the Common](#)

Epsom horse owners asked to take survey

25 September 2023



Britain's inaugural **Thoroughbred Census** has been initiated, inviting former racehorse owners to partake in the survey open until December 31, 2023. The primary aim is to enhance the traceability of retired racehorses.

About the Census: The census is a collaborative effort with Retraining of Racehorses (RoR), the official aftercare charity of British Racing, funded by the Racing Foundation. It receives support from World Horse Welfare and Weatherbys General Stud Book and is coordinated with experts from Hartpury University. This initiative is a crucial component of British Racing's Horse Welfare Board's five-year welfare strategy, 'A Life Well Lived.' The project's objective is to enhance the traceability of thoroughbreds after their racing careers conclude.

The Census seeks to address a recognized data gap resulting from infrequent updates to equine identification documents (passports) once thoroughbreds transition into private ownership. By improving data accuracy, British Racing and RoR aim to provide enhanced support to owners, including access to educational resources and avenues for competition if desired. Additionally, it fosters informed and supportive communities. Furthermore, it equips the Horse Welfare Board and RoR to enhance and adapt welfare initiatives and facilitates rapid and effective communication in the event of an equine disease outbreak.

Helena Flynn, Programme Director of the Horse Welfare Board, stated, "This campaign will help us emphasize responsible ownership and the critical role every thoroughbred owner plays in ensuring the accuracy of their equine identification document (passport)."

What Information Does the Census Require? To complete the survey, owners must provide the horse's equine identification document (passport) number, microchip number, age, current residence, second career, and other pertinent details to compile a comprehensive dataset for retired British racehorses in 2023.

Why is an Additional Objective of the Census Necessary? Typically, new horse owners are expected to update ownership information within 30 days. During their racing careers, this information is meticulously maintained by breeders, owners, and trainers in the Weatherbys General Stud Book. However, data for former racehorses significantly declines when they enter private ownership after retiring from racing, with equine identification document (passport) compliance averaging just 20% across the equestrian community. This decline may stem from a lack of awareness regarding the importance of this phase, uncertainty about associated costs, a reluctance to update documents even after a horse has passed away, and a general disinterest in participating in the process.

Therefore, an additional goal of the census is to engage with private owners to encourage them to review and, if necessary, update their horse's equine identification card (passport). Moreover, owners of horses previously registered with licensed British trainers will be invited to register their horses for free with RoR.

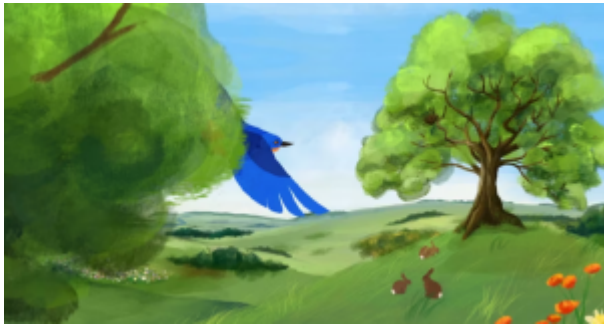
David Catlow, Managing Director of Retraining of Racehorses, emphasized, "The 'social license' for the use of horses in sport is under increasing scrutiny, with the welfare of former racehorses after retirement being a specific concern. This initiative is a significant stride toward ensuring thoroughbreds enjoy a healthy and caring existence throughout their lives, while also providing the racing industry with pertinent data to inform future decisions."

To complete the form, please visit: https://uwe.eu.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_8bNJFzR2FB95ZlQ

Participation in the census is voluntary, but owners are strongly encouraged to join the community and contribute. Full findings will be disclosed in the first quarter of 2024.

Surrey Uni film award in the Cannes

25 September 2023



A thought-provoking animated film made at the **University of Surrey**, which encourages its viewers to ***Remember the Future***, has achieved the accolade of ‘Best Environmental Film’ at the **Cannes World Film Festival**.

Co-created by the University’s Institute for Sustainability to support its vision of a world where everyone can live fulfilling and healthy lives within the limits of the planet, the film seeks to draw in viewers emotionally and win hearts and minds to the need to collaborate and act.

Remember the Future was produced and directed by Jon Weinbren, who is the Programme Director for Surrey’s MA in Film, Animation and Digital Arts within the University’s Department of Music and Media. The film shows a tree that is ailing because of environmental damage. The tree is saved from destruction by cooperation between an optimistic, visionary child and a songbird, delivering an upbeat, hopeful way forward.

Professor Lorenzo Fioramonti, Founding Director of the University of Surrey’s Institute for Sustainability, said:

“A tree is a symbolic and almost permanent thing. We see it through the seasons and ages, with a child dreaming of a future which rubs out the climate emergency. We see the solutions which are within our reach. We hope this film plants the seed and encourages people to work with each other and be connected.”

Co-written by Tom Hill and brought to life by a team of artists led by animation director Izzy Barszcz, the film was crafted using digital natural media techniques to create an evocative water-colour feel. It also features an original song composed and performed by Surrey alumna Alice Mills.

Jon Weinbren said:

“We experimented with using some of the latest AI-based image generation and style transfer techniques, but the quality we were achieving wasn’t high enough. Instead, our team of animators resorted to ‘traditional’ digital painting techniques to create the hand-crafted look and feel which, along with a beautifully arresting, specially composed song, helps the film engage on a powerful emotional level.”

Nathalie Hinds, Head of Operations and Partnerships at the Institute for Sustainability, said:

“Achieving a sustainable world takes cooperation and inspiration, as well as technology and regulation. At Surrey, we’re working on all of these, with the Institute for Sustainability taking an active, leading role. Strategic partners of the Institute, who were lucky to have an exclusive preview of the film, gave feedback how the film not only creates a sense of urgency, but is a true beacon of hope. They hope to use it within their organisations to inspire staff and suppliers.”

Remember the Future has been entered for other film festivals and will also screen at the Electric Theatre as part of Guildford’s Car Free Day on Sunday 24 September. Find out more about Car Free Day, watch a trailer or see how the film was made on YouTube.

For information about the MA in Film, Animation and Digital Arts, visit the website.

Surrey to fight Ash dieback

25 September 2023



Surrey County Council will undertake a programme of woodland management across its countryside estate this autumn, with a focus on tackling Ash dieback to protect public safety where needed, as well as identifying current and future nature recovery opportunities.

As England’s most wooded county, Surrey is heavily affected by Ash dieback, a non-native fungus which weakens the structure of Ash trees, making them liable to fall in an unpredictable way. Unfortunately, there is no known cure for Ash dieback and the disease spreads rapidly, with around 80% of the nation’s ash trees anticipated to succumb to it.

While trees in higher risk areas will need to be felled in the interest of public safety, Surrey County Council recognises the amount of ecological, historical and cultural importance that woodland has in the county, as well as its contribution to

biodiversity and carbon sequestration.

Residents had previously raised concerns about getting the balance right between protecting the public and protecting nature. As part of the planning process for this year's upcoming works, several local experts have been consulted to support in developing an appropriate approach and methodology, including Surrey Bat Group, Surrey Badger Group, Surrey Dormouse Group, Save Surrey's Countryside, Surrey Botanical Society and Butterfly Conservation Surrey amongst others. The Council will continue to liaise with local experts throughout the season in addition to its work with organisations such as Natural England, the Forestry Commission and Surrey Wildlife Trust.

Recognising the guidance provided, the Council's approach will now focus on higher risk areas around public rights of way, car parks and roads. This approach has led to around 2400 metres of permissive path being removed from the felling programme at Sheeples in West Horsley. Notices to divert the public away from some quieter permissive paths have been installed, an approach which follows similar action on National Trust land to minimise disturbance to biodiversity and encourage areas for wildlife to thrive.

A number of other measures are being put in place to minimise the impact of necessary works on nature including:

- Having a qualified ecologist on site throughout the works;
- Investing in specialist equipment and using specialist contractors to minimise disturbance;
- Undertaking work outside of ground nesting bird season;
- Creating new habitats for protected species such as Dormice;
- Development of new long term woodland plans linked to the Council's nature recovery strategy;
- Replanting or encouraging natural regeneration of suitable tree species wherever appropriate.

Following extensive arboricultural and ecological surveys, works are anticipated to focus around targeted areas of **Sheeples** (West Horsley), **Newlands Corner** (near Guildford), Park Ham (near Bletchingley), **Norbury Park** (Leatherhead/Dorking), **Brockham Quarry**, **Beech Avenue** (Effingham) and areas of the **Downs Link** path. All works are subject to all necessary permissions and licenses being secured, so may be subject to change. Where Ash dieback works are taking place, tree species other than Ash may also be removed for safety reasons.

Marisa Heath, Surrey County Council Cabinet Member for the Environment comments: "Ash dieback has had a devastating effect on ash trees not only across Surrey but nationally. Over the coming months we will be undertaking safety works across our countryside estate, however we will be managing this carefully and have minimised felling where we can.

"We will also be looking at how we can improve the overall quality and biodiversity of our woodland in order to develop long term woodland habitat management plans, as we understand the important role that trees play in helping us reduce the impacts of climate change and also in providing important habitats to a range of species. We have facilitated the planting of over 385,000 trees and we have plans to plant more during this tree planting season, but also to ensure we have a range of habitats for nature recovery."

As part of Surrey's ambition to be a carbon neutral county by 2050, Surrey County Council has a target to facilitate the planting of 1.2 million new trees (one for every resident) by 2030. Tree planting season is underway and more details on how to get involved can be found online.

'Show and tell' walks are being offered to the public as an opportunity to find out more about Ash dieback and the Council's plans to address it. Details of the events are below:

- **Beech Avenue, Effingham:** 9 September, 9.30am to 11am. Meet on corner of Beech Close and Beech Avenue, KT24 5PQ. Please park respectfully in nearby roads.
- **Sheeples, West Horsley:** 9 September, 12pm to 1.30pm. Meet at Green Dene car park, KT24 5TA.
- **Newlands Corner, near Guildford:** 16 September, 9.30am to 11am. Meet at White Lane car park, GU5 9BQ.
- **Norbury Park, Leatherhead:** 16 September, 11.30am to 1pm. Meet by Wild About Coffee (please note there is no parking at the coffee van – use Young Street, Fetcham or Crabtree car parks and follow signs)

Booking is not required, simply turn up at the meeting location shortly before the start time. For those unable to attend site walks, there will also be public drop-in sessions during September and October with details available online.

Further details on Ash dieback works are available at www.surreycc.gov.uk/ashdieback, including a short information video. Onsite information will also be available at each site throughout the works.

Epsom Common Green Flagged again

25 September 2023



Epsom & Ewell Borough Council is celebrating receiving a **Green Flag Award** for **Epsom Common Local Nature Reserve** (LNR) for the 17th consecutive year.

The news that Epsom Common LNR has once again achieved the accreditation – the international quality mark for parks and green spaces – is testament to the hard work and dedication of the team that care for the green space so that everyone can enjoy it.

Councillor **John Beckett**, Chair of the Environment Committee said: “Epsom Common is a beautiful and biodiverse space that we are incredibly fortunate to be able to enjoy in our borough. The Countryside Team at Epsom & Ewell Borough Council work tirelessly with volunteers and partners, including the Epsom Common Association, the Lower Mole Partnership and Natural England, to manage and protect this precious Local Nature Reserve and Site of Special Scientific Interest.

“The news that Epsom Common Local Nature Reserve has achieved the Green Flag Award for the 17th year in a row is a welcome tribute to the hard work of all the people who work year-round, rain or shine, to ensure it continues to flourish.”

To find out more about the wonderful countryside managed by the Countryside Team at the council, take a look at the walks and tours run by the team here: [What’s on | Epsom and Ewell Borough Council \(epsom-ewell.gov.uk\)](#).

Keep Britain Tidy’s Green Flag Award Scheme Manager **Paul Todd MBE** said: “I would like to congratulate everyone involved at Epsom Common LNR in achieving a Green Flag Award.

“Epsom Common LNR is a vital green space for the community in Epsom & Ewell, bringing people together and providing opportunities to lead healthy lifestyles. Epsom & Ewell staff and volunteers do so much to ensure that it maintains the high standards of the Green Flag Award and everyone involved should feel extremely proud of their achievement.”

The Green Flag Award scheme, managed by environmental charity Keep Britain Tidy under licence from the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, recognises and rewards well-managed parks and green spaces, setting the benchmark standard for the management of green spaces across the United Kingdom and around the world.

A full list of Green Flag Award-winning parks and green spaces is available [here](#).

Related Reports:

[Epsom Common Bird Walk Poem](#)

[Flagging Up Epsom Common](#)

The Green Flag Award Scheme (<http://greenflagaward.org/>) is run by the environmental charity Keep Britain Tidy, under licence from the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, in partnership with Keep Scotland Beautiful, Keep Wales Tidy and Keep Northern Ireland Beautiful.

Keep Britain Tidy is a leading environmental charity. They set the standard for the management of parks and beaches, inspire people to be litter-free, to waste less and live more sustainably. They run campaigns and programmes including the Great British Spring Clean, Eco-Schools, Love Parks, Eco-Schools, the Green Flag Award for parks and green spaces and the Blue Flag/ Seaside Awards for beaches. To find out more about Keep Britain Tidy and their campaigns and programmes, visit www.keepbritaintidy.org.

Any green space that is freely accessible to the public is eligible to enter for a Green Flag Award. Awards are given on an annual basis and winners must apply each year to renew their Green Flag Award status. A Green Flag Community Award recognises quality sites managed by voluntary and community groups. Green Heritage Site Accreditation is judged on the treatment of the site’s historic features and the standard of conservation.

Reviving nature by the M25 in Leatherhead

25 September 2023



A £2.8million grant has been awarded to a wildlife charity as it aims to fulfil its founder's last wishes. The **Wildlife Aid Foundation**, based in Leatherhead, was founded 40 years ago by **Simon Cowell**.

The money, which **Surrey County Council**'s cabinet approved today (Tuesday 25th July) will be used to build a community hub for hosting school, college and community groups, as well as family sessions and talks. The £2.8m represents just less than a quarter of the project cost, with the remainder being raised by the charity.

The Wildlife SOS star, who was diagnosed with terminal cancer in 2022, launched a Simon's Last Wish appeal to help the charity after his death.

Documents for the cabinet meeting, which made the decision on awarding the funding as part of the Your Fund Surrey money that community projects can bid for, say the project has the "potential to have a long-lasting positive impact on the environment and wildlife in Surrey".

A planned wildlife centre would restore land bordered by the M25 and the River Mole, and give the charity a future rescuing and rehabilitating animals in Surrey.



The Wildlife area between River Mole and clockwise carriageway of M25

Mr Cowell said the charity had got far bigger than he ever thought it would when he founded it 40 years ago and praised the 400 volunteers at the charity.

He told the LDRS earlier in the year: "They just do an amazing job, and without them we would not be here. It's as simple as that."

On his cancer diagnosis, Mr Cowell said he was in "total denial of the whole thing". He said: "We all think we won't get it, and when you do get cancer, you've got two choices. You sit in the corner and sulk, or you just ignore it and get on with it while you can. So I've done that, basically."

Emily Coady-Stemp LDRS

Epsom and Ewell Times adds:

After the grant was announced Simon Cowell said: "It's an astonishing fact that a third of Surrey's biodiversity is either locally extinct or heading that way. The power of the Wildlife Aid Centre shows that, by all of us working together, we will be able to change this. We will inspire visitors to carry out regular, small actions which will have significant, positive impact on the environment. And by all of us doing it, our joint strength is enormous.

This amazing funding means we can finish creating the habitats and build a visitor centre that will welcome everyone. I am thrilled that Your Fund Surrey is supporting the Wildlife Aid Centre; together we will create a replicable movement for environmental good that is driven by our communities."

Surrey County Council Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Communities and Community Safety Councillor **Denise Turner-Stewart** said: "I would like to congratulate the Wildlife Aid Foundation who have been successful in their application to Your Fund Surrey's Community Project Fund.

"This is fantastic news for the Wildlife Aid Foundation and indeed for Surrey's residents. This is a truly ambitious and inspiring community legacy project. The new centre aligns with our ambition to promote a greener future in Surrey, to

help restore and protect the future of the county's natural environment and encourage nature and wildlife to thrive. It will also offer huge benefit, opening the doors for people of all ages and backgrounds to learn more about wildlife conservation."

A £2.9m award given to Guildford's Yvonne Arnaud Theatre in June saw the total amount of money given out from the pot reach £10m since its launch in November 2020.



The Wildlife Aid Foundation is a charity dedicated to the rescue, care and rehabilitation of sick, injured and orphaned animals. Based in Leatherhead, Surrey, UK, the centre operates Surrey County's only wildlife hospital (one of the three largest such hospitals in the UK) and maintains a referral service for wildlife hospitals throughout Europe. The organisation also carries out environmental activist and educational roles. Wildlife Aid has attracted media attention for its rescues of photogenic wild animals like young foxes and baby badgers; Animal Planet's TV program *Wildlife SOS* chronicles the activities of Wildlife Aid volunteers as they rescue imperiled animals

Surrey cows driven by solar powered GPS

25 September 2023



Ground-breaking GPS technology is now being used on cattle across **Surrey County Council's** Countryside Estate at Chobham, Wisley and Puttenham Commons to help with conservation grazing and benefit biodiversity.

'**Nofence**', is the world's first virtual fencing for grazing cattle, helping to control where they graze without the need for traditional electric fencing. The new technology helps to better target exact grazing areas for ecological enhancements and saves time and money by not building, moving and maintaining traditional fencing.

GPS collars are fitted to adult cattle and land managers map out virtual geographic boundaries of where cattle can go via an app. If cattle enter an area they are not allowed to go, the collar emits audio signals which increase in pitch until eventually a small electrical pulse is physically experienced. The cattle quickly learn that increasing levels of sound mean they need to change their direction of travel. Land managers receive regular alerts to keep track of where each member of the herd is. Cattle collars are individual to each cow and charged using an inbuilt solar panel.

The new system, approved by veterinary professionals, has been successfully initiated by Surrey Wildlife Trust who undertake the conservation management at Chobham and Wisley Commons and the Hampton Estate who own Puttenham Common.

Marisa Heath, Surrey County Council Cabinet Member for Environment says: "We are delighted to be working in partnership with Surrey Wildlife Trust to make smart choices that make big differences to conservation. This technology works brilliantly on our large, open countryside sites, allowing us to successfully graze much wider areas of land. Not only does it save money but more importantly it hugely benefits biodiversity. At a time when nature is in global decline it is vital, we grab hold of new technologies like this to safeguard Surrey's countryside for generations to come."

Surrey Wildlife Trust Conservation Manager Adam Bolton says: *“From training the animals and drawing up management plans to securing the backing of government agencies and other partners, the introduction of no-fence conservation grazing in Surrey has been a long but important journey for our team. It’s great to be working with Surrey County Council to help preserve the beauty and biodiversity of Chobham Common, and to pioneer a new phase in the conservation of this special site.”*

Conservation grazing plays a vital part in managing Surrey’s countryside sites for wildlife and helps to promote biodiversity. It can be carried out on many types of land including woodland, scrub, wetlands and grassland. Grazing animals have shaped our landscapes for generations and are the most effective and sustainable way of maintaining habitats.

An example of how the new technology is already benefiting Surrey’s countryside can be seen at National Nature Reserve (NNR), Chobham Common which is home to rare heathland plant species, Marsh Gentian. This plant grows in wet, humid heath which is difficult to install stable fencing. Surrey Wildlife Trust can plot the plant location and install virtual barriers so cattle graze elsewhere, protecting the clusters of plants.

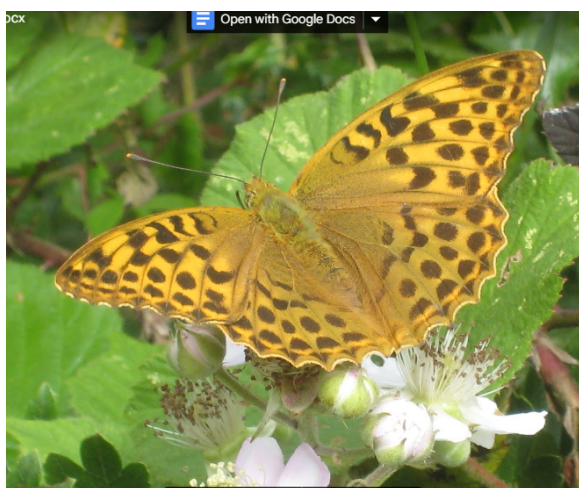
Uncommon commitment to the Common

25 September 2023



The **Epsom Common Association** (ECA) has a membership of around five hundred households, and works closely with **Epsom & Ewell Borough Council’s** Countryside Team and the **Lower Mole Partnership** to protect and improve the Common.

On Tuesday evenings, from June until the end of August, ECA will be hand-pulling bracken for a couple of hours to prevent selected areas of heath or grassland from becoming smothered. During the autumn they will hold the three remaining conservation tasks of the year’s programme of eight. Each task runs for two days, usually the third Sunday of the month and the following Monday. The programme is agreed with the Countryside Team, guided by the Council’s **Hundred Year Management Plan**. The work typically involves removing scrub and small trees to maintain and improve areas of grass and heath or rejuvenate scrub.



Female Silver-washed Fritillary

Sustainable Epsom and Ewell in partnership with St Martin’s Church are looking forward to hosting their 3rd Eco Fair on Saturday July 1st between 10:00 and 14:00. The event is free for all to attend and will include activities for children. Hot food and cakes will be available on the day.

Sustainable Epsom and Ewell is delighted to welcome again to our 3rd event the the Epsom Common Association. Further details about the work they do can be found on the website

<https://www.sustainableepsomewell.co.uk>.

Around fifteen cattle will be grazing across three separate pastures, following in the footsteps of their wild and subsequently domesticated ancestors. Every day the cattle must be checked for health, as must the fences and water troughs. Each week the ECA provides four of the daily checks; without this contribution it is unlikely that grazing could

continue.

As well as conservation work, each year ECA publish three newsletters, hold two public meetings with guest speakers, and arrange several expert led guided walks. Of this summer's programme, walks for: butterflies (2nd July) and bush crickets (6th August) are still to take place; and residents are very welcome to come along.

Finally, ECA make excellent hardwood charcoal from logs harvested during conservation work. Two years ago, thanks to funding from the Council's Community Infrastructure Levy, they were able to take delivery of a modern charcoal retort, which has greatly reduced the smoke whilst increasing the yield. Their charcoal is available at local retailers, the sales help finance activities.

Last September, funded from a generous legacy in memory of **Dave Berry**, a volunteer on the Common, ECA worked with the Lower Mole Partnership to create a new pond. Despite a dry start, by early spring it was full and should provide a new habitat for invertebrates and amphibians. Some funds remain and ECA are considering overgrown and silted ponds for future restoration.

In February ECA funded the installation of two Kestrel nest boxes high up in Oak trees. At least one now appears to have been occupied. Might this suggest a shortage of natural nest sites, despite the substantial number of large trees? Many organisations, including the Countryside Team and members of the ECA, contribute significant effort to monitoring a wide range of animals and plants on the Common.

Previously unrecorded species including various dragonflies and the Black Hairstreak butterfly (probably introduced but now breeding); the third year of Grey Herons nesting at Great Pond; and continuing good numbers of many species all suggest that in many respects the habitat management is successful.

However losses such as breeding Willow Warblers, declining across the south and east of the UK, demonstrate the limits of individual nature reserves, which have only a tiny impact on climate change and none on damage to other areas of the planet that may be essential for a particular creature's life cycle.

Next year will mark the fiftieth anniversary of the founding of the Association. ECA are considering what celebration might be appropriate, suggestions welcome. If you would like to help the ECA on its next fifty years please do get in touch. It is not all outdoor work, there is also plenty to be done in organisation, publicity and the like.

Details of activities and contacts can found at: <https://epsomcommon.org.uk/>

or

Facebook: www.facebook.com/EpsomCommonAssociation

David King

Top image: Berry Pond - Epsom Common

Related reports:

Flagging Up Epsom Common

Storm Eunice - Can the Epsom Common Ducks handle it?

Epsom Common Bird Walk Poem

Sustaining Epsom and Ewell's trees

25 September 2023



The **Epsom and Ewell Tree Advisory Board** (EETAB) founded in 1994 is a partnership of environmentally minded volunteers from the local community who work together to safeguard and promote the value of trees in the borough.

EETAB operates via volunteer **TREE CHAMPIONS** who feel that trees matter and who help to care for trees in their road or local park. Their aim is to ensure that they pass on to future generations a borough that is at least as leafy as the one we have inherited. EETAB is part of the wider Surrey Tree Warden Network.

One of the key roles EETAB has is to monitor Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs) and Conservation Area planning applications. EETAB seeks to ensure that major planning applications include appropriate soft landscaping requirements and tree planting to enhance the townscape. They provide scrutiny to these applications and this role is vital to maintain mature trees and ensure leafiness is maintained within the Borough. Both these activities often require site visits or follow up reviews to ensure any tree work or developments are aligned with the planning application.



Planting of hedge at the Epsom Riding for the Disabled site.

Sustainable Epsom and Ewell in partnership with St Martin's Church are looking forward to hosting their 3rd Eco Fair on Saturday July 1st between 10:00 and 14:00. The event is free for all to attend and will include activities for children. Hot food and cakes will be available on the day.

One of the aims of the Eco fair is to highlight the work of the many fantastic local green groups and businesses active in the Borough and provide an opportunity for our residents to find out about the work they do and how they can support these groups and businesses. Sustainable Epsom and Ewell are therefore delighted to welcome again to our 3rd event the **Epsom and Ewell Tree Advisory Board**

Further details about the work they do can be found on the website
<https://www.sustainableepsomewell.co.uk>.

In addition to this work, EETAB also undertakes many practical tree planting work within the borough working both in establishing tree planting projects in local communities and supporting **Surrey County Council** to get more street trees planted. Some of the ongoing projects include:

Allotment Tree Nursery

EETAB operates a small tree nursery at the Alexandra Road allotment site. They use this site to care for young trees so that there is ready stock for tree planting projects. They have several hundred trees in pots at the nursery. A team of volunteers look after the saplings there and help maintain the plot and we are always in need of extra help with this work.

Planting Projects

Over the past year EETAB has been involved in planting projects at various sites in the borough, the largest of which has been helping to plant a 120m long section of hedge at the **Epsom Riding for the Disabled** site in January, followed by a further 25m section of hedge in March this year. Species planted included hazel, field maple, hawthorn, hornbeam, willow, rowan, ash, dogwood, and dog rose.

Street Trees Planting

When familiar trees are lost (due to age/disease/extreme weather) and not replaced, the appearance of a neighbourhood is altered, so the topic of street trees stirs some strong emotions amongst residents. In the planting season 2021/2022 just 10 new street trees were planted in our borough, a figure far lower than the number of street trees lost. EETAB ran a campaign highlighting the loss of street trees and the increasing numbers of stumps left in our verges to put pressure on Surrey County Council to plant more trees.

As a result of this campaign progress has been made and almost 30 street trees were planted in the borough in the 2022/2023. They worked with Surrey County Council to get 44 planted in the 2023/2024 season. There is still concern in some areas about a continuing decline in numbers of street trees, particularly in the tree lined 1930s estates of the north eastern side of the borough. EETAB appreciate residents' frustration about the reduction in the number of trees. Replacement trees are not being planted in some of these verges as they do not pass the criteria set by Surrey County Council for street tree planting, often due to the narrow width of the verge, or due to the presence of utilities underground.

Tree care and watering

Although there is often much focus on tree planting in the media, the ongoing care and watering of these newly planted trees is equally important. EETAB volunteers regularly check on the newly planted trees in the borough, clearing vegetation around the base of the tree (to reduce competition for water and to prevent strimmer and mower damage), putting down mulch and checking the tree ties and supports. Young trees need watering regularly for the first few years after they are planted with increased frequency during spells of hot dry weather. In the summer months there is a huge need for Tree Champion volunteers to help with watering young street trees. They have a list of trees in need of a champion and would welcome additional help with this.

If you would like to find out more about the **Epsom and Ewell Tree Advisory Board**, please check their website: www.eetab.org.uk, follow on Facebook @EpsomEwellTreeAdvisoryBoard or email them at epsomandewelltab@gmail.com

Vicki Rees

Top image: EETAB Allotment Tree Nursery at Alexandra Road allotments.

Related reports:

Council Meeting: Does Epsom need more trees?

More trees please for Surrey

Any more trees please?

Birds dropping trees?

25 September 2023



The fate of trees which a **Surrey golf club** wanted to cut down because of bird poo falling on its clubhouse patio is still unclear. The beech trees outside Guildford Golf Club's clubhouse, in Merrow, were scheduled to be cut down in May, before a last-minute tree preservation order (TPO) was put in place. Guildford Borough Council's officers put the TPO in place on Friday (May 12) just days before the trees were due to be felled, on the following Monday.

Residents and councillors had spoken out against the plans to fell the trees, which are within the **Surrey Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty**, and officers will decide in the next six months if they should be permanently protected.

People can write to the council to give their views on protecting the trees, though the council's former leader made clear this was not a subjective exercise, but one based on the expert opinions of the council's tree officers.

Councillor **Joss Bigmore** (Residents for Guildford and Villages, Merrow) said he thought they were "beautiful" trees, but there had to be expert analysis rather than people saying: "I just like the tree."

He told the LDRS: "They should be assessed. If they're dangerous, then something needs to be done with them. If they're not, then they should be protected because they're stunning trees. But we should let the experts opine as to whether there is any real danger from them or whether they should be protected."

The golf club set out reasons for wanting to fell the trees in a newsletter to members, seen by the LDRS, which outlined "key reasons" for wanting to fell the trees, including regarding insurance and after storms in January 2022 had brought down one tree at the club.

The newsletter also outlined the "unacceptable" problem of bird droppings falling from the trees and landing on patio seating and tables.

Residents have until June 8 to write to the council to outline their views on if the TPO should be made permanent.

Katherine Atkinson, the independent chair of the Board of the Surrey Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), said cutting down the trees "would have a significant negative impact on the local environment and the public's enjoyment of it". She wrote to the borough council regarding the TPO, pointing out the trees' location in the nationally protected AONB and that they provided a "natural screen" for the clubhouse buildings, conserving and enhancing the "scenic beauty of the landscape".

She added: "The trees provide shade for those using the public footpath (especially in the areas with benches) and because they are mature trees they provide important habitat for a wide range of species. The trees stand as a highly visible and highly valued feature within this part of the AONB, from a distance forming a natural green skyline around the clubhouse and contributing to the sweep of landscape up from the bottom of Merrow Downs."

She said the response to the initial plans to fell the trees was "immediate and clear" and that the "amenity value" of the trees to the public was clear.

Councillor **George Potter**, (Lib Dem, Burpham), who sits on the district and the borough council, said the door was "always open" for the golf club to have a discussion about the plans for the trees. He added: "The borough council will make a decision based on the merits of the case, and considering comments made by any and all parties, but public support for making the TPOs permanent would certainly be welcome."

Maggie Mamen lives in Canada, but regularly visits Guildford, and wrote to the council to call for the TPO to be made permanent. She said: "It is one of the major joys of these visits to walk up to Merrow Downs and admire the beautiful

beech trees outside the club house in all the seasons. It is appalling that they are under any kind of threat.”

A **Guildford Borough Council** spokesperson said: “A Provisional Tree Preservation Order was served on Guildford Golf Club on 11 May 2023. Interested parties have at least 28 days to comment on, object to, or support the Order. The Provisional Order will remain in force for up to six months. During this time, but only after the first 28 days, we will consider the responses and decide whether the order will be confirmed.”

Guildford Golf Club was contacted for comment.

Voles let loose on the Hogsmill

25 September 2023



In August of 2022, years of hard work with the help of hundreds of volunteers came to fruition with the release of 101 voles back onto our local Epsom and Ewell river, **the Hogsmill**. On Saturday the 25th of February **Citizen Zoo** will be celebrating this landmark achievement and the river more broadly at the CornherHOUSE Theatre.

[Link to the website to purchase tickets.](#)

This celebratory event will feature a talk from **Dr Amy-Jane Beer**, a biologist, nature writer and campaigner. She is the author of over 30 books on natural history, a Country Diarist for The Guardian, a columnist for British Wildlife and a regular contributor to BBC Wildlife and Countryfile magazines, among others. Her recent book, *The Flow*, a beautiful and fascinating book that explores the UK’s rivers, includes a trip to the Hogsmill and features our water vole project!



Volunteers bringing voles back to the Hogsmill River

The event will also premier a short film about the **Hogsmill Water Vole** project, directed and filmed by aspiring wildlife filmmaker **Molly McNamara-Langton**. There will also be a short talk about water voles by **Elliot Newton** and **Ben Stockwell**.

This family-friendly event will include Water Vole-themed crafted-making activities for children and a book signing session with Amy where you can purchase her book at a discounted price that will also contribute to the water vole project.

Top snow dog gallery heats up

25 September 2023



Dog ownership in Epsom and Ewell saw a big rise during the pandemic, especially among young families. Poodle mixtures being evidently the most popular varieties purchased. And sometimes for £1000 or more. The Epsom and Ewell Times invites you to submit photos of your dog of any type in any of the open spaces we and our canine friends enjoy in the Borough. Please send in new photos taken outdoors during the Christmas period.

Image: Harvey, a two and a half year old male Goldenpoodle photographed by Claire Beim in Nonsuch Park on 13th December.

Send your photo with your name (let us know if you want anonymity or not), name, type, age and sex of dog and where and when the photo was taken.

Email to

admin@epsomandewelltimes.com

Related story:

Dogs in Frost and Snow

We will publish a gallery in the early New Year.

Thank you

Giraffes adapt from Serengeti to Surrey vegetation

25 September 2023



Surrey County Council has partnered with Chessington World of Adventures Resort to help provide additional food for the Giraffes over the winter months. Surrey's countryside estates team regularly coppice the council's woodlands as part of essential habitat management on Surrey's countryside sites. Chessington have been working with them to coppice hazel, chestnut and other local tree species within Norbury Park near Dorking to feed their herd of Giraffes.

During the autumn and early winter, the hoofstock team at Chessington made regular visits to Norbury Park where they cut back browse (leaves, shoots and branches). The team transport the browse back to the Zoo where they chop into smaller pieces and store in airtight containers which are then placed in freezer storage. This enables an ongoing stock of fresh food to feed the giraffes throughout the winter months.

The 1,340-acre Norbury Park is part of a European Special Area of Conservation (SAC) within the Surrey Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and forms part of Surrey County Council's countryside estate which comprises over 10,000 acres open for public access.

Marisa Heath, Surrey County Council Cabinet Member for the Environment comments: "We are delighted to partner with Chessington to benefit not only the endangered Giraffes, but also the wildlife in Surrey. Coppicing areas of land on Norbury Park helps to improve the health and biodiversity of the woodland by opening it up to the sunlight, which allows a wider range of plants to flourish. We hope to extend this partnership with Chessington to benefit other parts of Surrey's countryside estate."

Rebecca Apperley-Gawn, Senior Hoofstock Keeper comments: "It's been great to partner up with the countryside estates team at Surrey County Council. Norbury Park is closely located to our Zoo so it's great to keep food miles down

and the browse fresh for our herd. The Giraffe spend up to 75% of their day eating and it is vital for their diet that we include fresh food particularly during the long winter months. We look forward to continuing with this partnership over the coming years”.

As well as providing feed for the Giraffes, the Chessington team also took back to the Zoo the stems of coppiced material to make additions to animal enclosures and entertain the Rhinos who love to push them around their enclosures!

For information on Surrey County Council’s countryside sites, visit the website.

Dogs in frost and snow

25 September 2023



Dog ownership in Epsom and Ewell saw a big rise during the pandemic, especially among young families. Poodle mixtures being evidently the most popular varieties purchased. And sometimes for £1000 or more. The Epsom and Ewell Times invites you to submit photos of your dog in any of the open spaces we and our canine friends enjoy in the Borough. Please send in new photos taken outdoors during the cold spell.

Image: Freddie, a 9 year old male Labradoodle on Epsom Common on Sunday 11th December.

Send your photo with your name (let us know if you want anonymity or not), name, type, age and sex of dog and where and when the photo was taken.

Email to

admin@epsomandewelltimes.com

We will publish a gallery in the early New Year.

Thank you.

Mole Patrol captures pollution

25 September 2023



River Wey and River Mole fail to meet acceptable criteria for four out of five pollutants monitored in new report.

In one of the largest national people-powered scientific studies of its kind six different pollutants – nitrate, nitrite, phosphate, total coliform, pH, heavy metals – have been monitored across 48 sites in England and Scotland. At a national level, **all sites but one (98%) failed to meet acceptable criteria for at least one of five pollutants monitored, while over half, 52%, of sites failed on three or more parameters**, according to Planet Patrol’s *What Lies Beneath Report 2022*.

Image: River Mole near Box Hill Dorking. Credit: Johan J.Ingles-Le Nobel

River Wey near Sutton Green and River Mole near Dorking were amongst the worst for water quality, both failing to meet acceptable levels of nitrate, phosphate, total coliform and pH levels. River Dart in Devon is the only site tested to

pass across five parameters.

The report highlights the devastating outlook of the state of UK waterways and urgently warns the Government and polluting industries to take transformative action to reverse the destruction of our freshwater environments.

The *What Lies Beneath Report 2022* is one of the biggest datasets yet, with 57 citizen volunteers having conducted 1,229 water quality readings and 1,178 metal concentration readings.

Additional insights from the report include:

- Nearly half, 46%, of sites showed unacceptable levels of nitrates
- 69% of sites failed to meet acceptable concentration of phosphate
- Over 90% of sites tested positive for total coliform bacteria
- **Over a quarter, 26%, of sites failed to meet recommended PH range due to high levels of acidity.**

The causes of these pollutants are many and go beyond sewage contamination. From growing urban development to farming practices, increased diversity of chemicals and pharmaceuticals used by society, and pollution pressure from transport, addressing the UK's invisible water quality crisis needs a whole systems approach.

The launch of this report follows the latest data from the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra), which shows that no progress has been made on a key water pollution pledge made four years ago to ensure that 75% of rivers and other bodies of water achieve a "good" ecological status by 2027. The figure remained at 16% in 2021, unchanged since 2017. In response to the Environment Agency's plans to 'amend' this target, Planet Patrol has launched a petition calling on the Rt Hon Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, Thérèse Coffey, to reject plans to weaken the legislation.

Lizzie Carr MBE, founder of Planet Patrol, says: "Through our growing community of citizen scientists we've started to uncover what lies beneath to highlight a stark reality: the widespread, poor condition of our freshwater environments. The results have been disturbing and distressing but only by building evidence to illustrate the true scale and extent of a problem, can it be accurately understood, communicated and acted upon.

"We urge the Government to honour its pledge to ensure that 75% of rivers and other bodies of water achieve a good ecological status by 2027. This target is both a major driver of public and private investment into cleaning up our waterways and a vital tool to hold industries with permits to pollute – which include much more than just water companies – to account over water pollution."

As well as rejecting plans to amend this pledge, Planet Patrol, the environmental non-profit, is highlighting four other key policy recommendations:

- DEFRA to bring forward the enforcement date for the increase in Variable Monetary Penalties for polluting water companies to 1st February 2023
- DEFRA to strengthen the effectiveness of the Storm Overflows Discharge Reduction Plan (SODRP) – specifically, reduce the maximum achievement date on all SODRP targets to 2035 versus 2050, and prohibit water companies from increasing water bills to fund the critical infrastructure investment required
- The Environmental Agency to accelerate the speed at which citizen science is integrated into formal data collection activities for developing evidenced-based policies
- Use funds raised from the increase in Variable Monetary Penalties for polluting water companies to increase the criminal prosecution rates of those who damage water quality.

Dr Thomas Stanton, a freshwater scientist from Loughborough University who analysed the data, says: "UK waterways are vulnerable to a number of societal pressures, including pollution, water abstraction, and modifications to river courses. But they are also compromised by weak policy and legislation. Despite its political greenwashing, the environment continues to be an issue that the UK government does not take seriously. Nature is in crisis, but current efforts to fully understand the extent of this are shackled by politicians whose short-sighted priorities lie elsewhere, and who fail to recognise the significance of environmental action today for the lives of those who will outlive their political tenure."

Read the full report here: <https://planetpatrol.co/water-quality-report/>

Any more trees please?

25 September 2023



The Woodland Trust is urging schools and community groups across the south east of England to get their free tree-pack applications in quickly with just over a month left until the spring delivery closes.

Applications for spring, for delivery in March 2023, are currently open, but only until 11 January.

The last round of the ever-popular free tree-packs scheme was the Woodland Trust's biggest-ever single send-out, with 4,625 organisations across the UK taking advantage of the scheme.

A total of 643 schools and community groups in London, Greater London, Kent, Surrey and Sussex took delivery of their trees from the end of October to 11 November.

In the south east of England, 88,155 trees were sent out to 643 organisations:

- 16,380 Trees to 168 organisations in London
- 9,690 trees to 87 organisations in Greater London
- 26,535 trees to 157 organisations Kent
- 14,070 trees to 101 organisations in Surrey
- 21,480 trees to 130 organisations in Sussex

The figures for the south east of England were part of a bumper autumn delivery which saw 740,970 saplings finding homes the length and breadth of the UK, bringing the annual total to a record-breaking 1.3m trees for 2022.

Woodland Trust senior project lead Vicki Baddeley said there is no time like the present to sign up and take advantage of the scheme.

"With Christmas looming and National Tree Week upon us, now really is a good time to get those applications in and ensure you don't miss out," she added.

"We still have lots of trees available but with schools breaking up before you know it, and the hectic holiday period around the corner, it makes sense to get organised nice and early and avoid a last-minute rush in early January.

"Planting trees is such a simple action, but the collective impact can make a huge difference. It's a great way for schoolchildren and community groups to learn about nature and the environment and, at the same time, embrace a "Green Christmas".

"Planting trees has so many benefits, from combatting the effects of climate change, helping support wildlife, to greening up local spaces and boosting well-being.

"The desire to plant trees is growing all the time and I fully expect demand to reflect that in the coming weeks, so I would advise any interested groups to apply sooner rather than later.

"The application process to secure your saplings is quite straightforward, just visit <https://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/plant-trees/schools-and-communities/> to get started."

The Trust's tree packs have been generously funded by lead partners: Sainsbury's, Lloyds Bank, OVO Energy, Bank of Scotland and Sofology.

Baddeley added: "As ever, the support and generosity of our funders is invaluable and we simply couldn't do this without them.

"The help each and every one of them provides is hugely appreciated and helps to ensure we can provide and deliver our saplings in such huge numbers."

The Woodland Trust's autumn delivery:

- England: 615,720 trees to 3,982 schools and community groups
- Scotland: 77,940 trees to 428 schools and community groups
- Wales: 47,310 trees to 215 schools and community groups

NOTES TO EDITORS:

For more information please contact the Woodland Trust press office on 01476 602993, Owen Phillips on 07958 066 766, or email media@woodlandtrust.org.uk or owenphillips@woodlandtrust.org.uk

The Woodland Trust

The Woodland Trust is the largest woodland conservation charity in the UK with more than 500,000 supporters. It wants to see a UK rich in native woods and trees for people and wildlife.

The Trust has three key aims:

1. protect ancient woodland, which is rare, unique and irreplaceable
2. restoration of damaged ancient woodland, bringing precious pieces of our natural history back to life
3. establish native trees and woods with the aim of creating resilient landscapes for people and wildlife

Established in 1972, the Woodland Trust now has over 1,000 sites in its care covering approximately 29,000 hectares. Access to its woods is free so everyone can benefit from woods and trees.

www.woodlandtrust.org.uk

Free trees for schools and communities

The Woodland Trust is giving away hundreds of thousands of trees to schools and communities to make sure everybody in the UK has the chance to plant a tree. To apply, or see terms and conditions, visit: www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/freetrees

National Tree Week

National Tree Week takes place from 26 November to December 2022. It is the UK's largest annual tree celebration. Each year, the country's conservation sector, volunteer groups and tree-lovers come together to plant thousands of trees to mark the start of the annual tree planting season.

Courtesy: The Woodland Trust

Images: **The Woodland Trust | Flickr & People Planting | Flickr**