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Rare moth rediscovery secures conservation status for Epsom’s Manor Open Space

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Manor Open Space in Epsom has been designated a Site of Nature Conservation Importance (SNCI), recognising its ecological value and role in supporting wildlife across the borough.

The designation, made by the Surrey Local Sites Partnership, highlights several important features of the site, including veteran oak trees and the presence of the extremely rare moth *Coleophora conspicuella* (Knapweed Case-bearer). The species had not been recorded in Surrey for around 100 years before its rediscovery at the site in 2024.

The open space also plays a key role as a wildlife corridor, linking Epsom Common and Horton Country Park local nature reserves. This connection enables the movement of species between habitats and strengthens the borough’s wider ecological network.

SNCIs, also known as Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation or Local Wildlife Sites, are non-statutory designations that identify areas of high biodiversity value. While not legally protected in themselves, they are recognised in planning and conservation decisions and help safeguard important habitats and species at a local level.

Cllr **Liz Frost** (RA Woodcote and Langley), Chair of the Environment Committee, said the designation reflected both the ecological importance of the site and the work of those maintaining it.

“We are proud that Manor Open Space has been recognised for the important role it plays in supporting resilient ecosystems across the borough,” she said. “Through our Biodiversity Action Plan, we can protect our natural heritage, and the presence of veteran oak trees along with the discovery of extremely rare moth species reflects the dedication of everyone involved in caring for our habitats.

“This SNCI designation is a testament to the hard work, diligence and passion of our Countryside team, partners and much valued volunteers who continually strive to improve our green spaces for the benefit of our community. Their commitment ensures that these habitats will be enjoyed for many years to come.”

The Surrey Local Sites Partnership, which oversees the selection of SNCIs, brings together Surrey County Council, Surrey Wildlife Trust, district and borough councils and independent ecological experts under the Surrey Nature Partnership. The group identifies and manages both nature conservation sites and Regionally Important Geological Sites across the county.

Epsom & Ewell Borough Council’s Biodiversity Action Plan aims to protect, maintain and enhance biodiversity locally, taking into account priorities at regional, national and international levels. This work sits alongside the council’s Climate Change Action Plan 2025–2029, which sets out measures to reduce emissions and promote environmental sustainability across the borough.

Sam Jones – Reporter



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Photo: Manor-Open-Space-springtime-Cuckoo-Flower-in-the-foreground

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