

Horton Country Park Local Nature Reserve Management Plan 2017-2117 - Executive Summary

The Horton Country Park Local Nature Reserve Management Plan 2017-2117 covers approximately 100ha of Horton Country Park Local Nature Reserve (LNR). Excluded from the plan are areas of land within the Country Park managed by the Equus Equestrian Centre and the Horton Park Country Club (golf course), together with Hobbledown (formerly Horton Park Farm (Map 1). Throughout the remainder of the plan, unless otherwise stated, reference to Horton Country Park relates only to the Epsom & Ewell Borough Council (EEBC) managed part of the Local Nature Reserve.

The management plan succeeds the 2006-2016 plan and aims to update and build on the progress made during the implementation of the previous plan which was the first to be agreed formerly and implemented by Epsom & Ewell Borough Council. The previous plan has significantly improved the management of woodland, grassland, scrub and ponds, improved biological monitoring, increased volunteer input and commenced a programme of veteran tree management and improved public access and interpretation. The previous plan also secured the substantial external funding required to achieve some of the above improvements.

Subject to ten year reviews the plan aims to describe the important features of Horton Country Park LNR and set out an agreed approach for the continued management of the site to benefit both the people and wildlife of Epsom & Ewell for the next one hundred years.

The plan prescribes in detail (Stage Two Evaluation & Objectives section 2.8 and Stage Three Prescription) how the site will be managed from 2017 to 2027. Stage three of the draft management plan provides a guide to delivering the plan up to the first ten year review in 2027. The plan is aspirational and for guidance purposes only, estimated costs are given and as in the case of the previous plan 2006-16, implementation of the new plan is not dependent upon increased spending by the Council. During the previous plan substantial external funding was successfully secured and remains in place until 2020 with the prospect of future scheme eligibility. Possible funding sources currently include:

- EEBC
- DEFRA
- Lower Mole Trust
- The Friends of Horton Country Park
- Surrey County Council
- Community infrastructure levy
- Environment Agency
- South East Rivers Trust
- Heritage Lottery
- Other grants

It should be noted that, without a management plan there is very little chance of securing funds from other sources. The plan ensures that Horton Country Park LNR continues to provide good public access whilst at the same time providing an important home for wildlife.

The management plan has been updated following a number of additional site surveys carried out during the lifetime of the previous plan with consequent re-appraisal of available data, liaison with a number of individuals and representatives of relevant organisations (e.g. Epsom and Ewell Borough Council, the Friends of Horton Country Park and the Lower Mole Partnership) has again taken place.

Objectives and outline prescriptions set out in consultation drafts have been agreed by all parties concerned. The aim has been to achieve a realistic balance, between a range of issues that include:

- Nature conservation
- Maintaining and enhancing the historical, landscape and cultural value
- Providing appropriate facilities for public recreation and enjoyment
- Encouraging opportunities for education in all aspects of the Country Park's ecology, history, culture and landscape.

A PLAN FOR THE NEXT 100 YEARS

Over the last 100 years the land that is today Horton Country Park LNR has undergone significant change. This farmed landscape created over centuries to provide arable crops, meat, milk, wool, wood products and timber, today provides local people with fresh air, exercise, tranquillity and protection for wildlife. As readers of this plan will discover Horton Country Park is locally very important for its wildlife and maintaining that value requires an informed, consistent, systematic and long term approach to habitat management and public access. For example, trees live for hundreds of years, the ecological benefits of re-introducing rotational woodland management will take many decades to be fully realised, and biological monitoring often yields really valuable information after many years of recording effort.

The plan provides a regularly reviewed (10 years) 100 year approach to the management of Horton Country Park LNR to ensure the protection, maintenance and enhancement of the wildlife and heritage of Horton Country Park LNR whilst also ensuring good public access to a wonderful place!

The key components in managing Horton Country Park LNR which are unlikely to change in the next one hundred years are as follows:

- Ensuring good public access via a network of well-maintained and signed paths and bridleways.
- Managing and maintaining the features of nature conservation interest in 'favourable' condition.
- Ensuring the protection, maintenance, monitoring and enhancement of biodiversity and cultural heritage of Horton Country Park LNR.
- Encouraging and supporting the work of volunteers and the 'Friends of Horton Country Park'.
- Interpreting Horton Country Park LNR to the public
- Maintaining a close working relationship with the operators of the Equus Equestrian Centre, Horton Park Country Club (golf course) Hobbledown (formerly Horton Park Childrens' Farm).

Management Plan Page References:

- Page 4 - Introduction
- Page 5 - A plan for the next 100 years
- Page 67 - Identification of operational objectives and outline prescriptions
- Page 76 - Prescription tables for first ten years of the plan
- Page 98 - Maps and appendices