



**Enhancing your Environment**  
Countryside and Conservation News  
from Epping Forest District Council



**Issue 14      Spring 2009**










*Epping Forest District Council*  
[www.eppingforestdc.gov.uk](http://www.eppingforestdc.gov.uk)





Welcome to the Fourteenth Spring edition of **Enhancing Your Environment**. Hopefully you will enjoy a round up of news from the Policy and Conservation Team of the Directorate of Planning and Economic Development at Epping Forest District Council.

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## British Tree Record Breakers

### Which is the oldest tree in Britain?

– The Fortingall Yew (Scotland) estimated to be 5,000 years old.

### Which is the biggest tree in Britain?

– ‘Severn Sisters’, a giant sweet chestnut in Penshurst, Kent. Height 32metres, circumference 16metres. Thought to be over a 1000 years old.

### Which is the smallest tree in Britain?

– Dwarf willows that grow at altitudes above 610metres. These trees are often no more than 6cm tall.

### Which is the fastest growing tree in Britain?

- Leyland cypress! Can grow up to a metre per year.

### What is the rarest native tree in Britain?

-Ley’s Whitebeam which is only found on two carboniferous limestone outcrops in Brecon.

### What is the tallest tree in Britain?

- Douglas Fir in Glendaruel Argyll an incredible 63.79 metres or 209 feet

## Font Cover

The Debden Estate was a post war development which took place in the between 1945 and 1955. In so doing the landscape of Loughton was transformed for ever, but the planners did see fit to keep some of the old trees and these are the old trees we are recording today as part of the veteran tree hunt. Looking at the 1880 OS maps it is clear that these impressive survivors were hedgerow trees in a landscape of small fields.

Interestingly an extract from A History of the County of Essex: Volume 4: Ongar Hundred dated 1956 states “Planning has preserved some of the rural landscape at Debden. Both here and in the old town open spaces and many fine trees survive from Loughton’s village days.”

Today this very large oak stands adjacent to the brook in Etheridge Road in Loughton. With a girth of over 5 metres it is easily 350 years old. © Epcot Images

# Epping Forest Countrycare Events and Diary Dates



## April 2009

Thursday	16	Chigwell Row Wood LNR, Chigwell
Thursday	23	Oldshire Lane, Waltham Abbey
Thursday	30	Church Lane LNR, North Weald

## May 2009

Tuesday	12	Training day: Marks Hall Arboretum, Coggeshall, Essex.
Thursday	14	Chigwell Row Wood LNR, Chigwell
Sunday	17	Tree Hunt – Sheering Parish
Thursday	21	Bobbingworth Pocket Park, Bobbingworth
Thursday	28	Roughaltley's Wood LNR, North Weald

## June 2009

Thursday	04	Countrycare Volunteers Tour
Thursday	11	Epping Green Millennium Garden, Epping Upland
Thursday	18	Home Mead LNR, Loughton
Thursday	25	Hainault Forest SSSI, Lambourne
Sunday	28	Hainault Forest SSSI, Lambourne

## July 2009

Thursday	02	Foster Street Burial Ground, North Weald
Thursday	16	Loughton Brook Flood Storage reservoir, Loughton
Sunday	19	Tree Hunt – Stapleford Tawney
Thursday	23	Hallsford Bridge, Ongar

Above is just a small selection of the volunteer projects and events Countrycare will be running over the next four months. **Please note this programme may be subject to change.** Please contact us to get the monthly update sheet to confirm details or visit the Countrycare website [www.eppingforestdc.gov.uk/countrycare](http://www.eppingforestdc.gov.uk/countrycare)

Unless otherwise stated there will be a pick up from Loughton Tube Station at 9.30 am for all volunteer projects and we will aim to have you back there for 4.30 pm. Please bring a packed lunch, sturdy boots and plenty of enthusiasm. We will ply you with tea, coffee and biscuits to help keep your energy levels up!

## Volunteer Task Information

Below is a list of site details and the projects we have planned. Please refer to the website or the monthly update sheet for the meet points and times.

**Chigwell Row Wood Local Nature Reserve.** This reserve will be very familiar to many of you, as once again it has taken up the lion's share of the volunteer effort over this winter. Through 2008/09 some 10 project days were organised involving over a 1000 hours of staff and volunteer time. The heath land and pollard restoration has gone very well, with promising signs of recovery. Hopefully, all this hard work will be apparent in the spring and early summer.

Through the spring we will be concentrating on access issues within the wood and keeping the rides open.

**Oldshire Lane, Waltham Abbey.** This site has been another of Countrycare's creation projects as we have attempted to transform land which was formally old greenhouses into a wildlife area. Over the last 9 years numerous trees have been planted (800+) creating hedgerows and a copse. In addition, we are attempting to get a wildflower meadow going. This is progressing slowly with a good show of cowslips in the spring. Much more needs to be done though so your help will be needed as will continue to battle the weed growth that will hinder the more delicate wildflowers including a Pyramidal Orchid that appeared in 2008.

**Church Lane LNR, North Weald.** This flood storage reservoir come nature reserve continues to improve with age. The best time to visit is late May, but we will be on site in late April as we install a number of boundary markers, undertake some early grass cutting and maintain the willow bird hide.

**Bobbingworth Meadows (former landfill site).** As a number of our sites "celebrate" either 10 or 20 years of Countrycare management, we are just starting out with this former landfill site just outside Moreton Village. Many of you helped out with the planting of trees through this winter in what proved to be

very difficult conditions. Things have started to dry out and in all over 5,500 trees have now been planted. The 5 hectare wildflower meadow is now in the planning stage.



**Tree planting at Bobbingworth November 2008.**

Through the spring and summer your help will be needed tending to the trees and if we can get the funding.....creating a new pathway.

**Roughtalley's Wood LNR, North Weald.** This is a small woodland (3.4h) situated on the edge of North Weald village. It was once part the much larger ancient woodland covering 25 hectares, which was divided in the 1860s when the Eastern Counties Railway was created. Today the larger section is the Epping Forest Burial Park.

In our bit of Roughtalley's we are still trying to restore areas which were devastated in the 1987 storm. The tree planting is coming on well and the grassy areas can boast a few orchids, cowslip and the occasion primrose. Deer are becoming a big issue in the wood causing significant damage and hampering natural regeneration. Your help will be needed to maintain the grassland areas within the wood and keep the pathways open.

**Epping Green Millennium Garden, Epping Upland.** Back in 1999, Epping Upland Parish Council received a £1,500 grant from the Millennium Festival "Awards for All Scheme". This went towards creating a Millennium Wildlife Area on redundant allotments within Epping Green village. Over the last nine years, Countrycare has worked in partnership with the parish council to create an ever improving wildlife

area. A meadow area has been created, a pond dug and hedgerows planted all of which are now starting to mature. Wildflowers such as Cowslip and Common Spotted Orchid are now establishing. In 2006, a formal management agreement was signed between Countrycare and the parish council that will see this work continue in the long term. Your help will be needed as we undertake the annual cutting of the meadow areas to improve the wildflowers.

**Home Mead Local Nature Reserve.** This site was a late addition to the Countrycare portfolio with habitat works not starting until 1999. When it was “rediscovered” it had become very overgrown with scrub and many of the open grassy areas (identifiable from old aerial photographs) had been lost. A programme of coppicing and clearance over the last 10 years has seen major improvements with open grassy areas and a mosaic of scrub. In 2006 a circular hardened pathway was installed and the site really started to take shape. Last winter the regular Countrycare volunteer group and Capel Manor College, continued the scrub clearance, which was dense and very shaded. This area will be partly kept as grassland, but also partly allowed to scrub over, creating an age diversity of scrub, which is all vital as a nectar source for invertebrates and small song birds. Over the spring and summer we will be concentrating on the grassland areas with cutting to prevent them from scrubbing over at the very back of the site, adjacent to the boundary.

**Hainault Forest, Lambourne.** Over the last few years we have worked closely in partnership with the Woodland Trust promoting Chigwell Row Wood LNR and its big brother over the Romford Road - Hainault Forest. Again this Spring, we will be working on the heathland in the Forest which mirrors our site in Chigwell Row Wood. Bramble and scrub clearance will be the order of the day as make room for the heathland plants like heather and petty whin.

**Foster Street Burial Ground, North Weald.** Countrycare became involved with Foster Street in 2002 following an approach from local volunteers and

historians regarding the overgrown plight of the churchyard. Since that time we have undertaken a series of volunteer days (with a minimum of one a year). This winter we had an extra day clearing the graves of encroaching bramble and scrub, this should have a big impact on the spring wildflowers. In late spring we will be cutting the more open grassland areas and removing all the cuttings to the compost bin.



**Wild Basil – Foster Street Burial Ground**

**Loughton Brook Flood Storage Reservoir, Loughton** was created back in 1995, in a joint initiative between the then National Rivers Authority and the District Council. It is one of four flood defence assets that Countrycare manage in partnership with EFDC’s land drainage team (the others are Thornwood LNR, Weald Common LNR and Church Lane LNR) The land itself is still dedicated Epping Forest land and a Site of Special Scientific Interest. Each year staff and volunteers cut the reservoir embankments to benefit the developing spring meadow.

**Hallsford Bridge Meadow, Ongar.** This is another new venture as we again “adopt” a piece of abandoned land that we have discovered EFDC owns. It was mentioned in EYE 13, so go there for full details or look it up on the Countrycare web pages. The projects this spring will involve careful cutting of the grassland areas which have already been identified as being good for butterflies and maintenance of the access routes through the site.



## Tree Wardens Corner

By Paul Hewitt and Melinda Barham  
(Epping Forest Tree Warden Coordinators)

**Tree Wardens** are local volunteers with a passion for trees. They work in partnership with the Council on all things tree related and this can vary from information gathering through to encouraging practical projects relating to trees in their community. You do not need to be an tree expert as we will provide you with an “action pack” and all the training to give you the basic knowledge. All that is important is that you feel passionate about trees and their care.

In our district we currently have 39 tree wardens and they are coordinated by Paul and Melinda. We are always looking for new tree wardens to join us and are especially keen to recruit new wardens to help with the veteran tree hunt. We are especially looking for wardens in The Lavens and The Rodings, so if you are interested please contact us. This is the distribution of our current network with the Parish and number of Wardens for each;

- Buckhurst Hill Parish - 5
- Chigwell Parish - 2
- Epping Parish - 5
- Lambourne Parish - 1
- Loughton Parish - 5
- Nazeing Parish - 2
- North Weald Parish - 1
- Ongar Parish - 5
- Roydon Parish - 5
- Sheering Parish - 2
- Theydon Bois Parish - 3
- Waltham Abbey Parish – 3

**Veteran Tree Hunt tops 2000...** at the start of March 2009, we recorded our 2000<sup>th</sup> veteran tree in the district and trees have been recorded in every parish except Beauchamp Roding. So if you know any trees there please let us know.

At the time of going to press the district total of recorded trees verified on the website is 16 Ancient Trees, 2084 veteran and 720 notable trees giving a total

approaching 3000. These have all be recorded and photographed and can be found on our pictorial database [www.favouritetrees.com](http://www.favouritetrees.com)

We have continued to hold tree hunt days in Buckhurst Hill and Berners Roding and this has led to some great discoveries. On the Roding Valley Recreation Ground, Buckhurst Hill near to Roding Lane we recorded 10 veteran pollards including 3 of the largest hornbeams so far recorded. These incredible survivors have been aged at around 400 years old. Pictured below.



© Epcot images

### Future Events

12 May '09 – Marks Hall Arboretum, Coggeshall.

17 May '09 – Tree Hunt, Sheering

2 June '09 – Visit to Roughtalley's Wood, Epping Forest Burial Park.

19 July '09 – Tree Hunt, Stapleford Tawney

16 September 2009 – Open Meeting, Civic Offices.

Being investigated – trips to the Kew Gardens, Lark Rise Farm, Cambridgeshire.

### Reserves Round Up

## Volunteer Effort

A huge thank you once again goes out to all our volunteers who through rain, sleet, snow, ice and occasional sunshine helped us so fantastically though the winter. The effort and dedication through all weathers was great and all the sites that received management should look great this spring.

A special mention too must go to the "Flying" hedge layers ably led by Peter Vaughan. Through their hard work a number of our reserves can boast some expertly laid hedges. The group formed up and worked mainly on a Friday laying hedges at Weald Common, Oldshire Lane and the Millennium Garden at Epping Green. Hopefully, they can do the same again next winter, but a huge thanks to all of you who were involved.



The class of 1922 – Hedge layers in Epping Forest © Epping Forest Museum

## Reserve Milestones!!

2009 sees a number of significant milestones for some of Countrycare's best reserves. It is now 20 years since work first started on **Chigwell Row Wood LNR and Church Lane LNR** back in 1989.

Today, Church Lane LNR is a significant wet meadow. Some 170 species of herb and grasses have been recorded including numerous uncommon wildflowers including ragged robin and devils bit scabious, amazing when you consider it started life as an arable field.

At Chigwell Row Wood things too have continued to improve. Surveys have revealed we have over 360 veteran pollards, numerous rare dead wood insects and rare plants such as Lousewort have emerged on the relic heath.



March 2009 – Continued scraping of the heathland to encourage the heather, gorse and lousewort.

In Loughton we will be entering or 10<sup>th</sup> year of management for **Home Mead LNR** which again has seen it transformed from an overgrown field into a mosaic of grassland and scrub packed with bird life.



Home Mead declared a Local Nature Reserve in 2006.

Its not all good news though after nearly 14 years of management we have had to "give up" **All Saints Church at Berners Roding**. The church and land has been sold for the second time in 5 years and the new owners have rejected our input. We will continue to keep a close eye on the church and see how things develop.

On a brighter note you will see in the volunteer programme that our work will continue at Bobbingworth Tip which will be our biggest creation project yet. Also, at Hallsford Bridge Meadow in Ongar we have a chance to improve a great site beside the River Roding.

## How & Why Is Our Countryside Changing?

By Andrew Vaughan  
Assistant Countryside Manager

**Introduction.** As we rush about our daily lives do we really notice things changing around us? Certainly, at first glance the countryside doesn't seem to be changing a great deal. The major changes were historical with dramatic change in the 1960's and 70's. Up to 1963, 8000 km of hedgerow a year was being lost and of this 1200 km/year was grant aided by MAFF. The late 1970's was probably the last significant period when our landscape on a national scale changed, in terms of nature conservation for the worse. At that time, it was typical to see hedges grubbed out, heathland ploughed and moorlands afforested. The late 1980's and 90's the loss of broad habitat in Britain at least has slowed, halted and in many cases changed direction. However the loss of species rich grassland has continued to be significant. This article discusses some of the processes that directly affect our 'green and pleasant land'.

**Species decline.** Once species are lost from our shores endemic to Britain they are lost forever. It is feared that by the time we all notice species decline, it maybe too late or costly to bring the species back to a region. To put species decline into perspective the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, in the worst hit counties saw on average one flowering plant lost every year. In the last 150 years, 21 plants have been lost from Britain completely. So, why?

**Nutrient enrichment.** We can all associate with soil enrichment in its most simple terms, for example adding manure to our vegetable patch, gives us a bigger crop. We can also see the tenuous link between rough pasture to a bowling green, by adding weed killer and fertiliser. However this enrichment of chemicals in our soils in particular nitrogen and phosphorus has had a devastating effect on many of our rarer species rich habitats. Many of the plant species associated with these habitats require soils with very little fertility. Heathland habitats for example are generally found on acid soils. The nutrient enrichment of such habitats promotes the growth of less desirable species such as rye grasses, nettles and

docks. The sward will change over time, and specialist invertebrates will not be able to inhabit this changing niche habitat. If other forms of management are not carried out within fifty to a hundred years, the heath could be a dark high canopy with very little trace of heathland apart from the underlying geology.

**Succession & overgrazing.** In the lowlands of Britain, social and economic factors mean that whilst productive farmland is managed highly intensively, many semi-natural areas are no longer managed, or are managed at a level which no longer benefits wildlife, particularly as regards linear habitats, such as road verges and stream banks.

There have been notable decreases in woodland birds in recent years, and one explanation for this is the increased amount of closed canopy woodland. Deer are also becoming a very serious threat to our woodlands. Increasing deer numbers and therefore overgrazing is leading to the loss of the woodland understorey, both in terms of natural regeneration and loss of flora. Incredibly, today there are now more deer in Britain than at any time during the last 200 years and numbers continue to increase at an alarming rate.

**Alien species.** There are today more introduced plants than natives in the British flora. The ways in which exotic species are having an influence on the countryside are, of course, complex and include direct competition with natives, disruption or structural change of ecosystems, genetic contamination of native species, predation and transmission of disease. The aliens are very familiar to many of us. Japanese Knotweed is costing millions of pounds across the country to try and control and Munjac Deer are steadily munching their way through our bluebell and other wildflowers.

**Climate Change.** There are increasing signs that climate change is having an effect on wildlife. For example climate change is causing some birds, such as the Purple Sandpiper and the Turnstone, to winter in smaller numbers in Britain, because the conditions in the more northerly parts of their migration routes

stay favourable for longer. Globally, there is evidence of species shifting their range northwards at an average rate of 6.1km per decade. This is very evident in the plant kingdom. It is estimated that one in six plants are now flowering 15 days earlier than in the previous four decades.

**Conclusion.** This article has given you a taste of just some of the issues associated with a changing landscape.

To finish on a more positive note we should not give up. Direct habitat loss is now less common due to increased protection through law and environmental strategies, plans and policies. Education is helping too as public opinion and desire for change will ultimately win through. Habitat restoration projects are becoming increasing with funding more freely available. What is clear though is that it is far easier to damage than repair.

## Local Wildlife Sites in the Epping Forest District

This summer the Essex Wildlife Trust on behalf of the district council will be reviewing the suite of Local Wildlife Sites (LoWS) that exist across the district. But what are LoWs and what does it all mean?

**Background.** A Local Wildlife Sites (LoWS) can be defined as “a discrete area of land which is considered to be of significance for its wildlife features in at least a District/Borough/Unitary Authority context”. There are more than 36,000 LoWS in England representing a significant proportion of the country's biodiversity.

Back in 1991 a suite of these sites were identified and declared by the Essex Wildlife Trust following a Phase One habitat survey of the district. This was partially reviewed in 1996 and 1999. (Just to confuse things they were formerly known as Wildlife Sites, Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINCs) or County Wildlife Sites.) Currently, the Epping Forest District had 181 Local Wildlife Sites. That breaks down into 118 Woodlands, 39 grasslands, 19 mosaic sites and 5 fresh water aquatic.

**So what does their designation mean?**

LoWS designation is non-statutory, but it does recognise the high value of a site for wildlife. Many sites are of county, and often regional or national, importance. They are often designated because they support characteristic or threatened species or habitats included in Local or National Biodiversity Action Plans.

LoWS are recognised by national planning policy (Planning Policy Statement 9) as having a fundamental role to play in meeting national biodiversity targets. LoWS are not protected by legislation, but their importance is recognised by local authorities when considering any relevant planning applications and there is a presumption against granting permission for development that would have an adverse impact on a site.

Such measures have been strengthened by the provisions of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act (NERC) 2006 which requires all public bodies to 'have regard for' the conservation of biodiversity.

**What and where are they?** The Epping Forest District Local Wildlife Sites Report includes their location, boundaries and key features. Sites may be privately or publicly owned and vary in size and shape from small meadows, green lanes, dykes and hedges to much larger areas of ancient woodlands, heathland, greens, commons and marsh.

## Key Facts

- Local Sites networks provide a comprehensive rather than representative suite of sites.
- Local Sites provide wildlife refuges for most of the UK's fauna and flora and through their connecting and buffering qualities they complement other site networks.
- Local Sites have a significant role to play in meeting overall national biodiversity targets.
- Local Sites represent local character and distinctiveness.
- Local Sites contribute to the quality of life and the well-being of the community, with many sites providing opportunities for research and education.

Although the system of statutory designations contains well over a million hectares, it is widely recognised as leaving out many sites that are, nevertheless, of significant value for the conservation of wildlife and geological features.

This is because the purpose of such statutory designations is to provide a representative rather than a comprehensive suite of sites, the individual sites exemplifying the nation's most important wildlife and geological features, rather than including every site with such interest.

In most areas, local authorities, working with other local partners, have set up systems of locally valued non-statutory sites. Supporting in the region of 35,000 Local Sites, these systems contribute significantly to delivering both UK and Local Biodiversity and Geodiversity Action Plan targets.

Following consultation on the protection and management of Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and a subsequent report published in August 1999, a Local Sites Review Group was set up by the then Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions (DETR). It reported in April 2000 and defined the overall objective of a Local Sites system as follows:

“The series of non-statutory Local Sites seeks to ensure, in the public interest, the conservation, maintenance and enhancement of species, habitats....features of substantive nature conservation value. Local Site systems should select all areas of....value including both the most important and the most distinctive species, habitats....features within a national, regional and local context. Sites within the series may also have an important role in contributing to the public enjoyment of nature conservation.”

### Local Authority Performance Indicator for Biodiversity NI 197

In addition to the review of the LoWS network, Countrycare will be busy over the next few years working towards achieving the aims of a newly adopted Biodiversity Indicator NI 197.

This indicator will measure the performance of local authorities for biodiversity by assessing the implementation of active conservation management of LoWS.

The aim of NI 197 will be to get all LoWS into positive conservation management (PCM). To achieve this each site should have a basic management plan and have received some practical works in the last 5 years, which have either maintained, restored or enhanced the sites biodiversity.

The Epping Forest District has been set a target of getting 81 LoWS into PCM. This will be a tough target to achieve. Many of the sites are in private ownership and will require considerable liaison and partnership working with landowners.

Countrycare will be doing its best to work with landowners and it is hoped that Countrycare volunteers will be able to provide some of the muscle for management.

To begin with Countrycare we will be concentrating on the 18 green lanes within the district which are also designated LoWS. By working on these sites we can increase their biodiversity and importantly improve a vital part of the access network.

Over the next few Editions of EYE we will be highlighting the numerous lanes and their management.

## The Grey Squirrel – Friend or

**Foe?** By Jordan Thomas

Assistant Countryside Manager

The Grey Squirrel was first introduction into Britain in the 1870s, imported from its native North America. It was intended as an ornamental species to populate the grounds of stately homes, but of course has spread far and wide. For many people it is perhaps one of the most familiar wild mammals. With its stronghold in the woods of Southern Britain and many urban gardens it is accepted by many as a welcome addition to our wildlife. Many people even deliberately feed them. However, there is growing scientific evidence suggesting this invasive species is having a very negative impact on our native wildlife, particularly our woodlands.

Woodland managers and foresters have always known and felt strongly about the damage caused by greys to trees under their care. It is stated commercial forestry would not be financially viable without Grey Squirrel control. Greys do inflict considerable damage. They strip the bark of trees when the sap rises in the spring and can cause severe damage to many species including Sycamore, Hornbeam, Beech, Oak, Sweet Chestnut, Pine, Norway Spruce and Larch. In young plantations or areas of natural regeneration, trees aged between ten and forty years are generally most vulnerable.

In the most significant woodland we manage - Chigwell Row Wood Local Nature Reserve they seem to have developed a penchant for the young re-growth on veteran Hornbeam pollards. This could prove to be the final 'nail in the coffin' for some of these old and vulnerable trees.

The affect of predation by greys on some of our other woodland wildlife isn't yet fully appreciated, but both the British Trust for Ornithology and The Game and Wildlife Conservation Trust are currently carrying out studies to ascertain this potential impact on birds. Greys certainly have a habit of chewing through nest boxes in the breeding season and eating any eggs and chicks found inside.

The affect the greys are having on our native Red Squirrel is now widely recognised. Greys occupy much of the former range of the native reds and are able to utilise broadleaved and mixed woodland areas more efficiently than reds, reaching higher population densities. Where expanding populations of greys meet populations of reds, it is usually the reds that are quickly displaced. This can occur as quickly as fifteen years in the absence of any effective intervention and perhaps sooner if squirrelpox virus disease is present. The squirrelpox virus is deadly to reds. Evidence suggests that it originated from greys transported from North America and, whilst they appear to carry a natural immunity to it, the reds do not. Animals infected with the virus seem to suffer a marked decline in their health and die within two weeks of contracting it. At present, the spread of the squirrelpox virus by greys presents the greatest threat to retaining reds across their current range. In areas such as the Kielder Forest, home to England's largest remaining population of reds, buffer zones have been set up where greys are culled, halting their advance and thus preventing contact with reds. This type of project is essential if the reds are to be saved from extinction in Britain and many believe it is unfortunate that the situation has been allowed to get so bad.

Countryside professionals and the government have for a long time now been trying to educate the public about the true facts about the Grey Squirrel. With so much evidence pointing towards the negative impact that the greys can have, perhaps it is time we all started doing our bit on a local scale to help reduce their population? However, the main issue is that of public perception. Many people do see the grey squirrel everyday from their window and to them it has become an expected part of our wildlife. To start culling can be highly contentious, rather like tree felling if things are not explained adequately. Remember too the hedgehog saga on the Outer Hebrides. All we do know from our experience is that many of the old trees currently under our stewardship are being seriously compromised by squirrel damage. We would be keen to have your thoughts about the issue.

is the District Council's countryside management service, which aims to maintain and enhance the natural environment for the benefit of both people and wildlife. This is achieved by creating and maintaining habitats, improving public access and increasing awareness of our rural heritage.

Countrycare's team of four paid members of staff work with schools, volunteers, youth groups, tree wardens, wildlife organisations and national agencies, amongst others, encouraging participation in practical environmental projects.

Operating across the whole of the Epping Forest District, Countrycare undertakes a wide range of community-based activities and coordinates a regular programme of practical conservation tasks. This includes the management of the districts nine Local Nature Reserves.

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**The Tree and Landscape Team** deal with tree and landscape issues in connection with planning applications; applications for works to trees within conservation areas; making and administering Tree Preservation Orders; liaising with members of the public on tree issues.

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**The Historic Buildings, Conservation Areas and Urban Design Team** deal with most matters relating to historic buildings and conservation areas, including grants, enhancement projects, building risk, repairs, enforcement, prosecutions and advice. They also advise on the design of new development, prepare planning and development briefs and design guidance leaflets. **Email:** [contactconservation@eppingforestdc.gov.uk](mailto:contactconservation@eppingforestdc.gov.uk)

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