



*Epping Forest*  
***Countrycare***

a service provided by Epping Forest District Council

# **36th Annual Report**

## **2021 – 2022**



## CONTENTS

1.0 Introduction.....	3
2.0 Countrycare’s Key Functions.....	3
3.0 Biodiversity Projects .....	3
4.0 Public Engagement .....	5
5.0 Tree Wardens.....	7
6.0 Survey Update.....	7
7.0 Further Information.....	9
Appendices	
Appendix 1 – Volunteer Tasks and their Value.....	10
Appendix 2 - Biodiversity and Landscape Enhancement.....	11
Appendix 3 – EFDC’s LNRs and other EFDC owned sites.....	15

## 1.0 Introduction

Epping Forest Countrycare is Epping Forest District Council's Countryside Management Service. Based within Technical Services, it is fully funded by the District Council and is the key resource for advice, information and practical assistance on the countryside, nature conservation and wildlife legislation.

Operating across the entire Epping Forest District, Countrycare undertakes a wide variety of community-based activities and coordinates a regular programme of practical conservation work. Countrycare engages and involves the local community in "hands on" practical conservation work and, as one of the Council's primary "enablers", involves people of all ages and abilities in every aspect of its work.

Since its establishment in 1986, Countrycare has developed a credible and proven track record for delivering effective projects. This in turn has developed strong community support and trust, which staff have been able to harness to good effect. The obvious public enthusiasm and desire of people to make a difference is reflected in Countrycare's ability to recruit and retain a wide volunteer base.

At the start of 2021-22, Countrycare had four permanent staff: A Team Manager, a Senior Countryside Officer and two Countryside Officers. Currently the team has only one Countryside Officer.

## 2.0 Countrycare's Key Functions:

- i) To preserve the landscape, wildlife habitats and biodiversity value of the District
- ii) To promote and support the designation of Local Nature Reserves and the Local Wildlife Sites network across the District
- iii) To involve and educate local communities in all aspects of the Service's work
- iv) To promote a greater understanding and respect for the countryside

## 3.0 Biodiversity Projects

### 3.1 Practical Conservation Work

Enhancement of biodiversity across the District continues to be one of the Service's key strengths. A great deal of staff and volunteer time and effort has been spent improving sites across the District. In 2021-22 work was undertaken on eighteen sites. Eight of these are Local Nature Reserves and the others are Local Wildlife Sites or areas some Parish Councils wish to be managed for nature conservation.

### 3.2 Volunteer Thursdays

Thursday volunteer day tasks were complemented by some Tuesday project days. Fifty volunteer tasks occurred on eighteen sites this year. This equates to a value of £35,176.68 at the 2021-22 minimum wage rate of £8.91/hour. See Appendix 1 for a breakdown of sites and volunteer value for each. Tasks included raking, clearing, planting, habitat improvement, access improvement, pond creation, hibernaculum creation, fencing and construction. Chigwell Row Wood LNR and Linder's Field LNR are both benefitting having had eight and nine visits respectfully. (See later for Linder's Field update.)

Covid restrictions applied at the beginning of the year when numbers were restricted to six people per task. During the year Countrycare welcomed four new volunteers to join the group.

### 3.3 The Reserves

A few examples of the work Countrycare and its volunteers have been doing to improve biodiversity, access and the enjoyment of sites for people and wildlife.

#### 3.3.1 Hibernacula



Hibernacula are underground chambers that amphibians and reptiles use throughout the winter to protect themselves from the cold. Amphibians and reptiles like frogs, toads, newts, lizards, slowworms and snakes will use them. Bobbingworth already has a population of slowworms so this will improve their habitat. The chamber is filled with logs with gaps between for access. **Bobbingworth Nature Reserve** and **Roughtalley's LNR** have had new hibernacula built.

### 3.3.2 Bug hotel poles

Over the past year Countrycare has been installing post bug hotels. These are particularly good for solitary bee species, including Red Mason and Leafcutter Bees, which in turn carry out the vital role of pollination. Red Mason Bees for example are active at the time many fruit trees are in blossom and because their feeding is pollen led (as apposed to Honey Bees which is nectar led), one Red Mason Bee can do 120 times the amount of pollination a single Honey Bee does. The solitary bees deposit an egg in each cell they create, with a store of food. These develop into larvae and emerge as adults the following spring. Mason Bees will use earth to cap their cells and Leaf Cutter Bees will line and cap their cells with neatly cut leaf sections. The larvae within the bug hotels also become food for woodpeckers and parasitoid insects. Post bug hotels have been installed at **Roughtallys Wood LNR**, **Linder's Field LNR** and **Tree Top Meadow**.



### 3.3.3 Pond creation

Focus on **Linder's Field LNR**



Linder's Field has had much attention over the last year. An extensive network of connected ditches and small ponds has been created by volunteers to help slow and retain water on site. This has helped to reduce the risk of flooding to neighbouring properties which has been an issue in recent years. Both the existing ponds have been re-dug to clear the build-up of silt. A new pond has been dug and all three ponds have been given an additional eleven aquatic plant species. One pond (pictured) has had a replacement fence of untreated peeled Sweet Chestnut post and stock netting as a gated enclosure to protect wildlife. The newly created pond will be fenced as a project in 2022.

In preparation for a translocation of Slow Worms to Linder's Field from a local development site, two pit hibernacula and one bank hibernaculum have been created so the animals will have places to overwinter which will be flood and frost free. Countrycare has also carried out habitat enhancement works to benefit slow worms and their prey species. All bare earth from recent works have been seeded with a clay tolerant mix of wildflower seeds and grasses, as well as a nurse crop of cornfield annual species. Seed collection and spreading on site of Foxgloves and Red Campion have taken place and are showing signs of success.



### 3.3.4 Signage

**Home Mead LNR**, **Old Shire Lane** and **Roughtalley's Wood LNR** all received signage improvements.



*The entrance to Home Mead LNR*

### 3.3.5 Access improvements



After a successful bid to Essex County Council Countrycare was awarded a 'COVID Safe Tourism and Public Spaces' Grant. This allowed the path on **Bobbingworth Nature Reserve**, which previously ran only along the top of the Reserve, to be extended into a fully circular path. The extra 833m of path has stopping places and points of drainage where necessary. Visitors can now walk safely and more easily around the extent of the Reserve. In addition, the grant has allowed some scraping of the existing path which has been delayed due to the weather. The disturbed edges have been reseeded with clay-tolerant wildflower mix.

## 4.0 Public Engagement

### 4.1 Events

Countrycare has facilitated fewer events this year than usual. This was partly because of Covid, partly because some were cancelled due to high winds and partly because of short staff resource due to injuries.

However, during the Festival of Culture in April 2021, a ‘Marvellous Minibeasts’ event was held on Zoom (in partnership with Community Development) and a self-guided walk was promoted around the Lea Valley (in partnership with Life Walks). A week-long Facebook awareness raising campaign, ‘Wonderfully Wild Week’, took place in June. Ongar Primary School was visited for an in-person rollout of the Zoom ‘Marvellous Minibeasts’ event.

The volunteers had an actual guided walk in the Lea Valley and the annual ‘Mad About Moths’ took place on Bobbingworth Nature Reserve. One of the staff gave a short presentation on climate change at the Youth Conference in November and a stall was manned on Epping Market to raise environmental awareness.



*Tuesday in Wonderfully Wild Week*

Events are listed in this table:

2021-22 Walks, Talks, Environmental Education and Events						
Date	Event	Location	Audience	Staff	Attendees	Comments
07/04/2021	Marvellous Minibeasts	Zoom	Families	1	20	
08/04/2021	Marvellous Minibeasts	Ongar Primary	Schoolchildren	1	20	
10/04/2021	Self-guided walk	Lea Valley	General public	1	?	
01/06/2021	Wonderfully Wild Week	Facebook	Families	1	?	
02/09/2022	Waltham Abbey Walk	Waltham Abbey	Volunteers	3	23	
24/09/2021	Moth Night	Bobbingworth NR	General public	3	18	
20/10/2022	Tree planting	Linder's Field	Resident	2	1	Two trees donated
20/10/2022	Tree planting	Bobbingworth NR	Resident	2	1	One tree donated
18/11/2021	Climate Change Conference presentation	Council Chambers	Youth Council	1	100	And recorded
02/11/2022	Tree Warden Autumn meeting	Council Office	Tree Wardens	2	23	
22/11/2022	Countrycare promotion stall	Epping Market	General public	1	25	
24/11/2022	Tree Warden Hedgerow survey training	North Weald Common	Tree Wardens	1	6	
01/03/2022	Tree planting (assisting Climate Change Officer)	Limes Farm, Chigwell	Residents Association and local primary school	2	40	500 trees

## 4.2 Forest School

Countrycare has an agreement with Wild Child Forest School to use **Home Mead LNR** as the location for its Forest School activities. This is what Wild Child said about the year:

*'Woodland Wilds continues to use Home Mead Local Nature Reserve and to enjoy the beautiful space that it offers. Over the winter we had a small break, and then we started sessions back up again in March. We mainly run Parent and Carer Stay & Play sessions, with anything from 8-20 children in a session. Some families are very at home in the outdoors and are familiar with all weathers and getting muddy! We also welcome families for whom this is a new experience, and we support them on their journey as they learn to embrace being outside.*

*Probably the most popular activity of all is the mud kitchen - the children need no instruction as to what to do! We also enjoy the hammocks, learning about nature, going for small walks, singing songs and reading nature stories, bug hunting, den building and much more!*

*In this coming term we will be focusing on developing tool use, starting with some hammering (golfing tees are perfect for little hands!) and sawing with our brand new bespoke pack-away saw horse that we are having made especially.*

*We do also run other types of sessions; we have run drop off sessions for 8-12 year olds, family weekend sessions and even some 'Wild Art' sessions, focusing on activities such as making natural dyes.*

*We are always very careful to 'leave no trace' and to be respectful of the woodland.'*

For more information go to: <https://wildchildforestschool.co.uk/>



A Wild Child at Home Mead LNR

## 4.3 New walks leaflets



This year Countrycare produced a new guided walks leaflet. The route is Ongar to Moreton with a tour of the Bobbingworth Nature Reserve. The walk was introduced to Countrycare by the late Colin Thompson who campaigned for the former Landfill Site at Moreton to become a Nature Reserve.

The walk is approximately four miles long, passing through meadows, along the Cripsey Brook and within woodlands. It takes in Shelley Green Lane, the Ongar Oaks, Ackingford Bridge and St Mary the Virgin Church, Moreton.



Ongar to Moreton  
Country walk WEB ver

Here is a pdf of the walk leaflet:

All Countrycare walks leaflets are available on the website.

## 4.4 Seasonal newsletter

A new initiative, Countrycare produced some seasonal newsletters with news on what has been happening and what to look out for in the natural environment. This is on the website and one can be found here:

<https://www.eppingforestdc.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/Countrycare-Catch-up-Spring-2021.pdf>

## 4.5 Countrycare Kids relaunch

'Countrycare Kids' is a brochure aimed at 4-11 year olds to teach about nature and the environment. It has fun quizzes and games for them to play to aid learning. After a few years gap due to staff shortages, Countrycare began to reissue and the winter version can be found on the website. Or click here:

<https://www.eppingforestdc.gov.uk/countrycare/wp-content/uploads/sites/9/2021/12/Countrycare-Kids-Winter-2021-22.pdf>

## 5.0 Tree Wardens

Tree Wardens are in a position to report on many things locally that would otherwise go unnoticed by the authorities. This can be invaluable in protecting trees.

The Council has over twenty-three active volunteer Tree Wardens based in 11 of the District's Parishes. This year we welcomed five new Tree Wardens. The Tree Wardens receive a monthly newsletter from the Tree Council and quarterly newsletter from Forest Research Tree Health, Observatree and the Ancient Tree forum. The co-ordination of the Tree Wardens is in-house assisted by a volunteer.

Due to COVID only the Autumn meeting was held in 2021. Seventeen Tree Wardens attended. The Tree Wardens were given training on Oak Processionary Moth and a presentation on seven areas to do with trees: wildlife, the economy and climate amongst others.

A hedgerow survey training day was held in November when the Tree Wardens were guided by a member of staff demonstrating DEFRA's standard way of measuring the quality of a hedgerow to inform management. Six Tree Wardens attended.

## 6.0 Survey updates

### 6.1 Wetland Bird Surveys

Wetland Bird Surveys (WeBS) have been carried out on three Countrycare sites since September 2018, with the recording year running from July – June as the primary focus is on winter migratory species. They are **Thornwood Common Flood Meadow LNR**, **Church Lane Flood Meadow LNR** and **Nazeing Triangle LNR**.

WeBS is a national recording scheme jointly run by the BTO, WWT, RSPB and JNCC to record non-breeding wetland birds "which aims to provide the principal data for the conservation of their populations and wetland habitats" (*WeBS website*).

The surveys consist of monthly 'Core Counts', carried out on set dates to help monitor the movement of larger bird populations; or casual counts, carried out on any visit to these sites.

The surveys have shown that Thornwood Common is consistently used by winter migratory Snipe. Some wetland birds are also recorded there, such as Mallard and occasional Moorhen. The main focus of management of the site is for winter migratory waders.

Church Lane LNR had a Snipe recorded there in winter 2021 which was the first record there in the three years of surveys. Reed Warblers were heard singing last summer again.

Nazeing Triangle LNR has had single Gadwall and Teal amongst the Mallard, but it is unlikely to attract wildfowl of note due to its small size. It has had the first site records of Willow Emerald damselfly and rediscovered Great Crested Newt which shows it has real wildlife value in other ways.

Thornwood Common LNR was featured in an article in the October 2021 edition of WeBS News, the annual magazine by the Wetland Bird Survey which was looking at some of the less obvious WeBS sites in this part of Essex. This received very positive feedback from other local recorders and beyond.

A link to the articles is here: <https://www.bto.org/our-science/projects/wetland-bird-survey/publications/webs-news>

*Early morning at Thornwood Common*



## 6.2 Butterfly surveys

Butterflies are a vitally important group of insects, not only for their pollination potential but they also inform us of the habitat's health and the successfulness of conservation work on reserves.

For several years now, weekly Butterfly Transects have been conducted at **Church Lane LNR** and **Bobbingworth Nature Reserve**. From the beginning of April to the end of September 2021 Countrycare found 23 species recorded at Church Lane and 20 species recorded at Bobbingworth. Meadow Brown was the most common species on both sites. Gatekeeper was also a common species at both sites



Gatekeeper

There are 59 species of Butterflies present in the UK and over half of these can be found on various Countrycare reserves. In addition many species of moths were found including Jersey Tiger, Yellow Shell, Mother Shipton and Setaceous Hebrew Character. Moths are very successful pollinators providing valuable services to the habitat. Both sites are maintaining steady species richness and species populations, despite several surveys not being able to take place in this past very wet Spring.

This year Countrycare produced a report analysing the findings over five years:

<https://www.eppingforestdc.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/Countrycare-Butterfly-Report-2015-2020.pdf>



Meanwhile at **Roughtalley's Wood LNR** Purple Emperors were spotted flying high among the Italian Black Poplar and European Lime trees. Although this species is classed as non-threatened their populations saw steady declines through the twentieth century. They are now believed to be restricted to large woodlands in the South - making this small population at Roughtalley's good news.

Purple Emperor

## 6.3 Great crested newt surveys



Over March, April and May 2021 Countrycare surveyed the **Civic Carpark Great crested newt pond**. As Great crested newts are a protected species it is valuable to know details of populations.

Eight bottle traps were placed in the pond in the evenings and emptied in the mornings. The newts were set free back into the pond.

The GCN were photographed to check the DNA. Individual newts can be identified by different belly patterns. It was found that only two GCNs were recaptures. This means that there are at least 80 individual GCNs using the pond for breeding. Further surveys may have revealed more individuals. Although the pond area is small it consists good terrestrial and aquatic habitat for GCNs and connectivity is ensured by underpasses and tunnels under the carpark which allow newts out of the area into the residential area. The water quality is reasonable based on the invertebrates found in the pond during sampling.

The results were as per this table:

Date	Number of GCN	Recaptures
31/03/2021	26	0
23/04/2021	27	1
12/05/2021	29	1

A Great crested newt belly being photographed.

## 7.0 Further Information

Countrycare website:

<https://www.eppingforestdc.gov.uk/countrycare/>

Guided walks:

<https://www.eppingforestdc.gov.uk/countrycare/whats-on/guided-walks/>

Detailed information about the reserves:

<https://www.eppingforestdc.gov.uk/countrycare/our-places/>

Favourite Trees of Epping Forest District:

[50 favourite trees of Epping Forest District](#)

## APPENDICES

### Appendix 1 – Volunteer Tasks and their Value

2021-22 Volunteer Tasks and their values						
Date	Site	Task	No of Vols	Hours	Total at £8.91/hr	Totals
29/04/2021	Abbotts Wood	Raking meadow, litter pick, pathway clearance, tidying felled/fallen t	5	30	£267.30	
19/08/2021	Abbotts Wood	Raking meadows, paths, reinforcing wooded bridge, clearing scrub	10	60	£534.60	
06/01/2022	Abbotts Wood	Coppice of trees along paths, fire.	12	72	£641.52	£1,443.42
17/06/2021	Bobbingworth	Coppice of Hazel, creation of hibernaculum, Orchid Survey.	9	54	£481.14	
18/11/2021	Bobbingworth	Scrub Clearance, coppicing of planted trees + deer baskets, pond	20	120	£1,069.20	
31/03/2022	Bobbingworth	Removal of rubble from path, seeding with clay tolerant mix,	16	96	£855.36	£2,405.70
15/04/2021	Chigwell Row Wood LNR	Raking meadow, clearing felled wood, fire, litter pick	6	36	£320.76	
08/07/2021	Chigwell Row Wood LNR	Raking path, scrub clearance from meadow, clearing old camp	11	66	£588.06	
26/08/2021	Chigwell Row Wood LNR	Began work of extending the heath back into the woodland, created	15	90	£801.90	
23/09/2021	Chigwell Row Wood LNR	Clearing bramble from Glades 3 & 4, felling some holly and	13	78	£694.98	
16/12/2021	Chigwell Row Wood LNR	Christmas Do. Heathland clearance. Mainly focused on area behind	17	102	£908.82	
27/01/2022	Chigwell Row Wood LNR	Cut & rake Glade 6, burn remaining vegetation left from Sept 21,	18	108	£962.28	
17/02/2022	Chigwell Row Wood LNR	Clearing remaining Aspen growth and bramble, felling small trees	19	114	£1,015.74	
24/03/2022	Chigwell Row Wood LNR	3 new LOOP waymarkers, new scrape dug in wet area, some	17	102	£908.82	£6,201.36
07/10/2021	Church Lane LNR	Raking banks, hedge laying and clearing around entrances	13	78	£694.98	£694.98
14/10/2021	Epping Upland Millen. Gdn	Scrub Clearance and fire, wildflower seeding, bulb planting, fruit	15	90	£801.90	£801.90
08/09/2021	Foster Street Burial Grnd	Raking the meadows	2	12	£106.92	£106.92
03/06/2021	Home Mead LNR	Digging drainage ditches, digging up pendulous sedge, raking front	11	66	£588.06	
09/09/2021	Home Mead LNR	Digging in 2 new drainage pipes, raking meadow and glades, clearing	10	60	£534.60	
09/12/2021	Home Mead LNR	Fell trees over small pond, used timber for Stag Beetle hotel, tree	15	90	£801.90	£1,924.56
13/05/2021	Linder's Field LNR	Ditch Work, Invasive Species Control, Replacement Bench, Bee Hotel	17	102	£908.82	
24/06/2021	Linder's Field LNR	Drainage ditch and pipe installation, Charles Linder bench,	13	78	£694.98	
22/07/2021	Linder's Field LNR	Created Grass Snake Egg Laying Pile, Raked part of meadow and	11	66	£588.06	
29/07/2021	Linder's Field LNR	Reptile Survey, Ditch and Pond Creation, Wildflower Seeding, Seed	16	96	£855.36	
25/11/2021	Linder's Field LNR	Creation of a bank hibernaculum, Scrub Clearance around fenced	20	120	£1,069.20	
02/12/2021	Linder's Field LNR	Scrub Clearance around Fenced Pond, Construction of two pit	21	126	£1,122.66	
03/02/2022	Linder's Field LNR	Removal of old pond fence and putting in new straining posts.	20	120	£1,069.20	
10/02/2022	Linder's Field LNR	Constructing fence around pond, planting pond plants, raking glade	22	132	£1,176.12	
03/03/2022	Linder's Field LNR	Resolve of gate flooding on two gates. Ditch and pond digging to	16	96	£855.36	£8,339.76
22/04/2021	Nazeing Triangle/Churchyar	Raking meadow, sensitive hedge management, bramble removal,	5	30	£267.30	£267.30
10/06/2021	Norton Heath	Two new scrapes, trimmed some paths	7	42	£374.22	
12/08/2021	Norton Heath	Clearing bramble from paths and heathland. Tree cut down from	9	54	£481.14	
11/11/2021	Norton Heath	Refenced heather plant and seedlings, removed more bramble from	13	78	£694.98	
13/01/2022	Norton Heath	Vegetation Clearance to re-establish an old glade and clear around	19	114	£1,015.74	£2,566.08
01/07/2021	Old Shire Lane	Raking pathes and some of meadows, installing stag beetle loggery,	12	72	£641.52	
17/03/2022	Old Shire Lane	3 new entrance signs, clearing some areas of the meadow, clearing	18	108	£962.28	£1,603.80
20/05/2021	Roughtalley's Wood LNR	Raking cut grass from wet meadow, fixing boardwalk, installing	8	48	£427.68	
15/07/2021	Roughtalley's Wood LNR	Raking paths, installing bug hotel, clearing entrances, bench	7	42	£374.22	
20/01/2022	Roughtalley's Wood LNR	Repair Railway Bench with aluminium edging, create new	16	96	£855.36	
10/03/2022	Roughtalley's Wood LNR	Installed new Fence next to vehicle gate. Cleared and burned	19	114	£1,015.74	£2,673.00
28/10/2021	Sheering Copse	Raking cut brambles/scrub, haloing trees, clearing areas of scub,	15	90	£801.90	£801.90
23/06/2021	Springs Pond Wood/Ongar	Raking of grass from meadow areas and path clearance.	5	30	£267.30	£267.30
16/09/2021	Thornwood Common Natur	Raking meadow, Creating a Hibernaculum, Pond enlargement,	13	78	£694.98	694.98
27/05/2021	Tree Top Meadow	Raked large areas of TTM, except for 'Wildflower Area' and some	9	54	£481.14	
05/08/2021	Tree Top Meadow	Raking meadows, ragwort pulling	8	48	£427.68	
21/10/2021	Tree Top Meadow	Raking cut grass from meadow, clearing planted area of bramble,	10	60	£534.60	
24/02/2022	Tree Top Meadow	Clearing.mulching with dead vegetation in new hedgerow and	13	78	£694.98	£2,138.40
30/09/2021	Weald Common LNR	Raking banks, minor repairs to bridge, cutting bramble banks at	11	66	£588.06	588.06
06/05/2021	Willingale Road Orchard	Raking meadow, litter pick, pruning around apples trees	13	78	£694.98	
04/11/2021	Willingale Road Orchard	Raking cut grass/brambles, clearing brambles, light crown lifting of	18	108	£962.28	£1,657.26
<b>TOTALS</b>			<b>658</b>	<b>3948</b>	<b>£35,176.68</b>	<b>£35,176.68</b>

## Appendix 2 - Biodiversity and Landscape Enhancement

The following section describes the sites that Countrycare manages and what regular work is undertaken on each. More information can be found at [www.eppingforestdc.gov.uk/countrycare](http://www.eppingforestdc.gov.uk/countrycare)

### Bobbingworth, Bobbingworth Nature Reserve (9ha)

This District Council owned site is located to the south of Moreton village. From 1961 to 1972 it was used as a rubbish tip. The site was restored in 2008 and the next few years saw Countrycare creating a nature reserve with wetlands, a wildflower meadow, copses and hedgerows. Six thousand trees have been planted and there are now 84 species of wildflower and grasses.



### Buckhurst Hill, Linder's Field LNR, Local Wildlife Site Ep38 (3.6ha)



Linder's Field is a mixture of habitats. Combined with the grassland is ancient woodland, scrub and two small ponds. Since 1990 Countrycare has worked on the field to make both habitat and access improvements. In May 1996 the site was declared a Local Wildlife Site and this was followed in August 2000 by its declaration as a statutory LNR. In 2012 it was awarded a Living Landscapes Award for Countrycare's green hey strewing efforts.

### Chigwell, Chigwell Row Wood LNR, Local Wildlife Site Ep85 and Ep86 (15ha)

Chigwell Row Wood provides a variety of habitats: ancient semi natural woodland, with some magnificent veteran Oak and Hornbeam pollards, through to secondary woodland, heathland and acid grassland.

The main objective is to continue to develop a varied age structure throughout the wood at the same time as increasing woodland edge habitat as this can potentially be the most diverse area of a woodland. Work is on-going to extend the heathland further north and west and improving the interaction between heathland and woodland edge.



### Epping, Civic Offices Newt Pond (0.07ha)

The pond and its surrounding field (0.3 ha) was initially allocated for car parking in 1988 but the discovery of 400 great crested newts led to the plans being amended. Whilst the majority of the field was lost, the pond and a small area of grassland surrounding the pond were saved. This area was enclosed by a wall and planted with a variety of trees and shrubs. In addition, thought was given to creating safe access for the newts between the breeding pond and surrounding gardens which are now their main feeding area. This arrangement has been successful as the colony of great crested newts is still very much present. Countrycare has managed the pond and the newts since 1995.



### Epping, Tree Top Meadow (0.75ha)



Countrycare will be working in partnership with Grounds Maintenance to manage a small patch of land behind St Johns School, Epping. Part of the land will be managed by Grounds as recreational grassland, part of it is managed by Countrycare as a wildflower area. Bird boxes and bat boxes have been erected and over 800 trees planted.

### Epping Upland, Epping Green Millennium Wildlife Garden (0.5ha)

Epping Green Millennium Wildlife Garden was created with the help of grant funding from the Millennium Festival "Awards for All Scheme", obtained by the Parish Council in 1999. The funding provided trees and a wildflower seed mix to spread across part of the site.

Since 2006, a formal management agreement has been in place to continue working on the site in the long term. The effects of management can now be seen through the array of wildflowers on the site and the now completed hedgelaying project. Annually we mow and rake the meadow and also keep an eye on the hedgerows. Some orchard trees were planted in 2018 after a donation.



### High Ongar, Norton Heath Common, Local Wildlife Site Ep213 (4.3ha)



Norton Heath is a registered common. In 2008 this former heathland had largely reverted to secondary woodland. It has a mainly Oak canopy overlying very acid gravel soils. Since then a few glades have been created to improve light penetration to ground level. This has encouraged the reestablishment of Gorse, Heath Bedstraw and Heath Wood-Rush. The more open conditions are favouring bumblebees (six species recorded) and butterflies (twenty species). Broad Buckler-fern and rushes indicate a wet, healthy understorey.

### Loughton, Home Mead LNR, Local Wildlife Site Ep66 (1.82ha)



This District Council owned site is a mosaic of scrub, secondary woodland, acid grassland and a small pond. In 1999 Countrycare took over management of the site and began a habitat restoration programme. This has involved the creation of a new pond and grassland management combined with rotational scrub coppicing and tree removal. A circular hardened pathway was installed around the site in the summer of 2004. In December 2004 the site was declared a Local Nature Reserve reflecting its biodiversity importance. In 2009 Home Mead was designate as a Local Wildlife Site.

### Loughton, Roding Valley Meadows LNR, Local Wildlife Site Ep61, SSSI (56.5 ha)

The Reserve is a mosaic of old hedgerows and flower rich meadows that nestle beside the River Roding as it flows through Loughton and Chigwell. Today, the meadows represent the largest surviving area of traditionally managed flood-plain hay meadow and marsh in Essex and probably South East England. Four of the fields are designated a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) reflecting their huge importance for biodiversity nationally. Managed under an agreement, the Essex Wildlife Trust maintains this site with the occasional help from Countrycare, its volunteers and its hedgelayers.



### Loughton, Willingale Road Community Orchard (2ha)



Willingale Road Community Orchard is a small but ecologically important two hectares of land surrounded mainly by the large population of Debden. The site is a haven for wildlife with excellent ecological corridors to the surrounding wider countryside. A disused allotment site with remnant fruit trees and two veteran Oaks, this site has a great deal of potential and a medium population of slow-worms. In 2015 a variety of fruit trees and bushes were planted to create a community Orchard.

### Nazeing, Nazeing Triangle LNR, Local Wildlife Site Ep33 (0.6ha)

In June 2002 the site was declared a Local Nature Reserve, but for more than 20 years Countrycare and volunteers have worked here on behalf of the owners, Nazeing Parish Council. At the beginning of 2010 some major works were undertaken using contractors to dredge and enlarge the pond. The ground that was disturbed by machinery was later seeded with a mixture of wildflowers. By spring 2011 this area was in flower and buzzing with life. In 2017 with the help of the Tesco 'Bags of Help' grant from Tesco some pond-dipping platform restoration was possible. Annually the work consists of mowing and raking the wildflower area.



### Nazeing, Nazeing All Saint's Church



All Saints Churchyard, Nazeing was designated a Local Wildlife Site in 1992 for its species rich grassland. Species such as Burnett-saxifrage (*Pimpinella saxifrage*) and Rough Hawkbit (*Leontodon hispidus*) had been recorded there. In December 2014 Countrycare was approached by All Saints Church to help with the management of the site.

### **North Weald Bassett, Thornwood Common Flood Meadow LNR, Local Wildlife Site Ep92 (2.7ha)**

This LNR is one of North Weald's three flood storage reservoirs created in 1998. The meadow has been designed and sympathetically managed for nature conservation. Specially designed wetland scrapes and a wetland meadow was sown. Wildflowers such as Ragged Robin, Oxeye Daisy and Knapweed can be found here. It was designated as a Local Nature Reserve in December 2004 after just six years. The grassland area receives an annual cut by Grounds Maintenance in late July or early August. Countrycare also cuts part of the reserve in early April to help suppress the growth of invasive grass species, allowing better conditions for wildflowers.



### **North Weald Bassett, Church Lane Flood Meadow LNR, Local Wildlife Site Ep118 (3.25ha)**



Consisting of three hectares of wet and dry meadow, the banks surrounding the large stream fed pond at the centre of the site can hold 35 million litres of water. These banks and marshy areas also provide habitat for wildlife such as amphibians, dragonflies, butterflies and birds as well as the 180 species of flowers, grasses and trees that have been recorded here so far.

### **North Weald Bassett, Thornwood Common Nature Area (0.2ha)**

In 1996, Countrycare and North Weald Parish Council created a nature area on a number of redundant allotments. Since then Countrycare has managed the grassland areas by cutting and scrub clearance. This has helped to enhance the wildflowers. Following flooding of the adjacent allotments during the winter of 2012-13 a new pond was dug to retain the water. There is an annual summer grass cut and some tree management.



### **North Weald Bassett, Roughtalley's Wood LNR, Local Wildlife Site Ep114 (3.4ha)**



Roughtalley's Wood is a large ancient woodland covering 25 hectares. However, in the 1860s the wood was divided unequally by the creation of the Eastern Counties Railway. The largest section to the south of the railway is now a green burial site while the smaller section is EFDC's LNR declared in 2000.

The LNR can be divided into two areas. The first is semi-natural ancient woodland with large Hornbeam coppice stools and Oak standards and the second is an area of regenerating secondary woodland. There are three species of orchid and patches of Arum lilies, Snowdrops, Bluebells and Primroses in the spring.

### **North Weald Bassett, Foster Street Burial Ground, Local Wildlife Site Ep115 (0.28ha)**



The origins of the site can be traced back to 1677 and are linked to the Harlow Baptist Church. Countrycare became involved with the site in 2002. Many of the graves have been cleared of encroaching bramble and scrub and the more open grassland areas are cut each year with the cuttings removed. The work has created a more open aspect to the site with a good display of wildflowers.

### **North Weald Bassett, Weald Common Flood Meadows LNR, Local Wildlife Site Ep124 (2.9ha)**

The Weald Common Flood Meadows consist of two meadows created in 1996 as part of flood defence measures to protect the village of North Weald. It was possible from the outset to maximise the site for biodiversity gain. In spring Cowslips cover much of the meadow and in early summer Ragged Robin takes over. Grass snake and Common lizard have been noted here. The hedges on the lower meadow have all been laid.



### Ongar, Ongar Community Orchard (0.16ha)

Ongar Community Orchard is a small piece of land owned by Epping Forest District Council and managed by the Friends of Ongar Community Orchard with the help and support of Countrycare. A local Conservationist came up with the idea to plant an orchard on a piece of redundant EFDC land. Annually we help with an early and a late cut of the orchard.



### Ongar, Springs Pond Wood (1ha)



Springs Pond Wood is a privately owned woodland situated a short walk from Chipping Ongar High Street. An agreement is in place between Countrycare and the landowner to provide support for the management of this site, broadly consisting of keeping the paths open and the site safe and accessible. There is a large pond to the eastern end of the site and a number of springs and wet flushes throughout the wood. Cripsey Brook marks the site's southern boundary.

### Sheering, The Copse (0.4ha)

No management had taken place in the Copse for many years and the site, which has a network of narrow footpaths, was very overgrown with a number of fallen or dangerous trees. Since 2014 some Scots pine has been felled, the logs were used for marking out woodland paths, the right of way footpath on the western side has been repaired with edging boards and gravel, the open glade was dug over and wildflower seed sown to create a small woodland meadow. The overgrown Blackthorn in the hedgerow has been thinned out and new Buckthorn whips were planted.



### Waltham Abbey, Old Shire Lane (0.8ha)

EFDC has owned this site since 1991. Since 2000 Countrycare staff and volunteers have managed the site. This can now be seen in the increasing variety of wildflowers and invertebrates, with five species of dragonfly recorded. Further surveys could uncover a larger array of wildlife, as the site offers open glades and successional habitat ideal for moths, butterflies and other invertebrates.



### Waltham Abbey, Abbotts Wood (1.25ha)



This small wood has been managed by Countrycare since 2015. It is made up of Blackthorn scrub, Oak standards and rough grassland. The area is designated as broad-leaved deciduous woodland which is a Natural England Priority Habitat. Countrycare works with Ninefields Residents Association to clear up the rubbish and make the site more accessible to local walkers. Conservation work focuses on creating wildflower areas in glades, clearing scrub and haloing around the Oak trees to give them the best chance to thrive.

### Appendix 3 – Facts about EFDC’s Local Nature Reserves and other EFDC owned sites

Under the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949, the District Council has the power to designate sites of nature conservation interest as statutory Local Nature Reserves. The Epping Forest District now has nine Local Nature Reserves.

<b>EFDC Local Nature Reserve Summary</b>			
<b>LNR</b>	<b>Parish</b>	<b>Size (ha)</b>	<b>Declared</b>
Roding Valley Meadows*	Chigwell	63.00	13/04/1986
Roughtalley’s Wood	North Weald	3.40	17/08/2000
Linder’s Field**	Buckhurst Hill	3.50	17/08/2000
Chigwell Row Wood**	Chigwell	15.60	17/08/2000
Nazeing Triangle***	Nazeing	0.60	12/06/2001
Church Lane Flood Meadow	North Weald	3.40	13/05/2002
Weald Common Flood Meadow	North Weald	2.90	23/12/2004
Thornwood Common Flood Meadow	North Weald	2.70	23/12/2004
Home Mead	Loughton	1.80	23/12/2004
<b>Total</b>		<b>90.40</b>	

\* Managed by the Essex Wildlife Trust.

\*\* Managed by EFDC as trustees of a charitable trust.

\*\*\* Managed by Countrycare in partnership with the owners Nazeing Parish Council

<b>Seven EFDC owned sites</b>		
<b>Site</b>	<b>Parish</b>	<b>Area (ha)</b>
Civic Offices Newt Pond	Epping	0.07
Bobbingworth Nature Reserve	Moreton	9.00
Old Shire Lane	Waltham Abbey	0.80
Norton Heath Common	High Ongar	4.30
Ongar Orchard	Ongar	0.16
Tree Top Meadow	Epping	0.75
Abbotts Wood	Waltham Abbey	1.25
<b>Total</b>		<b>19.33</b>

<b>Six EFDC Special Roadside Verges</b>			
<b>No.</b>	<b>Grid reference</b>	<b>Side</b>	<b>Locality</b>
EPF1	TL 51188 10878	N	New Way Lane, Matching
EPF1	TL 51189 10374	S	New Way Lane, Matching
EPF2	TL 51488 12783	E	Sheering Lodge
EPF2	TL 51483 12779	W	Sheering Lodge
EPF3	TL 57352 09808	W	Beauchamp Roding
EPF4	TL 57679 10197	E	Beauchamp Roding



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