



**OFFICER REPORT TO LOCAL COMMITTEE
Epsom and Ewell**

Green Arc Bonesgate/Hogsmill Exemplar Project

10 September 2007

Purpose

For information

KEY ISSUE

Green Arc – its progress and potential

SUMMARY

A section of the Bonesgate/Hogsmill streams in Epsom and Ewell and Kingston has been chosen as an exemplar of the issues affecting countryside in the London/Surrey urban fringe which could be addressed by the proposed Green Arc initiative. This report outlines the Green Arc approach and current and proposed work in the Bonesgate/Hogsmill area.

OFFICER RECOMMENDATIONS

The Local Committee Epsom and Ewell is asked to note:

- (i) Progress to date on the Bonesgate/Hogsmill Green Arc Exemplar Project

1 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Green Arc

- 1.1 Green Arc is concerned with improving the environment and accessibility of the open space and countryside around London. It is an initiative which it is hoped will eventually extend to much of the Metropolitan Green Belt and is organised in four quadrant partnerships. Epsom and Ewell is included in the Surrey/South West London Green Arc partnership. Proposals for a Surrey/South West London Green Arc partnership are due to be put to the County Council's Executive on 23 October 2007.
- 1.2 Following a study of the problems and opportunities in the Surrey/South West London Green Arc area a number of "exemplar" projects have been established. The purpose of these exemplar projects is to test the Green Arc approach, raise the Green Arc profile and demonstrate the Green Arc potential particularly in terms of involving a wide variety of partner organisations and the local community and securing external funding.

Bonesgate/Hogsmill Project

- 1.3 The Bonesgate/Hogsmill project is one of five exemplar projects being worked on at the present time in the Surrey/South West London Green Arc area. In each case work is being organised by a project steering group with a number of active partners. In the case of the Bonesgate/Hogsmill project main partners include Surrey County Council, Epsom and Ewell Borough Council, Royal Borough of Kingston, and the Environment Agency, supported by the Lower Mole Countryside Project. The section of the Bonesgate stream which is the core of the project area forms part of the boundary between Epsom and Ewell and Kingston.
- 1.4 The area has a number of long term issues including:
- degraded land resulting from landraising using rubble or clay subsoil;
 - channelising the water course as an engineering solution to the threat of flooding;
 - abuses including garden refuse dumping, motorcycling and vandalism;
 - low public recognition and pride including lack of positive involvement by many local people;
 - neglect leading to growth of scrub, loss of public accessibility and deterioration in appearance and nature conservation value.

Work Undertaken

- 1.5 The project has involved considerable involvement of local people and local groups including the Friends of the Hogsmill and the Hogsmill Action Group. Work which has been undertaken so far has included:
- Environment Agency funded work under their Flood Protection function, to clear vegetation and in-channel dumped material, removal of litter and eyesores, opening up banksides and feature trees leading to nature conservation improvements;
 - at Gatley Green and further upstream removal of scrub and opening up footpaths;

- a three year programme of Japanese Knotweed spraying;
- upgrading footpath surfaces in the Kingston Bonesgate open space, removal of bollards and installing new gates;
- woodland management in the stretch into Horton Country Park, restoring coppice including installing fencing to exclude deer;
- clearance in the immediate future of flytipping between Cox Lane and The Edge community centre (some of this material has built up over a thirty year period).

Future Work

1.6 Further work may include:

- river channel diversification work by the Environment Agency including removal of toe boards and concrete weirs;
- improvement of derelict allotments at Moor Lane, Chessington adjacent to the river including allotment restoration, creation of hazel coppice, hedge planting and pond creation;
- treatment of Japanese Knotweed on other sites;
- development of further proposals along the Bonesgate and Hogsmill linking in with other initiatives such as Kingston's Hogsmill Strategy and Surrey's Rights of Way Improvement Plan. A possibility is the creation of a new link in the Hogsmill stretch of the London Loop in the area of Old Malden Lane.

2 ANALYSIS

- 2.1 Significant works have taken place, or are planned. These have been funded from a variety of sources including Surrey County Council, Royal Borough of Kingston and the Environment Agency. The status of the Bonesgate/Hogsmill as a Green Arc exemplar has been an important factor in raising the profile and priority of works needed and in enabling funding from Kingston and the Environment Agency.
- 2.2 With the boundary between Surrey and Kingston going down the centre of the river channel in many places, the Green Arc approach has made co-ordination of works straddling the boundary much easier. A prime example of this is the Japanese knotweed control work taking place on land owned by both Borough Councils. Knotweed is a highly invasive species which can spread by the movement of stem or rhizome sections down a water course and which can be a pest of such significant scale that living plant material is classified as "controlled waste" and must be disposed by deep burial in designated sites. Spreading by water movement makes a strategic approach to its treatment extremely advisable.

3 OPTIONS

- 3.1 Without the Green Arc overall approach individual work would be undertaken by each organisation in an uncoordinated way, and with lower profile.

4 CONSULTATIONS

- 4.1 Consultation has taken place from the earliest stages of the exemplar project with public landowners and representatives of the local community (primarily

Members). There has also been a public meeting held at the Cox Lane Community Centre. A second meeting is planned for the Chessington Methodist Church in autumn 2007.

5 FINANCIAL AND VALUE FOR MONEY IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The Green Arc approach involves partner organisations bringing joint resources to bear on priority projects and increases the likelihood of external funding.

6 EQUALITIES AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 The project will increase safety and recreation opportunities. The needs of different groups, the young and elderly are being considered.

7 CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 Fewer problems with burned out bikes/scrambling and vandalism/dumping as the area becomes better known, more frequently used and more visible following vegetation management and access improvements allowing Ranger patrols in vehicles.

8 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- 8.1 That the Bonesgate exemplar project continues throughout 2008 and that resources be brought forward to allow it to expand in term of geographical area and scope of work.

9 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 9.1 To gain the maximum benefit from work and resources already committed.

10 WHAT HAPPENS NEXT

- 10.1 Further work is programmed as set out in paragraph 1.6 above

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BACKGROUND PAPERS: