

GREEN ARC SURREY

The County Council has been involved in improvement of landscape and public access to the countryside on the edge of London for many years. The Green Arc initiative is concerned with improving the environment and accessibility of the open space and countryside around the whole of London.

It is an initiative which will extend to all the main parts of the Metropolitan Green Belt adjacent to and surrounding London. It is organised in four quadrants.

- Surrey and South West London
- Buckinghamshire and North West London
- Essex and North East London
- Kent and South East London.

Green Arc has been developed from an initial report prepared in 2003 by Land Use Consultants for the Countryside Agency (now Natural England) and the Essex/North East London Partnership. This proposed a number of benefits from a strategic approach to countryside management around London:

- working across administrative boundaries
- consolidating and integrating existing initiatives
- providing a strategic response to development pressures
- realising strategic opportunities and aspirations for the Green Belt.

The Essex Green Arc project has been up and running since 2005. The concept has been further reinforced by the Countryside Agency/Groundwork policy report on “The Countryside In and Around Towns” published in 2005.

A programme of work has been undertaken in Surrey and South West London since 2005 alongside similar work in Buckinghamshire and now Kent. This has considered the potential of a Green Arc approach in the Surrey/South West London quadrant. The work has been lead by staff from Surrey County Council, working in conjunction with officers from appropriate Surrey and London boroughs and district councils and government agencies such as Natural England and the Environment Agency. Following a study of 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 in terms of involving a wide variety of partner organisations and the local community and securing external funding. Significant work on the exemplar projects has now taken place with funding coming from a variety of sources including considerable external funding. Badging as a Green Arc project has made securing external funding easier and co-operation across administrative boundaries with London boroughs has also been successful. Much of the work on the ground

has been undertaken by the existing countryside management projects: the Lower Mole and the Downlands Projects. A Green Infrastructure Plan is also being prepared for the Green Arc Surrey area.

Green Arc Surrey/South West London has been organised by an Officers' Working Group drawn from the participating Surrey and London local authorities and from Natural England and other agencies. A Stakeholders' Group has been meeting about once a year to provide advice and this has involved representatives of all organisations who are interested in the potential of Green Arc. Surrey County Council officers have also been participating in meetings of officers representing the four Green Arc quadrants around London.

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