



# Roding Valley Meadows LNR Epping Forest Countrycare

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## Overview



**Countrycare was established in April 1986** (as a temporary 3 year project) same time as the Roding Valley Meadows were being declared an LNR and the Essex Wildlife Trust started management on the reserve.



Explains why EWT are partners.






## Resources




**Countrycare staffing until March 2007** 5 full time staff inc  
 1 Countryside Manager, 2 Assistant Countryside Managers,  
 1 Countryside Assistant and 1 trainee (until March 07).  
 Army of volunteers.  
**Project budget** of £12k for 2006/07 before any grant income.

## Work Output 2005/06





- Organised average of 3 walks, talks and projects days a week throughout the year.
- 121 practical days = 1,200 days.
- Managed 36 different sites across 20 parishes.
- Largest 15h most > 3h, often difficult sites to manage.

## Local Nature Reserves

- 9 of 37 LNRs in Essex (08.2007)
- 8 declared since 2000 area 90.72 h
- Roding Valley Meadows is by far the biggest 56h
- LNRs major focus for Countrycare - 42 project days, undertaken on the LNRs last year.
- Countrycare manages the other LNRs in partnership with or on behalf of Leisure Services, Land Drainage Section and Nazeing PC.
- Funding of £10k annually – Countrycare and partners- with average income of £9K per year of external grants for 8 LNRs since 2000.

## Countrycare's current role with RVM LNR

- **May 2005** – Planning Services via Countryside Manager took over from Leisure Services as coordinator between EWT and EFDC.
- **Budgets** – Spending control officer, grant to EWT then responsible for small works and print budget - £3,270
- **Green Flag applications** etc
- **Coordination** of the Management and Liaison Committees.
- **Assisting with events, walks** etc – e.g 2006 Museum exhibition
- **Liaison** with EWT and Warden, Patrick Bailly - assisted with his recruitment and probationary period.
- **Practical assistance** if needed – e.g 4 volunteers in 2005/06
- **Patrolling** if required – Countrycare trainee is volunteer warden.
- **Extra staff** to help Patrick if he needs assistance H&S issues of lone working for a solitary warden.



## Bring back in house? – The issues



- Countrycare expertise and community focus; local connection and accountability.
- Fresh approach new ideas.
- Bringing all 9 LNRs under Countrycare management would require expenditure on new machinery to avoid reliance on external contractors
- In house machinery would allow improvements to other LNRs/wildlife sites and may release volunteer time.
- Increase in Countrycare staff would give greater flexibility in terms of site management.



## Resources Equipment



### Options

- **In house** - Countrycare would need the specialist machinery tractor , haymaking and forage harvester – obvious major capital cost implication £25 - £40k with ongoing revenue costs.
- Storage for such equipment? Already an issue and a problem for EWT that needs resolving. Countrycare based at Town Mead Depot, Waltham Abbey – 5 miles – Little suitable available room.
- **External** - Employ specialist contractor for hay cutting?



## Resources - Staffing

- **Countrycare would need extra staff** – min of one if Countrycare's current work commitments are not to suffer dramatically.
- **Very seasonal** and labour intensive in the summer. Trust relies on volunteer labour to assist the warden e.g tractor driving – would this be acceptable if EFDC were in control.
- **Would the existing warden be prepared to transfer to EFDC?** Currently employee of EWT.
  - No?**
    - recruitment issues – skills shortage on the market.
  - Yes?**
    - Housing issues, Council Officer taking housing stock? EWT warden is effectively on call 24/7
    - Single status/job evaluation implications – member of staff would come into the Countrycare structure as an ACM – significant salary difference.



## An Alternative?

- **Partnership working** - there could be an even closer working relationship between EFDC and EWT – Countrycare could further assist on RVM LNR and EWT's two other reserves. EWT could assist EFDC on the other LNRs and significant wildlife sites.
- **Increased resources** - does the reserve need more resources to enhance its full potential? Extra equipment primarily for the RVM LNR would allow better timing of management, and EWT could assist with management of other EFDC LNRs (haymaking where EFCC currently pays contractors)
- **Increased commitment** - Countrycare could spend more time on the RVMs assisting with sensitive labour intensive projects such as hedgerow and scrub management.



## A difficult decision

- Not an easy reserve to manage. there are complex ecological issues at play, multi functional use and close to high area of population.
- Whatever decision is taken we must remember what a special and unique place the meadows are. As a SSSI EDFC has a legal duty to maintain them appropriately and their management must be the priority.