

Green Arc: Summary

What is the Green Arc?

The strap line for the project is 'bringing the great outdoors closer to people'. In general terms it is about making the countryside more accessible and improving its quality. In this instance quality is defined as its usability and interest for people, but also its viability as farmland and for traditional management, including grasslands, hedgerows and woodland; and for wildlife.

What is the project designed to achieve?

To a great extent within the broad aim exactly what is done can be influenced by local communities. One immediate effect is to add another reason for safeguarding the Green Belt in that it gives the Green Belt a positive function in addition to the stated purpose of openness.

Other direct improvements may include improvements to footpaths and footpath signage, improvements in land management and projects designed to improve the understanding of the countryside.

How will these objectives be achieved?

A project team has been established, led by Mary Parodi, Project Director, currently hosted by Essex County Council. There is a steering group comprising national bodies, principally Natural England (the Countryside Agency as was), the Forestry Commission etc, the Corporation of London, the Mayor of London's Office, the Woodland Trust and Thames Chase Community Forest. Essex County Council is a steering group member. Epping Forest District Council is also a steering group member; Epping Forest District Council is the only District Council or local body represented.

The principal role of Epping Forest District Council on the steering group has been to contribute local knowledge and expertise, and to try to ensure that the project takes proper account of local feelings and concerns, and will properly engage the community.

Significant funding has been available for land purchase by steering group members for land dedicated to the Green Arc. The majority has been spent within, or immediately adjacent to the district, including an extension to Hainault Forest and land in Theydon Bois and Matching Green. Other projects will include physical access improvement; prioritisation of grant aiding for projects and land management that support the Green Arc objectives and projects designed to increase understanding, such as Outreach via a dedicated website.

Funding is relatively short term, however, a principal job of the Project Director is to secure funding to maintain the project in the longer term.

Current work includes a communication strategy, the aim of which is to actively engage the community at all levels, but principally including the political, landowners and young people.