

The Thames Chase Plan

Summary

Thames Chase Trust
Transforming landscapes, transforming lives



Foreword



Ann Bartleet
Chair - Thames Chase Trust

It seems a very long time ago, 25 years in fact, since someone from the Countryside Commission, as it then was, telephoned me to ask if I would stop talking to landfill operators about planting a couple of dozen trees on one of their sites. The reason was that the Commission had in mind to plant 5 million trees! Working with their existing local authority partners, it had a vision for South West Essex and East London, of creating a Community Forest that would include planting all those trees.

A little over optimistic I thought at the time, but how wrong I was! Over 1 million trees have been planted in the last 20 years, as well as meadows, hedgerows and ponds and footpaths created to improve habitats and landscape and give more access to countryside for local communities and visitors alike.

It therefore gives me great pleasure to introduce the third Thames Chase Plan, a document that sets out the vision for the Thames Chase Community Forest over the next 10 years. The guiding principle that underpins a Community Forest, namely the creation of restored and enhanced landscapes for the benefit of people, wildlife and economy, remains central, just as it was 25 years ago. However there have been changes in knowledge, thinking and policy in the last 20 years. This plan takes account of climate change, the importance of 'green growth' to create new jobs, the notion of a Big society and smaller government, the emerging importance of exercise and time spent outdoors as part of a healthy lifestyle, as well as threats to our native flora from pests and diseases; none of these were as well understood nor promoted 20 years ago.

The underlying principles expressed in this document, we feel sure will be of importance throughout its life. However the intention is that there should be a rolling programme of identified and prioritised projects that will be updated as and when necessary - so that this third plan for Thames Chase remains a 'live' document that continues to engage local people, supporters and funders.

I commend the 2014 Thames Chase Plan to you all.

With Best Wishes

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'A. Bartleet'.

December 2014

Thames Chase

Transforming landscapes, transforming lives

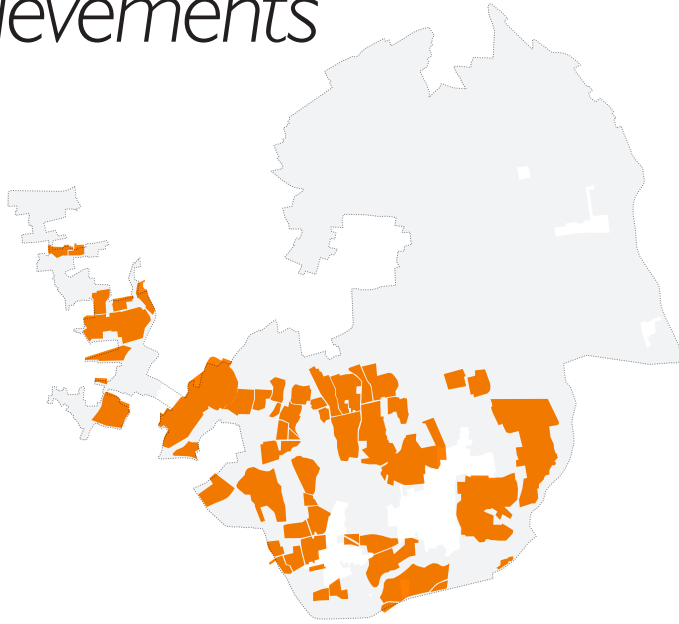
Welcome to the Third Thames Chase Plan which establishes the vision of the Thames Chase Trust for the Community Forest between now and 2024. This document is a summary of the full Thames Chase Plan which can be accessed via the Thames Chase website: www.thameschase.org.uk

The Plan has been produced in consultation with our valued partners in local government, the private and public sector, funders and the remarkable team of volunteers, who give their time so generously to ensure the continued vitality of this essential green lung for the people of the whole area. This new plan details five areas of activity – forestry, landscape regeneration, access, people and promotion – that will ensure that this Forest continues to thrive for nature and the 650,000 living in and around Thames Chase.

Images - clockwise from left: Ancient coppice; volunteers working on a conservation project at Thames Chase; schoolchildren enjoying a wooded playground in Thames Chase - part of an early playgrounds initiative
- credits: Thames Chase

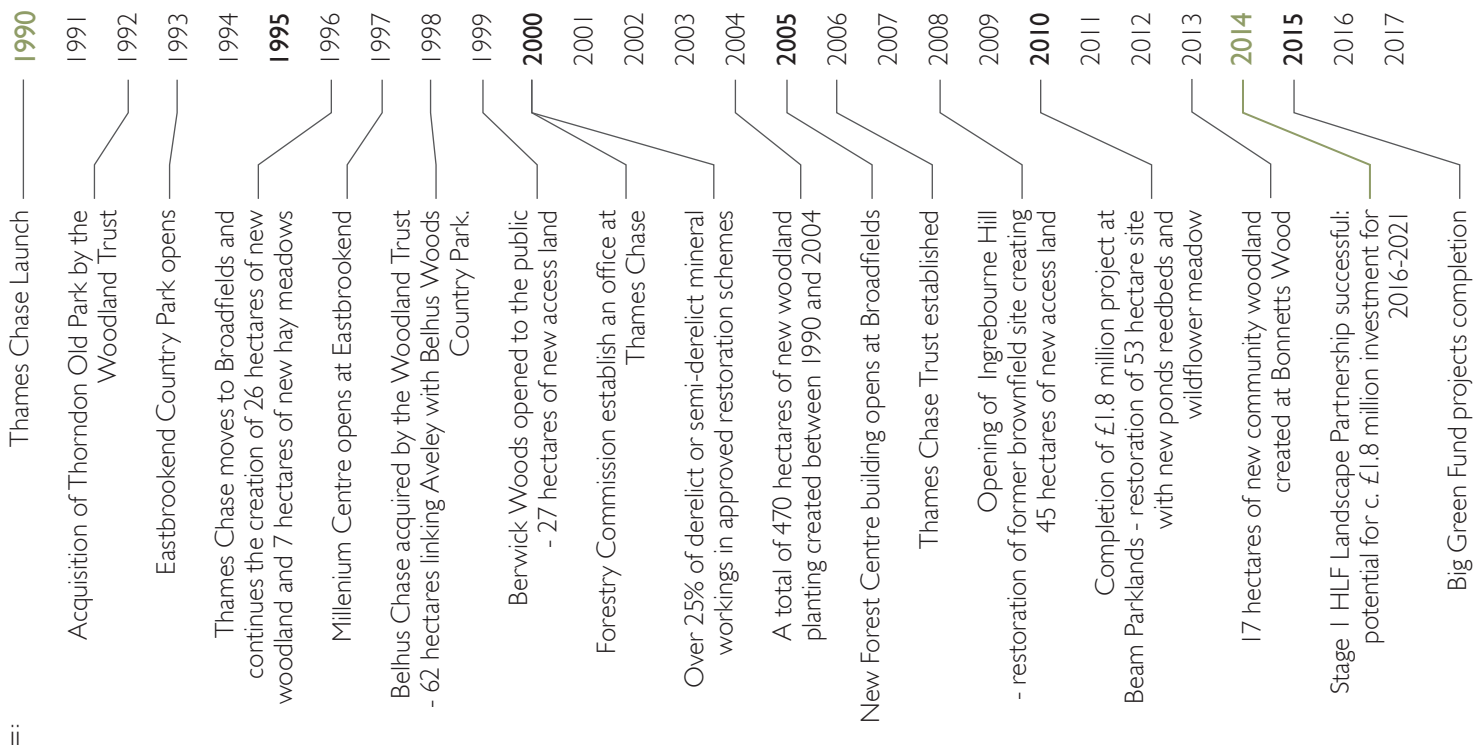
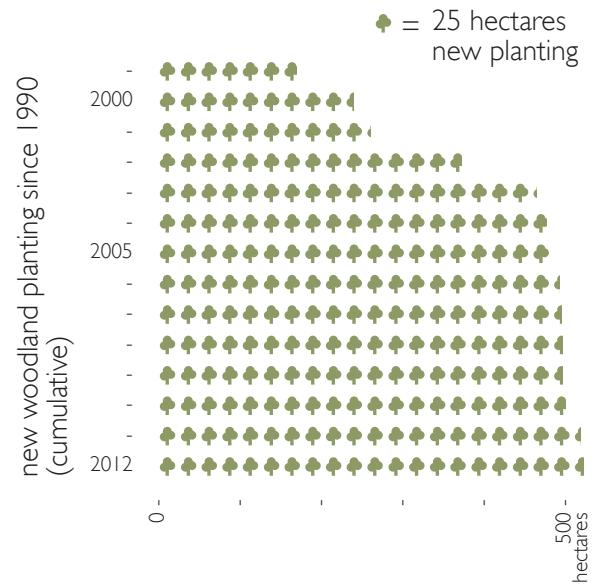
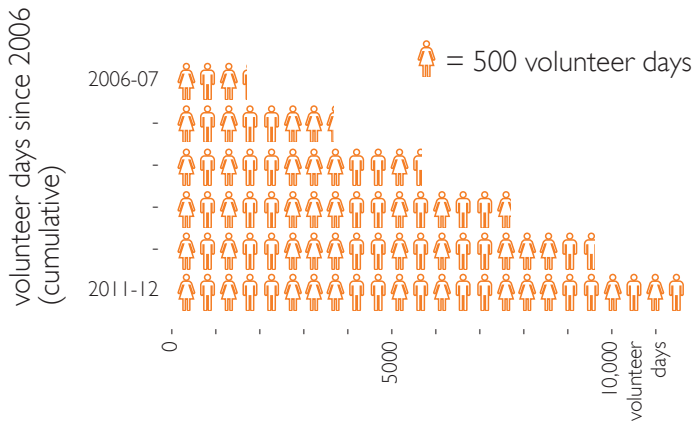


Achievements



Quarry sites make-up
20% of Thames Chase
- a total of 20 square
kilometers

Above: Plan showing quarry sites in Thames Chase
below left: Chart showing volunteer days since 2006
below right: Chart showing new woodland planting 1990 - present



1.3 million trees
planted since 1990

12,050
volunteer days since 2005

70% increase
in woodlands through new planting since 1990

41.2 km of hedgerows
created or restored since 1990

803 hectares
of non-woodland habitat created or restored since 1990

£14 secured for every **£1** invested during 2011-2014

In addition to this, since 2005 our volunteers have helped ensure the success of all aspects of the life of the Forest, from working in the landscape to welcoming people to our visitor centre and carrying out the vital back-office work without which no organisation can run successfully.

Recent years have been a time of change for the Forest, as we have moved from being a public sector initiative to being run by a charitable trust, but this has not dented our commitment to promoting nature and the quality of life which people can enjoy in communities throughout the area of the Forest.

Vision

Opposite: Aerial view showing new woodland creation at Pages Wood - credit: Forestry Commission

Our vision for the future is that:

'By 2030, Thames Chase Community Forest will be recognised as an inspirational example of landscape regeneration where enhanced, connected woodland and green space has made a clear difference to wildlife and peoples' lives'

Our new forward plan identifies work which we will be undertaking to achieve this. Projects are subdivided into five thematic groups:

Forestry



Landscape Regeneration



Access



People



Promotion



Upcoming Events



Charcoal Making workshop

Learn how to make charcoal in the woods...

[More...](#)



Talk About Bats

Bat expert Roger Havard will be holding a talk with live bats

[More...](#)



Forestry

- We will increase the amount of woodland cover in the forest to 30% by 2030.
- We will work with partners to ensure mineral and extraction sites within the Forest become wooded on closure and restoration.
- We will implement multi-purpose forestry as our means of woodland management, seeking social, environmental and economic returns from the Forest.
- We will complete projects across all five local areas of the Forest; Lower Beam Valley, Ingrebourn Valley and Quarry Landscapes, Mardyke Valley and Aveley Forest, Thorndon and Warley Woods, Havering and Essex Fringe.



Landscape Regeneration

- We will increase the number of Countryside Stewardship schemes in the Forest.
- We will further increase the size and number of Thames Chase conservation volunteer groups to support local maintenance of enhanced habitats.
- We will work with partners to ensure that habitats are connected across the Forest and adjoining landscape.
- We will work with partners to ensure riparian landscape restoration and improved water quality and river bank quality.
- We will increase the number of initiatives funded by Corporate Social Responsibility schemes in the Forest.





Access

- We will promote our new website as a way for Thames Chase and other community groups to raise their profile, and for the public to find out more about the Forest.
- We will improve our rights of way network.
- We will further increase the size and number of Thames Chase volunteer groups which help to maintain paths and access routes into and through the Forest.
- We will improve the infrastructure and marketing of the “Forest Circle” and create further long distance Greenway routes through and around the Thames Chase area.
- We will lobby for the establishment of strategic gateways and hubs improving access to the Forest from the primary road network, urban areas and public transport.
- We will lobby for quieter roads in the Forest to be used as Greenway links.

People

- We will promote Thames Chase and other community volunteer groups through our new website.
- We will complete the “Landscape of the Fanns” project to enable communities and schools to gain greater insight into the heritage of the Forest area and achieve important cultural, educational and health results.
- We will work with partners to clarify and fully develop the health benefits which result from the Forest and participation in Thames Chase and other community groups.

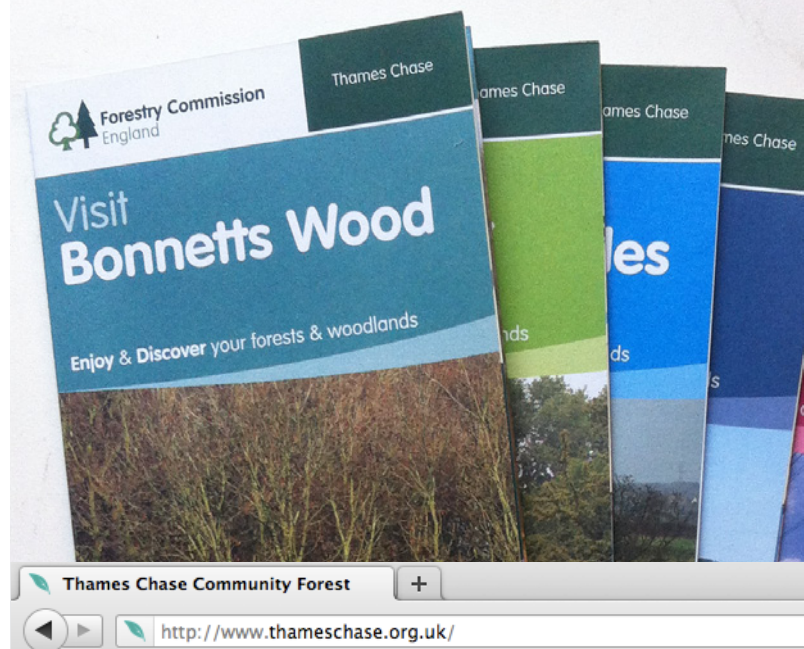
Images opposite page from top: Coppice management at Franks Wood; planting new woodland; Mardyke Valley meadows; aerial view of Hornchurch Country Park and the River Ingrebourne

Images this page from top: Footbridge in the woods at Thorndon; cyclists in the Mardyke Valley; school group in the Ingrebourne Valley; local walking group

- credits: Thames Chase

Promotion

- We will introduce a new Thames Chase Interpretation System.
- We will improve the Thames Chase Forest Centre as the “shop window” for the whole of the Forest.
- We will increase the number and size of Thames Chase volunteer groups which work to raise the profile of the Forest.
- We will use our new website to promote the wider Community Forest and the work of Thames Chase volunteer groups that people may wish to join.



How to get involved

Delivering the vision for Thames Chase requires cooperation and support from everyone. Whether you represent a local authority, charity, business or funder, if you are an existing or prospective volunteer, or simply a user of the forest, there is a role that you can play.

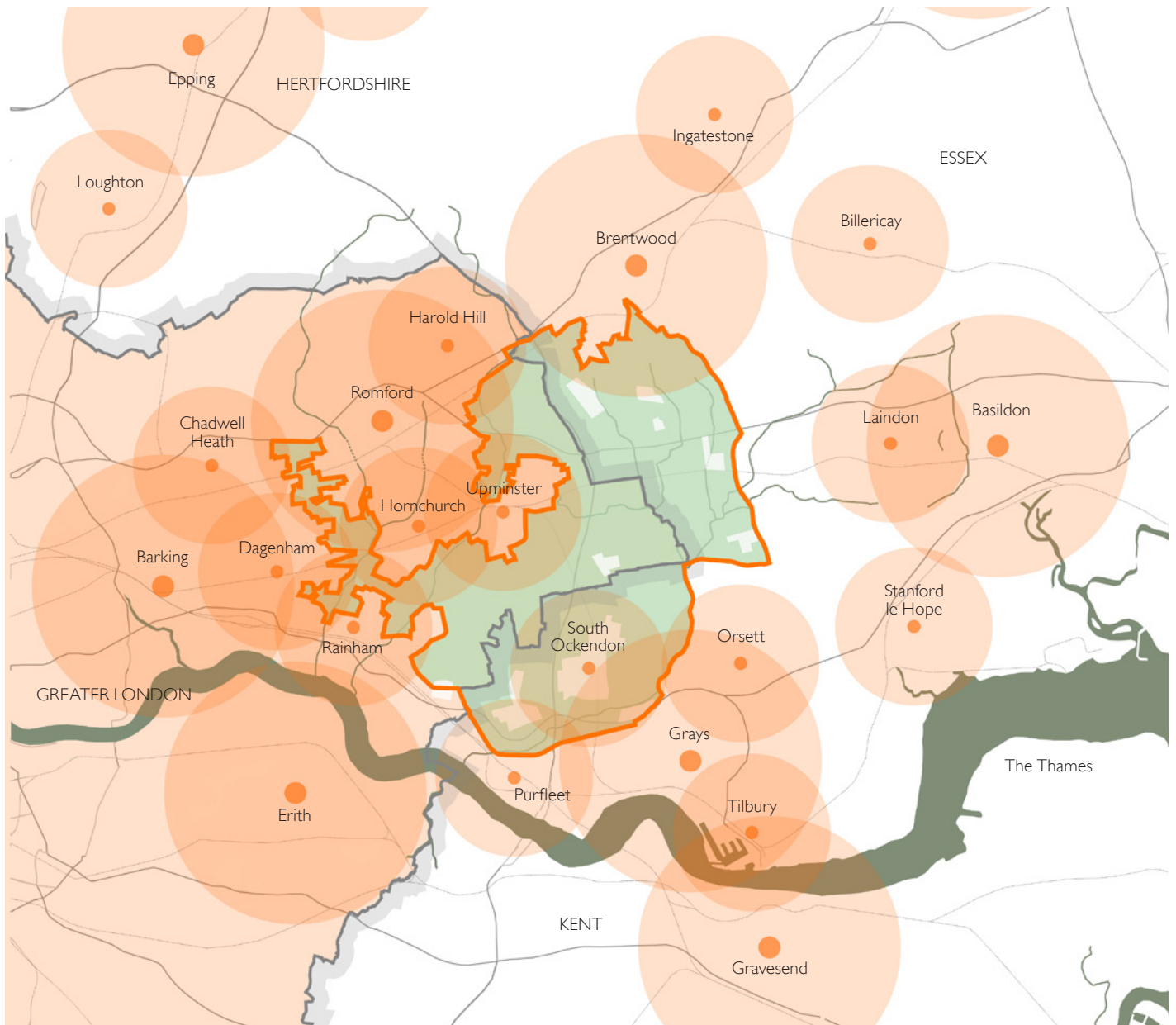
If you would like to become involved with the work of Thames Chase, you can find out more via our website www.thameschase.org.uk or pop into the Forest Centre at Broadfields Farm. We look forward to welcoming your involvement that will help us to transform landscapes and transform lives.

Images this page from top: Walking leaflets; Thames Chase website; completion of new play area at Broadfields; landscape management by volunteers

Opposite page: tree nursery at Broadfields Farm - credits: Thames Chase



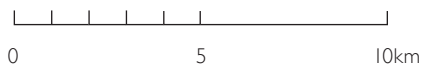




Thames Chase and its surrounding communities



north



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Thames Chase Trust

partner organisations



Forestry Commission



Essex County Council

