30 YEARS 1990-2020
Thames Chase

the Chaser

The Newsletter of Thames Chase
Transforming landscapes, transforming lives

JANUARY 2021











Thames Chase Trust News

Thames Chase Trust wishes you a happy and healthy New Year.

After a very difficult and challenging year when working conditions and practises have needed to adapt and projects and programmes delayed or abandoned, we are pleased to be able to bring positive news as we enter 2021. Engaging with our partner organisations and project leaders as well as volunteers has required constant revision during the last year as government advice has changed to meet the prevailing pandemic conditions.

However, during 2020 Thames Chase has been working with other community forests across England on a very productive programme to support the Government's 25 year Environment Plan to increase woodland cover across England. As we enter 2021, the opportunities this programme offers will help Thames Chase to work with our partners and landowners to progress projects that are vital to progress the Thames Chase Plan.

In the year ahead the Trust is also pleased that it now has the full complement of local authorities represented on the Thames Chase Delivery Group. Since the inception of the Community Forest in 1990, the Forest has been created in partnership with the five local authorities in which it operates - Barking and Dagenham, Havering, Thurrock, Brentwood and Essex. Through positive and collaborative working so much has been achieved in transforming landscapes and transforming lives' across Community Forest area. We have always appreciated each and every partner with whom we have worked and our local authorities have been particularly supportive throughout. The Trust is pleased to have them all back together and look forward to resuming joint working into the busy programme in the year ahead.

One project that is already live is Trees for climate outlined on the next page by our Consultant Forest Director, Dave Bigden, where Thames Chase Trust is delighted to be part of this national initiative, involving all ten Community Forests working together in partnership. The creation of new woodlands, combined with the increase in management of existing woodlands will bring significant improvements in the recreational, amenity and biodiversity value of Thames Chase Community Forest. It will continue and expand the work we have been delivering with our partners since 1990 when the Community Forest programme began.

Trees for Climate will help the Thames Chase Trust and its partners to continue to drive this vital work forward. This scheme aligns with the aims and objectives of the Thames Chase Plan and the tree planting will support the Trust's vision to create a mosaic landscape, rich in diverse habitat, right across Thames Chase Community Forest and to meet it's aim:

'*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.*'

Thames Chase Trust will be working with partners and landowners to plant up to 8.5 hectares in Year 1 of the programme (to March 2021).

Mary Wright
Interim co-chair, Thames Chase Trust

New projects in 2021

England's Community Forests

500 hectare planting boost for England's Community Forests

Over 500 hectares will be planted with trees across England's ten Community Forests, from Yorkshire to Essex and Greater London, backed by £12.1 million of investment; the government announced in December 2020. This will also build the pipeline of projects for community planting in future years.

The new programme - Trees for Climate - will see trees planted in Community Forests across the country over the next three months. When mature, the trees will eventually store over 100,000 tonnes of carbon dioxide, playing an important role in meeting the government's net zero emissions by 2050 target. The project will also reduce flood risk, increase sustainable UK grown timber, provide more places for nature and biodiversity to thrive, and increase people's access to and enjoyment of woodland. The funding will also create new jobs and secure existing ones within the forestry and environmental sector, helping to boost local economies as part of a green recovery.

Forestry Minister, Lord Goldsmith, said:
"Through this exciting new programme we will build back greener, as more communities - particularly those in urban environments - will have access to nature, with real benefits for health and wellbeing. Trees are the backbone of our urban and rural environments and essential in tackling the climate emergency. This vital programme will plant trees where they are most needed to stem flooding and provide more places for nature to thrive."

Trees for Climate will help deliver against goals in the government's 25 Year Environment Plan and support Nature Recovery Networks across England.

Essex Forest Initiative Planting More Forests

Essex County Council



The Essex County Council is dedicated to planting over 375,000 native trees worth up to £ 1 million. This initiative was developed in response to the urgent need to mitigate the effects of climate change and lock up carbon from the atmosphere. In 5 years, the Essex Forest Initiative aims to have created enough woodland to lock up 60,000 tonnes of carbon over its lifetime. The importance of green spaces around our towns and cities become more evident as urbanisation grows and global warming increases. Trees provide better air quality and act as a cooler in the urban heat. Woodlands create new habitat and increase biodiversity; they prevent adjacent streams from drying and lessen the chances of sudden floods. The benefits of trees are vital and of global importance, locking up carbon, but having more of these areas in Essex extend to the physical and mental wellbeing of its residents.

Essex County Council is working in collaboration with Thames Chase and Brentwood Council among others to deliver the EFI target of 375,000 trees. This growing partnership has plans to plant new trees in many Brentwood greenspaces around Thames Chase.

With the Trees for Climate government funding that the Thames Chase Trust have successfully secured, the future looks more promising for the creation of new woodland. With 30 years of experience in forestry, it is recognised that the Thames Chase Trust plays a crucial role in making Essex greener, proving an excellent partner for the Essex Forest Initiative.

Parsloes Park 'Forest of Thanks'

Barking & Dagenham

2020 has been a difficult and unprecedented year for everyone. Through determination and hard work, Thames Chase Trust and its highly valued teams of volunteers have managed to sustain high-quality project development and delivery. On the ground, the Thames Chase Conservation Volunteers proved to be the backbone of the Parsloes Park 'Forest of Thanks' project and strategically, the Trust has been an active partner in the creation and publication of the first London Urban Forest Plan.



Thames Chase Trust has worked in close partnership to create a new Forest of Thanks in Parsloes Park. During what has been a difficult and unprecedented time for everyone, Barking and Dagenham Council wanted to recognise the incredible work that not only our NHS staff and keyworkers have delivered, but every other individual who continued to work during the COVID-19 pandemic and kept our communities safe.

To celebrate those who have consistently gone above and beyond, the council has created a 'Forest of Thanks' at Parsloes Park in Dagenham.

The council partnered with Thames Chase Trust who are responsible for the continued creation of Thames Chase Community Forest in accordance with the Thames Chase Plan; The Conservation Volunteers (TCV) who work across the UK to create healthier and happier communities; SUGi Projects, an international organisation specialising in urban rewilding; Wild Urban Spaces; and the NatWest Group who donated the 32,000 trees to create the Forest of Thanks.

The ambitious project will see 32,000 native trees and shrubs planted following a new planting method called Miyawaki, which establishes a forest up to 30 times more dense than conventional tree planting. It also grows 10 times faster than regular forests and is a chemical and fertiliser free forest that sustains itself once established and supports local biodiversity.

Just four years after planting, the 'Forest of Thanks' will deliver benefits including:

- absorbing 24,000kg of carbon: up to 30 times the absorption of other tree-planting schemes
- a huge increase in biodiversity
- processing 1,500,000 litres of rain
- improving air quality by reducing polluting floating particles by up to 10%
- up to 30 times the noise reduction of other tree-planting schemes



The Parsloes Park 'Forest of Thanks' is the largest Miyawaki Forest in the UK and Europe and a valuable addition to the landscape of Thames Chase Community Forest which covers 40 square miles on the edge of East London and South West Essex.





London Urban Forest Plan





Published during National Tree Week 2020, the London Urban Forest Plan has been developed by a network of partnered organisations, including Thames Chase Trust, that are collaborating to protect, manage and enhance the capital's trees and woodlands.

The plan sets out the goals and priority actions needed to protect, manage and expand the capital's urban forest. The network of partnered organisations will coordinate delivery of the plan, in collaboration with others responsible for the stewardship of London's urban forest and the wider urban forest community.

With London's growing population comes an increasing need to plant trees and improve the city's green spaces. The London Mayor aims to increase tree canopy cover in the capital by 10 per cent of current levels by 2050, to 23 per cent.

Thames Chase Trust is an active delivery partner in the plan which closely aligns with the aims and objectives of the Thames Chase Plan.

Community Tree Nursery

The Thames Chase Community Tree Nursery will play an essential part in the above planting projects as its development and regeneration continues, already supplying and storing tree stock for partners and landowners and supporting the work of our conservation volunteer teams throughout the Forest.



Work has begun on replacing, where necessary, and pruning the trees in the Broadfields orchard in partnership with Forestry England. The dedicated team of volunteers are being trained in pruning skill by our resident volunteer expert Peter Tomlin, leading towards taking cutting for grafting here and other sites in future years.

Sadly, the tree identification walks using the Tree Trail leaflets that were being developed in conjunction with the health and wellbeing programme and led by volunteers, have been abandoned for the immediate future as result of the Coronavirus restrictions. Engagement and learning activities are a fundamental part of the nursery, and a key focus for the team. Unfortunately, work with school, youth and social groups has been curtailed. Thankfully, seed collection both at Broadfields and partner sites was completed by volunteers before Christmas along with collecting black poplar cuttings.

We are now looking to increase our volunteer team as plans are being developed to expand the Tree Nursery. If you would like to get involved, please contact Alex Hewitt, tree nursery manager, on alex.hewitt@thameschase.org.uk.

Land of the Fanns News



As we approach the successful completion of this Heritage Lottery funded scheme that has faced many challenges through its delivery stages, Thames Chase Trust is pleased to be identified as the legacy vehicle to continue working and developing with partners the projects and programmes identified through the scheme. Having been delayed by engagement difficulties through the past year, the scheme is being extended beyond its original completion date. A number of programmes are now reaching completion with successful outcomes. These include the Community Action Fund having granted £75,000 grant funding to 20 small community projects, the 50 fabulous features book has been published, the Education resource website will be launched shortly and we look forward to the Tales of the Fanns book later this year.



Tales of the Fanns

Across the Land of the Fanns 100 stories have been gathered to tell the social history and to celebrate the people and places of the fanns area. The book will celebrate all that is special and unique about the landscape in the words of the people who live or have lived here. These stories will be further celebrated in a walk and arts festival in May/June in collaboration with Thurrock-based arts company Kinetika.For the map of all the stories please visit: https://www.landofthefanns.org/100-stories/

50 Fabulous Features

The Publication of '50 Fabulous Features' Document is part of a wider project to identify and record changes in the Land of the Fanns landscape over time to build an understanding and appreciation of its historic significance. Working with volunteers drawn from across the Land of the Fanns area, The Garden Trust provided initial training workshops, followed by an active period of site surveys, research and recording to document the heritage assets of the historic designed landscapes and their features. In the process current conditions, use, possible leisure use and future threats were considered .





The Trust is pleased to welcome Carole Watling as the new chair of the Land of the Fanns Strategic Board and looks forward to working with her. Carole is an Occupational Psychologist by profession and Associate Fellow of the British Psychological Society. She worked for a global law firm co-ordinating their health and wellbeing programme for 20 years. She has also worked as a volunteer as a verifier for the Mayor of London's "London Healthy Workplace Award" programme. Carole is passionate about the benefits of the Community Forest and is a keen rambler

Looking back at 2020

What a strange year this has been for us all. We have been told to stay at home and yet you have been out exploring our forests more than ever! Working from home and reduced social contact this year has highlighted the importance of our local landscapes and the well-being benefits of spending time in nature. It has been great to see many of you getting outdoors and making the most of the natural environment that is on your doorstep. We have continued to work hard through the pandemic to ensure our forests are safe for you to enjoy. Pages Wood has seen many new additions in 2020 including: additional sculptures along the woodland trail, a pond and scrapes network which will help alleviate flooding and create a wetland habitat, and a new running route. Elsewhere in the Thames Chase district we have seen the opening of Berwick Glades extension, the continued work on the dormouse project at Cely Woods and the start of development at Pleasant Farm (our newest addition to our growing list of sites). We hope 2021 brings as much enjoyment in our forests as this year. One thing we have really missed are our hard-working volunteers, who unfortunately had to stop due to Covid-19 restrictions. However, we are hoping to have them back up and running in 2021, and expand our volunteer workforce even more! (When it is safe to do so.) So keep an eye out for updates and volunteering opportunities while we continue our work improving our forests for both people and wildlife.

Berwick Glades Project

Berwick Glades, a restored former quarry and landfill is the latest Forestry England Community Woodland to become part of Thames Chase Community Forest. Like much of the local area the former quarry was used to deliver the resources in the building and expansion of London. When the quarry closed, the site was poorly restored and served as low quality arable land. Forestry England worked closely with a land reclamation and restoration company, Ingrebourne Valley Limited and with support from Thames Chase Trust, the site has been restored and landscaped to create a new woodland within the Community Forest.The new woodland at Berwick Glades opened in March 2020 and connects with Bonnets Wood. It has an easy access path which allows the public to walk, run and cycle from Rainham to Upminster, through a dynamic woodland setting without the need to walk on an urban street. The site has open areas for people to stop and enjoy the scenery and a grass ride running around the boundary. The site is a haven for skylarks and the planning and management of the site is designed to protect their habitat. Berwick Glades provides a green corridor connecting wildlife habitats with sightings of adder, whilst Bonnetts Wood has a thriving water vole colony. Over 10,000 trees were planted at the new woodland with species chosen to improve the soil and to mirror existing native woodland. The planting was undertaken with support from local community and volunteer groups. These groups included the Thames Chase Conservation Volunteers, London Fire Brigade Cadets, local schools and Avalon Road Volunteers.





Woodlands for Wellbeing



Whilst the cold and the effects of the pandemic have hit us all hard this winter, it is important to remember the benefits of getting outdoors, even in the colder temperatures. Research has found that walking is one of the best all round forms of exercise for heart lungs and body, and engaging with the great outdoors is beneficial for physical and mental health. Promoting health and wellbeing through the forest is one of the key aims of the Thames Chase Plan, and as such has been one area we have focussed development on during the pandemic.

Wellbeing and Tree walks

The Thames Chase tree nursery team started a weekly Wellbeing and Tree Walk where attendees could learn about how nature can impact your health, as well as learning some tree identification skills along the way. The popular walks covered lesser walked trails around the Broadfields site and focussed on learning how to relax and be at peace when in an outside space. Whilst these are currently on hold due to the pandemic we aim to restart them again soon and spread to other sites in the Community Forest.





Walks and cycling project

Transport for London

LONDON MARATHON CHARITABLE TRUST

Knowing the benefit of walking, cycling can provide similar benefits both for physical and mental health, and even more so during this pandemic. The Trust is delighted to have been awarded a grant to develop our provision, not only for physically exploring additional walks and cycle rides, but also developing virtual walks where we can bring the Community Forest to those unable to visit in person.

Feel Good in the Forest

In November 2020, Forestry England launched their Feel Good in the Forest programme at Thames Chase Forest Centre. Led by their Active Forest Co-ordinator, Rachael Purchase, the programme also focuses on improving mental health and wellbeing with a weekly walk followed by a complimentary hot beverage and a chat. Whilst this programme is currently on hold due to the Coronavirus pandemic, Rachael hopes to restart when it is safe to do so. Please watch the website www.forestryengland.uk.



Thames Chase walks

Providing access to the natural environment is one of the main aims of the Thames Chase Plan through a network of 'greenways' connecting the 48 varied regenerated sites forming the Community Forest. The 18 walks leaflets already produced by our volunteer walks team to explore the heritage of the natural and built landscape have been in great demand during the pandemic restrictions and can be accessed on the Thames Chase website. The dedicated team of volunteers who survey, map and produce the leaflets are now working on the 'forest cycle,' a continuous string of paths encircling the forest area first walked in the early 1900s. The group also lead guided walks in better times to explore the unique and varied landscape of the forest and will resume the programme when conditions allow.

Forest Centre News



Sadly at the beginning of this new year when Thames Chase should be celebrating 30 years of successful landscape regeneration with its partners and the community, its hub, the Forest Centre, is again under severe restrictions. Most of both Thames Chase and Forestry England staff are either furloughed or working remotely and the Visitor Centre and historic buildings have fallen silent unable to offer any indoor activities. The cafe is restricted to offering take away only from an outside door. Only the toilets remain open for those using Broadfields for their daily exercise. The Broadfields site, however, has proved a lifeline form many seeking relief from this third Coronavirus 'lockdown', taking advantage of the surfaced paths and ample car parking spaces. It is good to see all ages and abilities using the facilities and children enjoying imaginative exploration of the woodland and not missing the wooden structures removed for safety reasons by Forestry England prior to the Covid-19 outbreak.

Events

With Coronavirus still restricting any live gatherings at the time of writing, any live events planned for Q1 2021 have been put on hold. We have been working with our staff and volunteers in the background on a number of virtual events and sessions and will continue to share these on our website and social media. We are hoping we can continue with our 30th anniversary celebrations and 10k run in June, but will post any updates on our website in line with government guidelines at that time. Thank you for your continued support.

Goodbye Wendy, Welcome Michele



Wendy joined Thames Chase in 2013 taking over the management of the Forest Centre from the team of volunteers and quickly bringing her management experience to help the Trust develop the Centre into a lively and active hub for the Community Forest. She will be greatly missed by trustee, staff, volunteers and users. We wish her a well earned, enjoyable and healthy retirement.



We have recently recruited Michele Phillips, our new facilities coordinator and Administrator. Michele lives locally in Rainham in Essex and has a history of experience in Investment Banking and general Facilities Management. Her previous role was working as an Administrator and Housekeeping Manager for University of London students at their halls of residence. Previous to this a local Housing Manager supporting the elderly residents at Randall Court in Rainham for 12 years. We all welcome Michele to our team who is really enthusiastic about this new role.

Thames Chase Trust
Thames Chase Forest Centre,
Broadfields, Pike Lane, Upminster RM14 3NS
Tel 01708 642970
www.thameschase.org.uk
Charity no. 1115627 Company no. 5687558

30 YEARS 1990-2020 Thames Chase