

Countryside Volunteer role description

Role title	Countryside Volunteer
Purpose of the role	Countryside volunteers assist the Council's Countryside Team with managing over 800 acres (330 hectares) of the Borough's richest countryside on a variety of nature reserves.
What you will be doing	<p>As a countryside volunteer you will be outdoors</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Helping with practical conservation tasks using a variety of hand tools. Tasks include cutting back scrubby plants and trees, coppicing woodland, planting hedges, and controlling invasive plants such as pulling up ragwort and Himalayan balsam etc • Helping to improve visitor access by assisting with path maintenance and construction, building and repairing bridges, fences and boardwalks.
Skills, experience and qualities needed	<p>Volunteers must be over 16 years old. Under 18s must be accompanied by a responsible adult.</p> <p>No previous experience is necessary, although any of the following skills / attributes would be useful:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An enjoyment and appreciation of the countryside and wildlife • Enthusiasm for helping people enjoy and appreciate the countryside. • Willing to do practical outdoor work, getting muddy and grubby, and generally 'do something' for our wildlife and countryside. • An enjoyment of meeting new, like-minded people
When and where	<p>We have several different groups you can join:</p> <p>Third Sunday of the month - Itchen Valley Country Park and Countryside Sites around Eastleigh Borough</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tasks are advertised via email and are carried out on a variety of sites in the Borough. • 10am start, finish between 3pm and 4pm (depending on the job), with refreshment breaks and a lunch break around 12.30pm. You are welcome to come for all or part of a day. <p>Wednesday mornings - Lakeside Country Park, Eastleigh</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A practical task is held every Wednesday morning at Lakeside Country Park. • Volunteering at Lakeside is so popular we may be operating a waiting list at the time you apply. <p>Thursday mornings - Hiltingbury Lakes, Chandler's Ford</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A practical task is held every Thursday morning* from 10am - 1pm at Hiltingbury Lakes. • *On the second Thursday of the month our volunteer task moves to our nearby Hocombe Mead Local Nature Reserve to work alongside the Friends of Hocombe Mead on their task days. <p>Summer 2022: days to be announced – Invasive Species Task Force</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Practical task days pulling up the invasive species Himalayan Balsam at different locations along the River Itchen and the Monks Brook.

Contact	If you have any queries about volunteering with the Countryside Team, please contact Alex at countrysidevolunteers@eastleigh.gov.uk .
What you could get out of it	During practical tasks there will be plenty of on-the-job training with the task leader and more experienced members of the group.
Other information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read the Countryside Volunteer Guidelines (below) which forms part of this Role Description. • Please wear suitable clothing for the work and weather conditions, sturdy footwear suitable for outdoor work is essential. • Tools and all safety clothing will be provided for tasks e.g. gloves and hard hats.
What to do if you're interested	<p>Read the Countryside Volunteer Guidelines (below) which forms part of this Role Description.</p> <p>Please apply by completing an online Volunteer Application form on the Eastleigh Borough Council website www.eastleigh.gov.uk/volunteering</p> <p>We will contact you to let you know if your application has been accepted.</p>

Eastleigh Countryside Volunteer Guidelines



Issue Date: December 2021

Eastleigh Countryside Volunteers, run by Eastleigh Borough Council, assist the Council's Countryside Team with managing over 800 acres (330 hectares) of the Borough's richest countryside on a variety of sites. Our countryside management aims to balance the need to conserve our natural and man-made heritage with the demands for recreation and education. Countryside areas owned by the Council include:

- Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs)
- Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINCs)
- Local Nature Reserves
- Two Country Parks
- Many other important wildlife habitats.

They also contain many features of archaeological and historical interest and receive large numbers of visitors each year from local people and tourists for recreation and study.

Staff Structure

The Countryside Manager has overall responsibility for all countryside sites and the activities of the Countryside Officers and Rangers within the Borough. The Countryside Officers and Rangers carry out habitat management, site development and conservation work.

What you need in order to become a Countryside Volunteer

Volunteers must be over 16 years of age. Under 18s must be accompanied by a responsible adult.

No previous experience is necessary, although any of the following skills/attributes would be useful:

- An enjoyment and appreciation of the countryside and wildlife. This will probably be the reason most people will want to volunteer. However, it is worth mentioning that countryside management is not only for the benefits of wildlife, but also for people to enjoy and appreciate the countryside.
- An enjoyment of meeting new, like-minded people.
- Practical outdoor work, getting muddy and grubby, and generally "doing something" for our wildlife and countryside is also useful. You don't have to get muddy though, we need help with surveys, data inputting and events as well.
- An ability to get on with different types of people.

You will be dealing with a whole cross-section of the community when working with other volunteers or helping out on one of our sites.

Role Description

As a Countryside Volunteer you can become involved in as many of the following activities as you wish:

- Helping with practical conservation tasks such as scrub clearing, coppicing, planting, fencing, etc.
- Helping to improve visitor access, by assisting with path maintenance and construction, building bridges, boardwalks etc.
- Assisting with events and guided walks

Volunteers' Code of Conduct

Whilst volunteering with Eastleigh Countryside Volunteers you represent the Borough Council and we ask that you act courteously and politely with members of the public, staff and other volunteers.

Health and Safety

- Whilst working as a volunteer, all the health and safety precautions and legislation, that protect and govern full-time members of staff, apply to you. This means that we have a responsibility for your health and safety while you are volunteering by ensuring that you:
- Wear the correct safety clothing, and equipment when necessary

- Have had sufficient training and are capable of using the tools and equipment assigned to you.
- You have a personal responsibility to work in a safe manner so as not to affect the health and safety of yourself, staff, other volunteers or members of the public.
- The task leader will have a current first aid qualification and first aid kits will be on-site. Help or assistance can be summoned by means of the leader's mobile phone.
- If you suffer from an unusual condition or are allergic to stings/bites, or have any other allergy please ensure the task leader is aware.
- During hot periods, please bring sun cream and plenty of water.
- If you have an accident or near miss (no matter how minor you consider it) please report it immediately to the task leader.
- It is recommended that you have current protection against tetanus and Hepatitis B.
- Always ensure you thoroughly wash your hands after the task. Hygienic wipes will be available on task to use during the day.
- This pack also includes information about Weil's and Lyme's disease which you must read before coming on task.

Coronavirus (Covid-19) Pandemic

You will follow the safe system of working we put in place at all tasks to reduce the risk of exposure to the virus for yourself, fellow volunteers, staff and the public. This will involve following current government guidance, maintaining social distancing and following strict hygiene procedures as set out for each task by Countryside Staff.

Clothing

When attending tasks or undertaking surveys, you must ensure that you wear suitable clothing for the work and conditions:

- Sturdy footwear, suitable for outdoor work, is essential
- Wear appropriate clothing for the weather conditions e.g. close fitting so that it does not get snagged or caught on tools, or vegetation etc. Please remember that on most tasks whatever you wear is likely to get dirty!
- During hot periods please remember to wear a sun hat.

- Safety clothing will be available for your use on tasks e.g. hard hats and gloves

On Task

The task leader will give a talk prior to work commencing to say what needs to be done and why, and to point out any hazards or safety precautions needed. Please ensure that you listen to what is said. Risk assessments will be available on task for everybody to read and volunteers will be asked to sign in. If you arrive after the task has started please make yourself known to the task leader so that you can be signed in and briefed about any health and safety procedures and the task. If you leave before the task has ended please let the leader know you are going.

Training

During practical tasks there will be plenty of on-the-job training with the task leader and more experienced members of the group. From time to time there will be opportunities to assist with and learn about the various wildlife surveying projects.

Tools

Where new or different tools are being used that require training, the task leader will give the necessary instructions to enable you to get the best use of the tool and use it safely. If you have any doubts about how to use any tools - please ask the task leader. If you find that a tool is damaged or defective do not continue to use it, simply report the problem to the task leader immediately.

General Information

Volunteer Tasks

Tasks and important volunteer news are advertised by email and are carried out on a wide variety of sites across the Borough. Please be aware that you may need to book your place in advance to attend volunteer tasks, particularly during the Covid-19 pandemic. Please see [Eastleigh Borough Council's 'Become a countryside volunteer' web page](#) for further details.

Social Activities Around Christmas and the New Year we have a quiz and buffet, which all volunteers are welcome to join in with.

Communication Eastleigh Borough Council sends important information about upcoming tasks and the work of the countryside volunteers by email.

Uniform Whilst on volunteering activities regular volunteers will be supplied with steel toe capped safety boots, and offered an official volunteer polo shirt and sweatshirt.

Insurance Volunteers are covered by the Borough's insurance policies whilst engaged in activities for the Borough.

Volunteer Registration

New Volunteers - are welcome to apply by submitting a completed Countryside Volunteers Registration Form. We will contact you to let you know if your registration form has been accepted, or to discuss your circumstances and wishes to help us identify a suitable volunteering opportunity for you.

Existing Volunteers - are required to re-register annually by completing a registration form which is sent out by email by the Countryside Team. We will contact you to let you know that your registration form has been accepted and that you continue to be registered as a volunteer.

Changes to your circumstances - if any of the details listed on your registration form change at any point during the year, such as your contact details, your next of kin, your health for example, it is your responsibility to inform us immediately and provide an updated registration form so we can keep your details up-to-date.

Car Parking

- Itchen Valley Country Park operates a pay and display scheme, volunteers will be issued with free permits, on request, by the task leader
- Lakeside Country Park has free parking for four hours on a weekday which will cover your attendance for a standard morning volunteer task.

Enquiries

The Countryside Volunteer Co-ordinator
countrysidevolunteers@eastleigh.gov.uk

Alex Watts: 07825 920121

Leptospirosis

What is leptospirosis?

Two types of leptospirosis infection can affect workers in the UK.

- Weil's disease. This is a serious and sometimes

fatal infection that is transmitted to humans by contact with urine from infected rats.

- The Hardjo form of leptospirosis. This is transmitted from cattle to humans.

What are the symptoms?

Both diseases start with a flu-like illness with a persistent and severe headache, which can lead to vomiting and muscle pains and ultimately to jaundice, meningitis and kidney failure. In rare cases the diseases can be fatal.

Who is at risk?

- Anyone who is exposed to rats, rat or cattle urine.
- Farmers are now the main group at risk for both Weil's disease and cattle leptospirosis: the cattle form is a special risk for dairy farmers.
- Other people who have contracted leptospirosis in recent years include vets, meat inspectors, butchers as well as abattoir and sewer workers.
- Workers in contact with canal and river water are also at risk.

How might I catch it?

The bacteria can get into your body through cuts and scratches and through the lining of the mouth, throat and eyes after contact with infected urine or contaminated water, such as in sewers, ditches, ponds and slow-flowing rivers. People working in dairy parlours are often in contact with cattle urine. Rat urine may also contaminate animal feed stuffs on farms.

How can I prevent it?

- Wash cuts and grazes as soon as possible.
- Cover all cuts and broken skin with waterproof plasters before and during work.
- Wear protective clothing.
- Wash your hands before eating, drinking or smoking.

What else should I do?

Report any illness to your doctor. Tell the doctor about your work. Leptospirosis is much less severe if it is treated promptly. If your doctor decides you have leptospirosis tell your employer, who must then report it to the Incident Contact Centre (Tel: 0845 300 9923).

Lyme's Disease

What is Lyme's Disease?

Lyme disease is a bacterial infection that is spread to human by infected ticks. Ticks are small, spider-shaped insects that feed on the blood of mammals, including humans.

What are the symptoms?

The most common symptom of Lyme disease is a red skin rash that looks similar to a bull's eye on a dart board. However, if Lyme disease is left untreated, further symptoms can follow including:

- a high temperature (fever) of 38C (100.4F) or over,
- muscle pain,
- joint pain and swelling, and
- neurological symptoms, such as temporary paralysis of the facial muscles.

A person with Lyme disease is not contagious because the infection can only be spread by the ticks. Lyme disease can be a difficult condition to diagnose, particularly in its latter stages, because its symptoms are also shared by other, more common conditions, such as infections, or arthritis. While the characteristic skin rash can provide an important clue, not everyone with Lyme disease will develop the rash.

How might I catch it?

Lyme's disease is contracted from tick bites.

How to remove a tick

- If you find a tick on your skin (or your child's skin), you should remove it by gently gripping it as close to the skin as possible, preferably using fine toothed tweezers, and pull steadily away from the skin. Alternatively a special tick removal card or tweezers can be purchased from a pharmacy.
- Do not use a lighted cigarette end, a match head, or volatile oils to force the tick out. Some veterinary surgeries and pet supply shops sell inexpensive tick removal devices, which may be useful if you are frequently exposed to ticks.

How can I prevent it?

Currently, there is no vaccine available for Lyme disease. The best way to prevent getting Lyme disease is to be aware of the risks when you visit areas where

ticks are likely to be found, and to take sensible precautions. You can reduce the risk of infection by:

- being aware of ticks and which areas they normally live in,
- wearing appropriate clothing in tick-infested areas (a long-sleeve shirt and trousers tucked into your socks),
- using insect repellents,
- inspecting your skin for ticks, particularly at the end of the day, including your head, neck, and skin folds (armpits, groin, and waistband),
- making sure that your children's head and neck areas, including scalps, are properly checked,
- checking that ticks are not brought home on your clothes, and
- checking that pets do not bring ticks into your home in their fur.

Photosensitive damage caused to skin by plants

Many species of Umbellifer, especially Wild Parsnip, can cause people to develop a severe skin irritation from contact with the sap. Umbellifer plants have chemicals that cause photosensitive damage to the skin when exposed to UV light on both sunny and cloudy days.

Umbellifer burns usually occur in streaks and elongated spots, reflecting where a damaged leaf or stem moved across the skin before exposure to sunlight. If the sap gets into the eyes, it may cause temporary or permanent blindness.

The problems with these plants can occur throughout the summer.

If working near these plants it is advised to keep your skin covered, if you think you have got sap on your skin the advice is to wash the area thoroughly and keep the affected area protected from UV light. If burns occur seek medical advice.



Pictured: Wild Parsnip