



# Countryside Engagement Plan

Engaging with residents through Parish Councils

November 2022

## Introduction

This plan outlines the countryside services strategy for engaging with its residents, specifically through engagement with parish councils.

Hart District Council is primarily committed to engaging with and informing parish councils of site works and activities as they represent the voice of the community at a local level. Good communications and engagement with parish councils is therefore key to Hart Countryside's overarching engagement plan. Through their voice we can engage with all residents in a parish ward, not just a site's adjoining landowners.

Successful engagement with local people will reduce instances of discontent, helping to build a positive relationship with the communities which we serve. We also hope understanding why these works are taking place might inspire the next generation of countryside ambassadors. Strong partnership working will help to identify common interests and help identify opportunities for joint working, helping to save costs.

This plan sits in line with the councils [Corporate Communications and Engagement Strategy](#). They should not be read in isolation. The Countryside plan focuses on specific engagement with parish councils as an outcome of informing the local community of management activities and decisions on our countryside sites.

## Key Stakeholders

Hart District Council engages and works with many different stakeholders in order to maintain 16 sites, equating to 425 hectares of land or 1050 acres. Stakeholder groups include:

- Other Local Authorities
- Parish Councils
- Residents
- County Councils
- Volunteers
- Interested groups such as the Hartley Wintney Heritage Society
- NGO's (Charities etc)

**Table 1. List of countryside sites and parish they sit within.**

Name	Parish area
Fleet Pond	Fleet
Hartland Country Park	Fleet
Edenbrook Country Park	Fleet
Bramshot Farm Country Park	Fleet
Elvetham Heath Nature Reserve	Elvetham
Odiham Common	Odiham
Broad Oak Common	Odiham
Hazeley Heath	Hartley Wintney / Mattingley



Hartley Wintney Central Commons Includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Central Common</li> <li>• Cricketers Green</li> <li>• Causeway Green</li> <li>• Hunts Common</li> </ul>	Hartley Wintney
Phoenix Green	Hartley Wintney
Queen Elizabeth II Fields	Hartley Wintney
West Green Common	Hartley Wintney
Stoken Green	Hartley Wintney
Cricket Hill Pond	Yateley
Royal Oak Valley	Yateley
Whitewater Meadows	Hook
Ashwell's Copse	Hook

Each site is unique and has its own countryside management plan tailored specifically to the site's ecology and habitats. The countryside services engagement plan needs to take account of each areas unique characteristics and adapt to changing communities and evolving priorities. Each site management plan will have a section on engagement, which will reflect these site-specific differences.

## Hart District Council's Communications Channels

### Digital

The countryside service regularly schedule countryside specific social media posts that go out on our main corporate channels listed below:

#### Facebook

The official Facebook page for Hart District Council, run by the Communications team can be found here: [facebook.com/HartDistrictCouncil](https://facebook.com/HartDistrictCouncil). On this page there is a range of information from each service area and the latest news from across the district.

#### Twitter

The official twitter channel of Hart District Council can be found here: [@HartCouncil](https://twitter.com/HartCouncil). Keeping up to date with projects, the latest news and events across the district

#### Instagram

Harts Districts official [Instagram account](#) keeps up to date with projects, the latest news and events across the district.

#### LinkedIn

The Council update our [LinkedIn page](#) regularly with business news.

#### YouTube

[Hart District Council YouTube Channel](#). This is used to live stream Council meetings.

## Website

Hart's Countryside Service has its own pages on Hart District Councils website. These can be found under: [hart.gov.uk/countryside-nature](http://hart.gov.uk/countryside-nature). Information about all our sites, projects, volunteering, and events can be found here.

## Publications

Hart District Council publish [Hart News](#) twice a year - in the spring/summer and autumn/winter – it is delivered to all households in Hart District. Hart News is used to tell residents about the services we provide, local activities and events. There is also information in Hart News about some of the things the council's partners, such as the police and local housing associations, are doing.

Limited advertising space is offered for local businesses and organisations, for more information, stakeholders can email [hartnews@hart.gov.uk](mailto:hartnews@hart.gov.uk) or download the council's [media pack](#).

Councillor Connect is an electronic publication that is circulated every other week. Its content is aimed specifically at Parish and Town councillors to keep them in the loop about Hart's activities and any other related information.

At each countryside site there is a site notice board. Updates and notifications about works are displayed here on the noticeboards on posters.

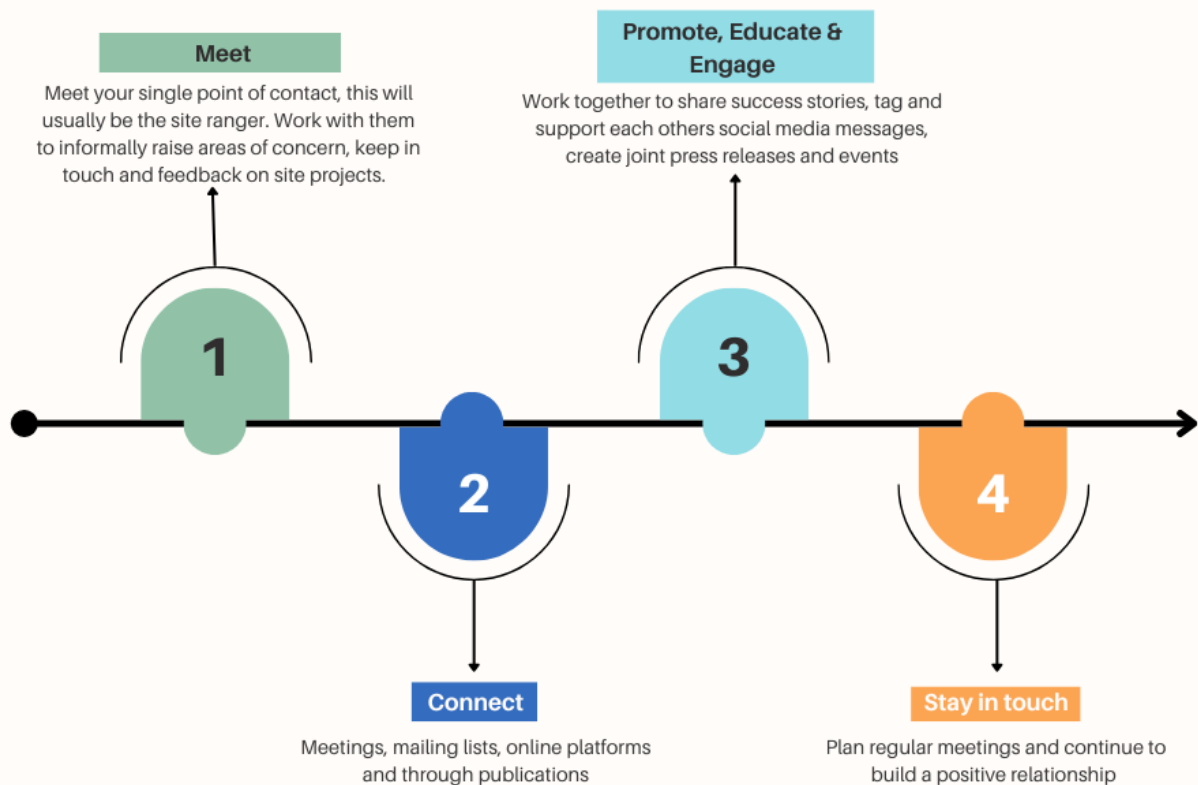
The Countryside Service also makes use of local press, magazines, leaflets and/or any publication to engage with its target audience. HDC will work with Parish councils to identify key contact points for the community and provide content for any relevant communications. For example, Contact magazine in Hartley Wintney and the Fleet Pond Society's members newsletter.

## Feedback and complaints

Hart District Council hopes that parish councils will be happy with the service they receive. The Council always strives to build strong working relationships with stakeholders and when we get it right, we hope to hear from our partners. Feedback can be provided by filling in the council's [customer feedback form](#).

Hart District Council's [customer care standards](#) set out our promise around our services. We endeavour to get things right first time, but when things do go wrong, we want to know, so that we can put it right. More about Hart District Councils full feedback and complaints process can be found here: [hart.gov.uk/feedback](http://hart.gov.uk/feedback)

# Parish Council Engagement Plan



## Meet

The area site ranger will formally meet with representatives from the parish council to discuss present and future works on site. They will also discuss successes and lessons learnt from previous projects. This will give the parish an opportunity to record any issues, concerns or positive feedback that is being raised by their residents. We aim for these meetings to take place every quarter as a maximum but may be less if both parties agree.

The area site ranger will have a positive relationship with their respective parish councils and will be available for frequent informal chats and meetings.

## Connect

The Countryside Service Communications and Engagement Officer should be put in contact with communications colleagues. The communications leads can then stay in contact, discuss publication options, potential mailing lists they may wish to join and share ideas. Including connecting on social media platforms to allow tagging on posts relating to their local sites, for them to share with their followers.

## Promote, Educate and Engage

Once a strong partnership has developed, it may be mutually beneficial for the interested parties to work together on joint events, press releases or projects. Working together could identify mutual interests where there may be mutual benefit in working together and the council are very keen to seek out these opportunities where possible.

## Stay in touch

Regular meetings should be planned into the diary so that the teams do not fall out of touch, and we are able to continue to develop a working relationship.

## Volunteering

Harts Countryside Service offers a range of volunteering opportunities that are run at sites across the district. This is a great way to engage with residents and creates local ambassadors for Hart's green spaces. More information about how residents can get involved can be found here:

[hart.gov.uk/volunteering](http://hart.gov.uk/volunteering)

There are also opportunities for local businesses, schools and uniformed groups to take part in site activities and learn about their local greenspace.

## Public Consultation

There may be times when larger scale engagement is required, for example when a project is taking place on site, which will directly affect residents neighbouring the site, or for any large scale works on Common Land.

In this instance a more focused engagement plan will be required. Individual householders may be written to or invited to a meeting to discuss the works. This is called Public Consultation and requires us to work to set guidelines.

For works on Common Land, which require permission from the Secretary of State, there is a set method of communication called '[A Common Purpose](#)' which is an agreed format for consultation, which will be utilised in this instance.

## Formal Partnership Agreements

There are some circumstances when Hart District Council may wish to enter into a formal partnership working arrangement with local groups.

These organised groups will have a close working relationship with the council to inform management of the site. They will participate through active volunteering on site, significant financial contributions, and grant funding applications, for example, the Fleet Pond Society. It will be at the discretion of the Countryside Manager, whether a group or society meets the requirements for a formalised partnership agreement.