

THE ENGLEFIELD ESTATE ANNUAL REVIEW

# ENGLEFIELD ECHO

## CONNECTING PEOPLE AND PLACES

Caring for the environment and the well-being of  
those who live and work in it

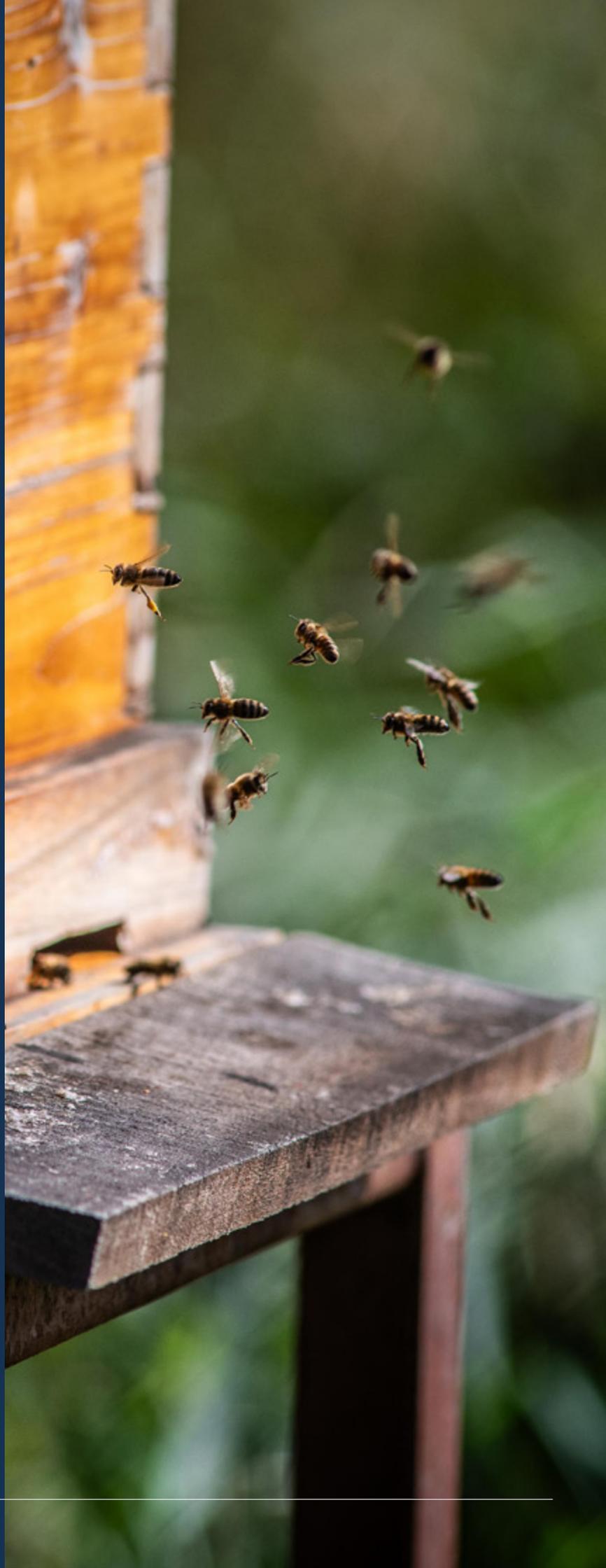


ENGLEFIELD  
ESTATE

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 *Estates Director Edward Crookes, Site Manager Angelo Moretti of Stonewood Builders, and architect Katie Pottrill of ADAM Architecture view the progress of the work at the Estate Yard*





# ENGLEFIELD ESTATE



## Meeting our challenges

The history and traditions of our Estates are important to those of us who live and work at Englefield, the Benyon Estate or Glenmazeran, particularly during these demanding times.

But we know that we are not immune from the effects of challenges, or the need to adapt to meet them.

In the pages of this year's Echo there are many examples of how the Estates are rising to the challenges, as they affect the environment, farming, education, and the physical and mental health of those around us.

The work we have been doing over many years to reduce our carbon footprint, for example, has this year been formally recognised with a Carbon Literacy Award. Thanks to all those who took part in the training and who are helping us on the journey to net zero.

Our commitment to helping to educate the young about the countryside and how it is managed, through the ever-popular Schools Days, has also been honoured with an award. Congratulations to the organisers and supporters that

make this such a successful event, year in and year out.

And with wildlife under increasing pressure, it is heartening to see the positive outcomes from our participation in the project to bring back Golden Eagles to southern Scotland, and of the work we are doing at Englefield to improve biodiversity, while continuing to operate a sustainable and financially viable farming operation.

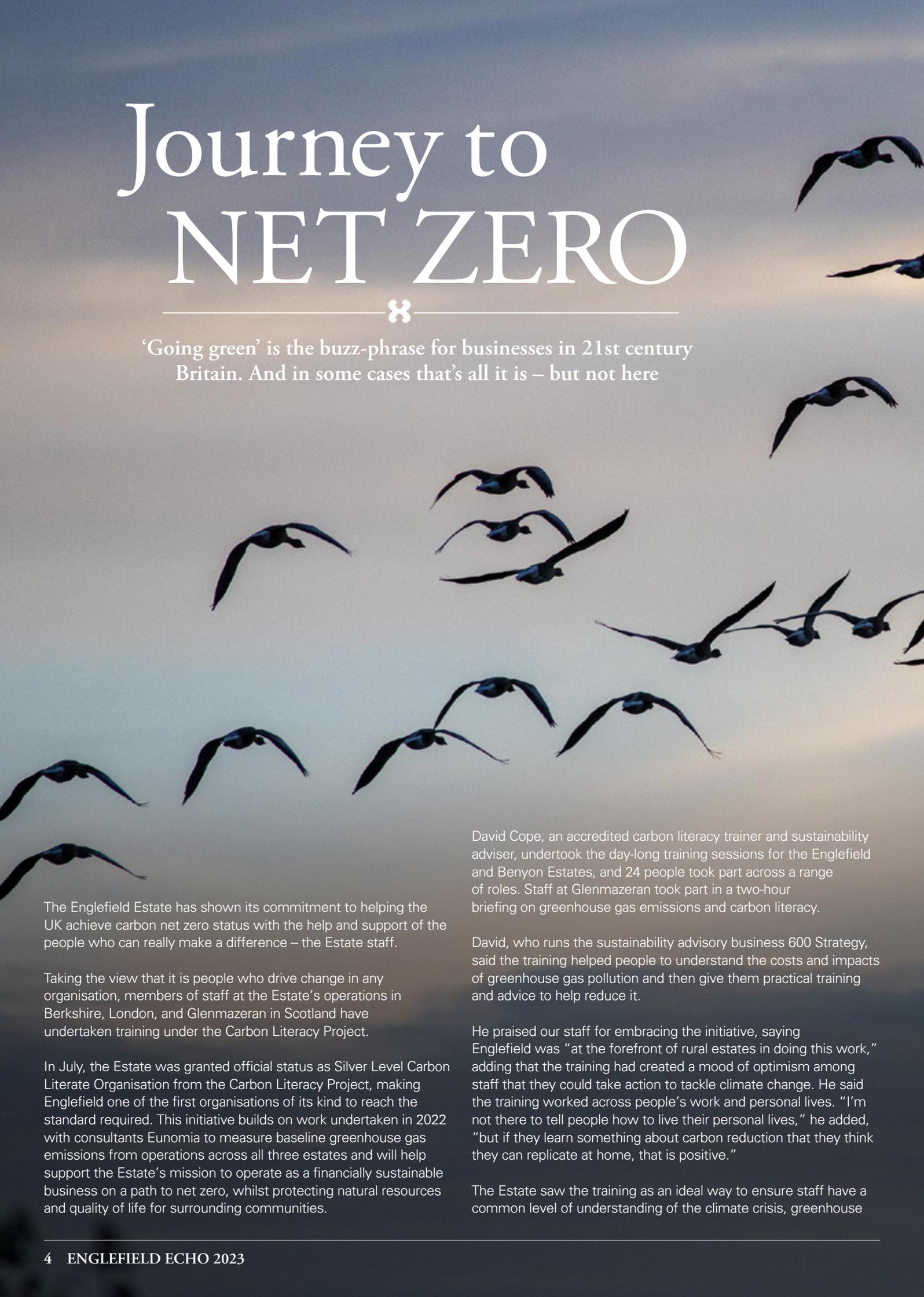
Finally, I am delighted that we are making significant progress in cataloguing, photographing, and preserving the important artifacts at Englefield House, to ensure that they are cared for so that future generations may enjoy them.

Maintaining our history and traditions while looking to the future and adapting to change go to the heart of the way we run our Estates.

I hope you enjoy this year's Englefield Echo.

*Richard Benyon.*

# Journey to NET ZERO



‘Going green’ is the buzz-phrase for businesses in 21st century Britain. And in some cases that’s all it is – but not here

The Englefield Estate has shown its commitment to helping the UK achieve carbon net zero status with the help and support of the people who can really make a difference – the Estate staff.

Taking the view that it is people who drive change in any organisation, members of staff at the Estate’s operations in Berkshire, London, and Glenmazeran in Scotland have undertaken training under the Carbon Literacy Project.

In July, the Estate was granted official status as Silver Level Carbon Literate Organisation from the Carbon Literacy Project, making Englefield one of the first organisations of its kind to reach the standard required. This initiative builds on work undertaken in 2022 with consultants Eunomia to measure baseline greenhouse gas emissions from operations across all three estates and will help support the Estate’s mission to operate as a financially sustainable business on a path to net zero, whilst protecting natural resources and quality of life for surrounding communities.

David Cope, an accredited carbon literacy trainer and sustainability adviser, undertook the day-long training sessions for the Englefield and Benyon Estates, and 24 people took part across a range of roles. Staff at Glenmazeran took part in a two-hour briefing on greenhouse gas emissions and carbon literacy.

David, who runs the sustainability advisory business 600 Strategy, said the training helped people to understand the costs and impacts of greenhouse gas pollution and then give them practical training and advice to help reduce it.

He praised our staff for embracing the initiative, saying Englefield was “at the forefront of rural estates in doing this work,” adding that the training had created a mood of optimism among staff that they could take action to tackle climate change. He said the training worked across people’s work and personal lives. “I’m not there to tell people how to live their personal lives,” he added, “but if they learn something about carbon reduction that they think they can replicate at home, that is positive.”

The Estate saw the training as an ideal way to ensure staff have a common level of understanding of the climate crisis, greenhouse



gas emissions, and how those emissions can be tackled. It also meant staff are now directly involved in designing working methods to reduce emissions.

Edward Crookes, Estates Director, said: "The Carbon Literacy Project has increased our teams' knowledge about climate change and climate action. We have already seen that training can encourage more climate-conscious behaviour both in the workplace and at home.

"We are committed to embedding climate change into our decision-making processes at all levels and developing our plans to help reach net zero, working both within our organisation and by knowledge sharing with others."

And on the granting of Silver Status for Carbon Literacy across the states, he praised the hard work of staff. "Achieving this recognition is something we can all be extremely proud of and it is an important step in the Estate's commitment to playing our part to address climate change," he said.

Carbon Literacy is described as an "awareness of the carbon costs and impacts of everyday activities and the ability and motivation to reduce emissions, on an individual, community and organisational basis."

For Estate staff on a practical level that means doing things differently to help cut the use of fossil fuels which, as well as doing the right thing for the planet, makes good business sense as well. Other clients David Cope has worked with on Carbon Literacy and

sustainability include the Duchy of Cornwall, the Royal Countryside Fund, the Country Land and Business Association, the Natural History Museum and the Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs.

Dr Liz Mattison, our Education and Environment Officer, said: "David gave our team the opportunity to discuss and reflect on the worrying implications of climate change, while really inspiring positive feelings and 'can do' attitudes towards reducing our greenhouse gas emissions."

Changes the Estate has already implemented on the road to net zero include measuring soil carbon levels and altering farm management practices to help reduce agricultural emissions. Advice has been provided through membership of the Lower Pang and Kennet Farmer Cluster.

The Estate has also introduced a 'no idling' policy for its vehicles to reduce carbon dioxide emissions and is working with suppliers to boost electronic invoicing and further reduce printing and postage. New staff are given a Carbon Literacy briefing as part of their induction process too.

Staff found the training not only equipped them with the practical knowledge and skills to reduce their own carbon footprint but also allowed them to discuss issues that prey on the minds of many of us, as the threat from climate change becomes ever more obvious.

Englefield employs sustainable methods of working, including participating in agri-environment schemes, gaining Forest Stewardship Council certification, sustainable construction methods, recycling, organic peat-free gardening, peatland restoration at Glenmazeran, providing land for renewable energy and using renewable energy for the Estate's electricity needs. 



## Sue Broughton, Head Gardener

Head Gardener at Englefield, Sue Broughton, said the carbon literacy training had been a useful reminder of the difference small changes can make – even something as simple as turning off lights – to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

And she said the course has helped underline the importance of measures already being taken in the gardens to become more environmentally friendly, as well as giving advice on beneficial changes in the home.

Sue said: “The training was very useful. It gave me a broader picture of how what

we do affects so much – and also how it is possible to store carbon and remove it from the atmosphere.

“In the gardens we are already cutting down on tilling and digging because that releases carbon. We’ve been turning more areas over to become wild, which increases insect life. And we are identifying areas where we can reduce mowing, so cutting the use of fuel.

“We are also looking at ways to get water butts in the kitchen garden, harvesting rainwater that lands on the structures in the garden.” ✂



## Duncan Urquhart, Maintenance Manager

Duncan Urquhart, Maintenance Manager at the Benyon Estate, took part in the carbon literacy training with David Cope.

He said: “We really enjoyed David’s course. It was linked to each individual’s role on the Estate, which I really liked. We walked around the Estate and he asked each of us what roles we carried out and



asked us questions on how we thought we could improve our carbon footprint and made suggestions himself.

“For me, as Maintenance Manager for the properties, looking at the way we manage the front and rear gardens was important. Aspects such as helping the insect life to thrive, looking after the plants, how we irrigate – all those little things can make a big difference. He also talked about making changes inside the properties, using low-energy light bulbs and installing draught excluders around windows really helps reduce

## Sheanay Humes, Maintenance and Procurement Administrator

Benyon Estate Maintenance and Procurement Administrator Sheanay Humes admitted that before the carbon literacy training, she hadn't paid too much attention to environmental issues.

She realised there were small changes she could personally make that would help reduce greenhouse gas emissions – including one of the most straightforward – always turning off her laptop at the end of the day!

Learning about other departments across the Englefield, Benyon and Glenmazeran estates helped to show that, by working together, staff can come up with solutions to help reduce the damage being done to the planet, she explained.

She said: "When you pull a group together and ask them to focus on the topic you really start to see what you can do. Sharing ideas and discussing the issues amongst ourselves was really useful – we all realised that by each of us making small changes we could really have a positive impact."

She said the Benyon Estate is now actively looking at ways to encourage and advise tenants on making changes to reduce their carbon emissions at home. And she said when contractors are called out she now tries, whenever possible, to arrange for them to carry out a number of jobs, to reduce the amount of travelling required.

She added: "Our staff are always on hand to provide valuable advice on how tenants can take care of items in their homes in an environmentally-friendly way." ✨



energy use and keeps properties warm." Duncan said the course also included advice on making changes in Estate staff's own life, away from work, to cut their environmental impact.

He said there were challenges on the Estate in balancing the management of older properties with working to reduce carbon emissions. "People want to live in character buildings, but there are drawbacks when it comes to reducing our carbon footprint," he said. "We are putting David's suggestions into practice and it seems to be going well." ✨



# *Praise for* SCHOOLS DAYS

It's always a big hit with the children – and now the event has been granted official recognition



Everyone involved in the Estate's Schools Days knows how much they are appreciated by the pupils, school staff and supporting organisations which take part. But it is always gratifying to get outside endorsement, so we were extremely proud at the announcement, made in September, that Englefield's Schools Days

have been granted the prestigious Sandford Award for Heritage Education.

After an exhaustive assessment during a site visit in June this year, the assessor found the event, which annually welcomes more than 1,500 primary school children to Englefield, to be "supremely well-organised, safe, accessible and inspirational."

Staff from departments across the 14,000-acre Estate in Berkshire were joined by experts from other organisations in June as the grounds at Englefield were transformed into an outdoor classroom for the 26th annual Schools Days.

Among the many activities that were organised this year, students worked with the Estate's maintenance team to build tree sparrow nest boxes, learned how wheat is grown and turned into flour, and planned a water supply system. The topics covered during the days were: health and wellbeing; history; habitats and wildlife; trees and timber; farming and food; community and energy and water – and the Estate was praised for including lots of practical work and hands-on experience, as well as giving the pupils detailed information.

In its citation alongside the award the assessor said: "The Schools Days at Englefield Estate offer pupils exciting, interactive and memorable experiences that have a powerful effect on their understanding and appreciation of sustainability. The beautiful landscape

“  
 The Schools Days at  
 Englefield Estate offer  
 pupils exciting, interactive  
 and memorable experiences  
 ”



**H** Pupil from  
 Hampstead Norreys  
 Primary School  
 learns about  
 renewable energy

and impressive Englefield House provide an excellent setting for exploring local heritage and the natural environment.

"The Benyon family, the Estate staff and the partner organisations together generously share their knowledge and passion with schools to facilitate thoughtful engagement and meaningful learning. The Schools Days are supremely well-organised to be safe, accessible and inspirational."

Dr Liz Mattison, Englefield Estate's Education and Environment Officer, said the granting of the Sandford Award was "a credit to all involved."

She went on: "We know how much schools value the annual Schools Days from the feedback we get from teachers and pupils, but to have this endorsement and the granting of a Sandford Award is extremely rewarding. It is truly a team effort to put on this event and the credit should go to all those who played their part, both from the Estate and the outside organisations."

Well done to everyone who took part. **H**



*✘ Pupils from St Anne's Catholic Primary School planning a water supply system*

# DIGGING *for victory in* FIGHT *for* NATURE

**Five new ponds have been created on the Flats at Mayridge Farm, on the Englefield Estate, to boost and connect habitats for freshwater invertebrates and amphibians, farmland birds and water-loving plants.**

But there was a lot of work to do before the excavators moved in. It took a year for planning permission to be granted by West Berkshire Council – and the Estate’s Education and Environment Officer Dr Liz Mattison had to organise archaeological surveys as well as stick to a Construction Environmental Management Plan to ensure the ponds were built in a way that doesn’t harm existing biodiversity and habitats or archaeological features.

Two of the ponds have been created from existing structures – one a hollow that needed lining in order to hold water and the other a disused slurry pit. Three more have been dug out from scratch.

Liz and Head Keeper David Wiggins have been heading up the project. Liz said jumping through all the administrative hoops to bring the project to fruition was hard work but justified. “An area of land may have different attributes and the planning process helps to make sure that you make conscious decisions about what those attributes are,” she said.

“On the farm we are balancing food production, nature conservation and preservation of the historic landscape. The planning application, and the guidance that came with it, considered each factor carefully.”

With the ponds now filling with rainwater the wildlife will hopefully start to move in. Liz said: “There are multiple reasons for doing this work. Aquatic plants and animals, particularly invertebrates and amphibians, are vulnerable to the effects of climate change. The ability to migrate south to north, and between the wider variety of microclimates formed by the new ponds, should help them to cope with future conditions.”

Species including newts, frogs and toads, bats, damselflies and dragonflies will benefit from the creation of the

ponds, along with water-dependent plants like starworts, irises, water mint, purple loosestrife and meadowsweet. Liz went on: “The other reason for this is we’ve already created habitat areas such as hedges, scrub, pollen and nectar plots, ground nesting areas and overwinter stubbles to encourage farmland birds and an important attribute is also fresh water. Species like the turtle dove, which we are trying to encourage, and yellowhammer, lapwing and grey partridge, which breed here but are at risk nationally, should all benefit.

“50% of farm ponds have been lost in the UK since the 1970s and we’re trying to redress that. The area of the Flats is a part of the Kennet Valley that would once have been very wet. The Kennet and Avon Canal, the railway and the A4 road have all affected the hydrology of the area. As a result of those changes, ponds and wetlands dried up.

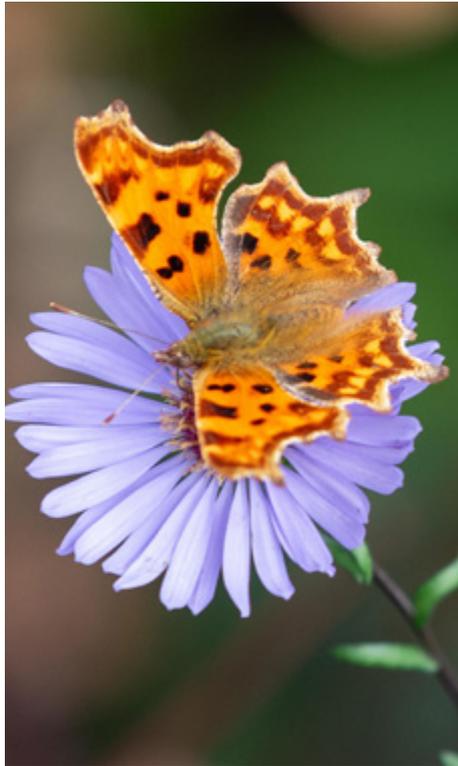


“We are creating buffer zones around the ponds to protect them from nutrient run-off and increase the wildlife area. They are also positioned to support species’ ecological needs. For example, one is by a ground nesting bird area used by lapwing and skylark while others are adjacent to hedgerows, which help amphibians and reptiles move across the landscape.”

Liz said the changing seasons will affect the ponds, which should fill to the brim after winter rains and partially dry out in summer. As the water recedes mud will be revealed, providing another habitat for insects and birds that thrive in those conditions.

The area is part of the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and funding to create the ponds has come from the Farming in a Protected Landscapes programme.

Englefield Home Farm is also engaged with the Government’s new Countryside Stewardship Scheme, which supports farmers as they adjust to new support regimes following Brexit. Under two options of the Government’s Countryside Stewardship Scheme – AB15 two year sown legume fallow and GS4 legume and herb-rich swards – around 100 hectares of land on Englefield Home Farms were sown with herbal leys following the 2023



✂ Top row, L-R: grey partridge, comma butterfly, a honey bee. Second row, L-R: common lizard, Hereford cows, yellowhammer. Bottom row, L-R: northern lapwing and turtle dove



harvest. The benefits for the soil and the environment more widely, are significant.

James Meade, Head of Rural Property and Land at Englefield, said: "Our farm strategy is to establish a path to net zero and be nature positive whilst remaining financially viable. This is a part of the journey to regenerative agriculture, increasing carbon sequestration, and reducing emissions."

"The five principles of re-generative agriculture are to minimise soil disturbance, maximise crop diversity, keep the soil covered, maintain living roots year-round, and integrate livestock."

James explained the benefits for nature of planting herbal leys: "First of all you have wild flowers, which are good for pollinators; secondly you don't need to use fertiliser so you are reducing your carbon footprint and thirdly you will be sowing a mix in the ley with some deep-rooted plants that help with water infiltration and improve soil structure."

The leys stay in place for two years, getting a cut to manage the blackgrass, and when the land comes to be drilled again for cereals the expectation is that the improvements to the soil will mean less fertiliser is needed, more carbon will have been captured and the soil structure will have improved.

James added: "We are trying to do less heavy cultivations and more direct drilling of arable crops to minimise soil disturbance and prevent the release of carbon."

Work to measure the carbon in the soil is underway. This year, eleven fields have been tested for soil organic matter and bulk density, to act as a benchmark. The tests will be carried out again in five years to check for changes and demonstrate if the policies are effective.

Head Gamekeeper David Wiggins has also had a major part to play in nature recovery on Englefield Home Farms. In the past 15 years he has been responsible for the planting of more than 5,000 metres of new hedgerow, some on the line of where old hedges once stood and others created from scratch.

The impact has been significant, particularly in support of the project to bring back native wild grey partridges, launched on the Estate in 2009. David's work also helps ground-nesting lapwing, which this year fledged a total of 39 chicks from 16 adult pairs on the Estate. Yellowhammer numbers are also rising, he said. 



# Soaring success for our Golden Eagles at Glenmazeran

**A project to bring back Golden Eagles to the south of Scotland has been supported by the Glenmazeran Estate and the results so far are encouraging**

Two Golden Eagles from the Glenmazeran Estate in Inverness-shire have been re-located to the south of Scotland as part of a ground-breaking project to boost numbers there.

The first bird, a female named Iona, was introduced to her new home two years ago and by the summer this year had paired up with a male bird in the Moffat Hills of Dumfries and Galloway, raising hopes that once she is of breeding age she may have chicks.

And the second bird, a male named Haworth, brought from Glenmazeran as a six-week-old eaglet in May this year, started hunting for himself in September after leaving one of the specially-built aviaries where the project team initially care for the young birds.

Estates Director Edward Crookes said: "We're delighted to be working with the South of Scotland Golden Eagle Project. This partnership is a fantastic example of how sporting estates and gamekeepers make a positive impact through the conservation of rare heather moorland and the wildlife which lives there."

The South of Scotland Golden Eagle Festival Project partners – made up of the Southern Uplands Partnership, RSPB Scotland, Scottish Land & Estates, Scottish Forestry and NatureScot - worked on the project together for more than 11 years before releasing the first eagle chicks in 2018.

Funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund, project partners and the Scottish Government, the initiative is a key project under the Government's



✠ *Haworth, a juvenile male eagle from Glenmazeran explores his new home*

'Challenge for Scotland's Biodiversity'.

The pioneering project was designed to improve numbers of this iconic Scottish bird of prey which was in danger of dying out in the south of the country. Eaglets are taken from eyries in the Highlands where at least two young have hatched and where Golden Eagle numbers are thriving.

The project has earned widespread support from landowners, conservationists and the Scottish Government and has so far proved a remarkable success with over 40 Golden Eagles now soaring in the skies over Dumfries and Galloway and the Scottish Borders.

Dr Cat Barlow, South of Scotland Golden Eagle Project Manager, said: "We've had two chicks from the Glenmazeran Estate. We are grateful to the private landowners in the north of Scotland who allow us to translocate these birds to an area where, very sadly, they could so easily have become extinct, but where they are now increasing in numbers."

Iona, the first bird from Glenmazeran to make a new home as part of the project, was named by wildlife TV presenter Iolo Williams. He said it was "an honour" to be asked to name the young bird which was filmed shortly afterwards demonstrating hunting behaviours, pursuing a woodpigeon over the release site in southern Scotland.

“  
Eagles choose nesting sites that are difficult to access, often on mountain crags or tall trees, which can make obtaining the chicks a challenge  
”

Now two-years-old, Iona is settled into her new home and helping to fulfil the aims of the South of Scotland Golden Eagle Project by finding a mate and, in time, hopefully producing more eagles to further boost numbers.

Iona was taken from a nest on the Glenmazeran Estate in a fully licenced operation that puts the welfare of the birds first at every stage. Cat said that when news comes in from volunteers on an Estate that there is the potential to obtain an eaglet, a team makes the trip north to the site.

She said: "We work with a volunteer who monitors the nest – working with the Estate. He lets us know when there is an eyrie with twins and then myself, an eagle officer, a vet and a climber – sometimes two climbers – travel to the area."

Eagles choose nesting sites that are difficult to access, often on mountain crags or tall trees, which can make obtaining the chicks a challenge.

Once the eaglet has been brought from the nest and undergone veterinary checks, the chosen bird is carried in a specially made basket back to a vehicle for the drive south. Cat said it was important to avoid too much human contact. "They need to be completely wild," she said.

Food is provided as they learn to hunt but, as Haworth, the second Glenmazeran eagle has shown, it does not take long for them to leave the aviary and begin to learn to fend for themselves, helping to ensure the long-term survival of Golden Eagles in southern Scotland. ✠



## We're keeping De Beauvoir Town green and pleasant

The team at the Benyon Estate have been working hard to keep the natural environment that is such an important part of De Beauvoir Town looking its best.

That includes caring for the 36 specimen trees, including replanting species important in an urban environment.

Regular maintenance checks are carried out and, where necessary, trees that have come to the end of their life are removed and replaced.

The work is part of the Benyon Estate's commitment to the natural environment, providing habitats for wildlife, improving the gardens for tenants and visitors and enhancing the street scene.

Among the tree species growing across De Beauvoir Town are sycamore, lime, ash, horse chestnut, acer and hazel.

Duncan Urquhart, Benyon Estate Maintenance Manager, said: "We inspect all the plants and on the rare occasion a tree is not healthy we call in a firm called Custom Cutters, a North London firm of professional tree surgeons.

"They come to inspect the tree and they apply to Hackney Council for whatever permission is needed for the work required."

Duncan said new trees were regularly planted in the gardens of properties belonging to the Estate. When a full refurbishment of a property is carried out, Steven Whitby, Benyon Estate Building Surveyor, takes the opportunity to put in more plants and trees.

Duncan added: "One of the features of De Beauvoir is how green it is. We aim to maintain and enhance that quality as we care for the Estate." 🌿



## David's busy with his bees

Gamekeeper David Wiggins has a new string to his bow – beekeeping.

His wife, Ellen, bought him his first beehive for Christmas and he has since added a second, with two more ready to go out to add to the growing apiary. David said: "We've put in all these wild flowers for the birds and insects, so it made sense to put the hive alongside them. We've already had ten kilos of honey from them."

Tasting the honey has been especially popular with David and Ellen's grandson, Freddie, aged 5, who already has his own miniature beekeeping suit. David said: "He's a proper little honey monster!" 🐝



# FALLEN TREES *help* SALMON

**Gamekeeper Murray Wilson is working to find a new use for fallen timber on the Glenmazeran Estate**

Work to improve the environmental value of a stream on the Glenmazeran Estate has begun, with a project to put fallen trees into the water to divert the flow, helping spawning salmon and reducing the flood risk downstream.

The concept of using timber obstructions has been proven elsewhere to help with flood alleviation as well as enhancing the natural state of the river to provide a wide range of habitats for wildlife, including spawning fish.

Large wooden structures (LWS) are introduced into the watercourse helping to build up sand and shingle bars and create scoured-out pools where fish can hide from predatory birds like herons and sawbill ducks, including merganser and goosander.

Eco-engineering firm cbec, who were commissioned by the Findhorn Watershed Initiative, has carried out an assessment of the best spots along the stream to place trees and other natural debris that can kick-start natural river processes. As global temperatures increase the measures should create cooler refuge areas in the river to provide cover for all aquatic life.

The longer-term plan is to plant many more trees alongside the river so that branches and even whole trees will start to fall into the water, as the trees grow, age and then die.

To get the scheme underway, Glenmazeran Head Gamekeeper Murray Wilson has overseen an operation to take trees that have fallen elsewhere on the Estate and position them in the water at key points along the Glenmazeran Burn.

He said: "We've got a natural stock of fallen trees that have had their time in the woods in the Glen, right in the middle of the Estate. We had a couple of contractors in with their diggers and underkeeper James



✂ Large wooden structures are placed in the Glenmazeran Burn

Edgar and I worked with them to pick up the trees and put them in the river."

He said the trees helped divert the flow of the water and caused scouring on the river bed to create deeper pools, to help the salmon. "It's a major spawning burn for the river Findhorn – we want to provide whatever cover from predators that we can," he added.

The study carried out so far suggests putting large trees into the burn will have the greatest beneficial effect in achieving the desired outcomes and reversing the impact of historic dredging of the Glenmazeran Burn.

Murray said: "What we are doing is replicating what would have happened naturally many, many years ago when there was tree cover all along the burns. This is a quick fix until we can establish more tree cover but we can already see the impact it is having, scouring out pools in the river and diverting it, when it's in spate, across the floodplain." ✂

✂ Gamekeeper and now beekeeper, David Wiggins





# RESTORED TO GLORY

## Looking after the contents of Englefield House takes teamwork – but it is well worth all the effort

The discovery of a wedding dress stored in a cupboard in Englefield House has brought to light the remarkable story of Lady Violet Peek, who married Henry Benyon just after the start of the First World War and lived a long life on the Estate, much of it dedicated to public service.

The dress was found by Head Housekeeper Amanda Thacker and Zoe Benyon in 2020. Amanda said they were taking advantage of having time to go through cupboards while the House was closed because of the Covid pandemic.

“I found this bundle in a cupboard and Zoe immediately spotted what it was,” Amanda said. “She had already found a pair of shoes elsewhere that Violet had worn at her wedding and we were so pleased to find the dress as well.”

Violet, who came from Rousdon on the Devon-Dorset

border, and Henry – known as Harry – the only son of Mr JH Benyon of Englefield, were engaged and married within weeks in the spring of 1915. Harry, who was serving with the Berkshire Yeomanry, was sent to Alexandria, Egypt, where Violet was allowed to join him.

She worked in Egypt during the first part of the 1914-18 war for the Red Cross – a pattern of public service that was to be repeated right through her life. The couple returned to England when Harry was invalided home in 1917. When the war ended and was demobbed the couple moved into Ufton Court on the Estate.

As well as modernising the house and enlarging the garden, Violet threw herself into voluntary work, becoming county director of Berkshire Red Cross, joining the committee of the Royal Berkshire Hospital and serving as an active member of the District Nursing



✦ Head Housekeeper  
Amanda Thacker  
preserves Lady Violet's  
wedding dress



Once items are cleaned and ready for storage Amanda has strict rules – use acid-free boxes, acid-free paper – and only touch the items when wearing white gloves.

Society, and a Berkshire County Councillor for almost 30 years.

The couple moved into Englefield House and in 1946 Harry Benyon was appointed Lord Lieutenant of Berkshire and later, in 1958, became a Baronet, in recognition of his service to the county. Harry died in 1959, aged 75, and Violet, who continued to live at Englefield, passed away in the spring of 1963. She was 77.

Violet's wedding dress needed careful handling after spending years locked away but Head Housekeeper Amanda, with the support of her team, is an expert in caring for fragile clothing and other material that has come under attack from moths.

Amanda came to Englefield from Chatsworth, the home of the Duke and Duchess of Devonshire, and has brought with her many skills, including a rigorous approach to the control of moths and other pest species that pose a threat to clothes and other fabrics.

She said: "In a big house you are not going to get rid of moths – but you have to try to keep on top of them. It's a constant battle."

Amanda said her plan of attack includes keeping chimneys clean – as they can harbour birds, which attract moths – vigorous Hoovering and dusting, the use of environmentally-friendly moth sprays and freezing items of clothing that harbour the moths and eggs as they cannot survive in very low temperatures.

Once items are cleaned and ready for storage she has strict rules – use acid-free boxes, acid-free paper – and only touch the items when wearing white gloves.

Along with Violet's wedding dress the lockdown searches at Englefield turned up other historic items of clothing, including a number of military uniforms. All have undergone moth treatment and cleaning and are now safely stored, to Amanda's exacting standards.

Amanda paid tribute to her cleaning team who support her with this archiving project and keeping the house clean including Donna Shipp (Cleaning Supervisor), Karen Rose, Leanne Taylor and Natalia Boloteniuk, who came to Englefield from Ukraine after the invasion by Russia. 



## Keeping a record of our history in the digital age

A major project to catalogue items of historic value in Englefield House was launched by Richard Benyon's personal assistant, Michele De Angeli, and is now being undertaken by Anna McLean, right, who has joined the team for the painstaking job of compiling a comprehensive database.

Anna photographs and catalogues items, which are checked to assess their historical importance and state of repair. The aim is to build up a complete digital record of every item and, where appropriate, begin restoration work.

Using a sophisticated computer programme the work is slowly turning out-of-date and incomplete lists of the contents of the house into a complete record – unearthing and identifying some important objects along the way.

Gareth Hughes, a curator and conservator, visits the house for a week once a month to evaluate, clean, restore and catalogue cutlery, plates, porcelain and books.

With years of experience, working with special collections in museums and historic houses, Gareth has been able to clean and restore some historic objects which help to tell the story of Englefield down the centuries.



**H** L-R Cleaning Supervisor Donna Shipp; PA to Richard Benyon, Michele De Angeli; Cleaner Leanne Taylor; and Head Housekeeper, Amanda Thacker



Among the items now properly catalogued and stored is a large collection of pewterware, once in regular use by the kitchen staff in the old kitchen and pantry, and of historic interest because each piece bears a crest, an unusual feature in pewterware.

In the cellar a large quantity of old china has been checked and some of the more important pieces identified and sent away for repair.



Keeping track of the objects in the house is vital to ensure they are being properly cared for – especially when filming at Englefield means some objects need to be removed and then returned to their proper place.

The conservation work continues outside the house, too. Specialist contractor Jim Johnson has been gilding the historic ironwork around Englefield, completing work earlier this year on the courtyard gates and the Lodge Gates.

Unfortunately some of that good work was undone in the summer when a motorist collided with the Lodge Gates, causing significant damage which required further repair. **H**



**H** Items being cleaned and properly stored include military uniforms and Lady Violet's wedding shoes



**H** James Meade, Head of Rural Property and Land (left) with Angelo Moretti of Stonewood Builders



# *Fit for the* FUTURE

**The principle of honouring the past while looking to the future underpins much of the work on the historic buildings on the Englefield Estate.**

And nowhere is that more obvious than at the Estate Yard, where work to convert the former sawmill building to the new Estate Office is progressing towards a planned completion date in 2024.

From the outset, the project to breathe new life into the building and bring the management and maintenance teams together into the heart of the village in a well-appointed modern office has been a balancing act. The challenge was to retain the beauty and heritage of the listed building while converting it to 21st century use.

The Estate and its partners including ADAM Architecture, Stonewood Builders, Kitesgrove and others are working together to bring the project to completion, facing a number of interesting challenges along the way but always staying true to the history of the building.

Katie Pottrill, Associate Architect with ADAM Architecture, said: "It's been incredibly important to incorporate all of the existing features of the sawmill as part of the redevelopment plan. The building has got such a rich industrial heritage that we didn't only want to preserve but enhance and seamlessly integrate this as part of the design."

An example of this is the Victorian-era steam boiler that powered the sawmill, which has been retained and conserved and will be seen from the boardroom through a newly created viewing window.

The massive flywheel that carried the belts which once drove the huge saws, turning whole trees grown on the Estate into usable timber, has also been retained and provides a central feature.

And the spectacular internal dimensions of the building, a long open space where raw timber was once turned into planks, will be retained through the use of Crittall-style windows and partitions – large panels of acoustic glass with fine steel glazing – providing privacy when needed without compromising the look and feel of the building.

Other pieces of industrial equipment have been retained and will be displayed, to ensure the history of the building is never lost, despite its new use. These include the overhead wheels, pulleys and steel gantry system.

Once complete the Estate Office will be the hub of Englefield and the place where visitors first arrive. They will be given a unique glimpse into the history of this repurposed building. Katie said: "Down in the reception area the overhead wheels that run along the length of the building are being reinstated in their existing positions and the stair is sensitively brought forward to allow these wheels a space to be celebrated."



**H** Works underway to transform the Estate Yard



The work has not been without its challenges. This has included the discovery of a disused borehole near the entrance to the building. Two large brick-built and rubbish-filled gasometers were also found underground on the site of the planned extension earlier this year, which delayed work for a time but provide yet another insight into the building's former use as a gas works. In addition, Luke Wade, Maintenance Manager and his team, who are based in the Yard, have not only very



patiently worked around the disruption of this huge project but have stepped in to help with unforeseen conundrums, such as the large and very deep Victorian private water supply pipes not running where shown on plans.

Looking after the buildings and infrastructure across the Englefield Estate is a never-ending task that requires year-round maintenance and constant vigilance. Examples of this include the brick and flintpark wall where Robin White has carefully taken down and rebuilt unstable sections this year using skills honed over many years working with his father Danny, including 15 years directly employed in the Yard team.

Englefield Estate's journey to become net zero carbon has been a central element of the Estate Yard redevelopment. Building Manager Duncan Rands said installing green energy systems combined with high levels of insulation were essential to the plan – combined with the use of natural UK sourced materials.

Solar photovoltaic panels and air source heat pumps produce the energy for the building and electric vehicle charging points, while insulation using sheep's wool, wood-fibre and cork have all been incorporated into the build. "We are going as far as looking at the provenance of the materials we are sourcing to ensure, whenever possible, we are reducing our carbon footprint and our reliance on imported resources." Duncan said.

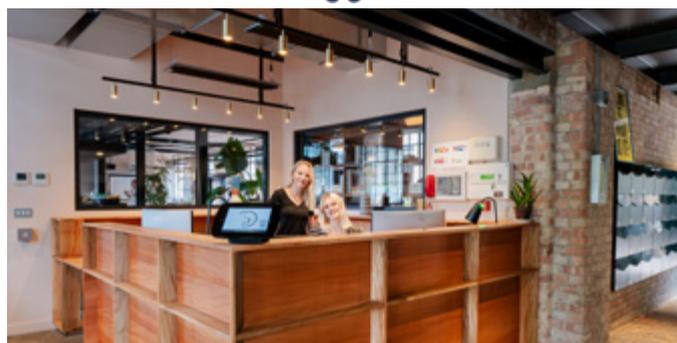
Those measures include installing a rainwater harvesting tank to hold a 21,500 litres of rainwater for watering plants, washing vehicles and other uses around the Yard.

The redevelopment incorporates the whole of the Estate Yard and the outside spaces have been subjected to the same rigorous approach to the green agenda. Duncan explained: "The soft landscape areas provide an important habitat for insects. We've also got bee bricks, swallow bricks and swift boxes. And we have incorporated a bat loft in the design of the office building."

Robbie Kerr, architect with ADAM Architecture, has been involved with the Estate Yard project from the beginning. He said: "From the start this project has been a fine balancing act between the heritage and the change of use, creating a functional space that delivers all you require of an office environment. I think we have got it right." ❧



❧ *The restored flint wall, built around an oak tree*



## New look for De Beauvoir Block

Work was completed in the summer to transform the De Beauvoir Block reception on the Benyon Estate, and give it an impressive new look.

The newly refurbished reception room, featuring a desk made from London plane timber, provides a more formal welcome for tenants and guests.

The completion of the works, undertaken by Sullivan Brothers Construction and designed by architects Mowat & Company, was celebrated in style with an evening drinks party at The Block, to say a big thank you to all the tenants for their patience during the work.

The drinks and delicious food were catered by The Block's very own Albers, and entertainment was provided by The Block tenants, No Ghost.

As part of the work the front gates were replaced with glass doors, leading into the new space, presided over by Becky McLoughlin, De Beauvoir Block receptionist. ❧



*HELPING children with special educational needs*



**Putting Estate buildings to good use is important at Englefield**

A new school for children unable to go into mainstream education because of their special needs has opened in a former farmhouse on the Englefield Estate at Theale.

Haywards Farm School delivers a bespoke learning environment for children with a range of conditions such as autism, attention deficit and hyperactive disorders, cognitive brain delay, trauma and sensory overloads.

The school's opening, in September, was in direct response to the government's SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disability) and Alternative Provision Improvement Plan to combat the shortage of specialist schools and to set new national standards.

Headteacher Alex Walsh said: "To be the headteacher of such a forward-thinking, nurturing therapeutic primary school is a real privilege. We aim to give our children the very best start to their educational journey, developing a lifelong love of learning, ready for independence and the wonderful next stages of education."

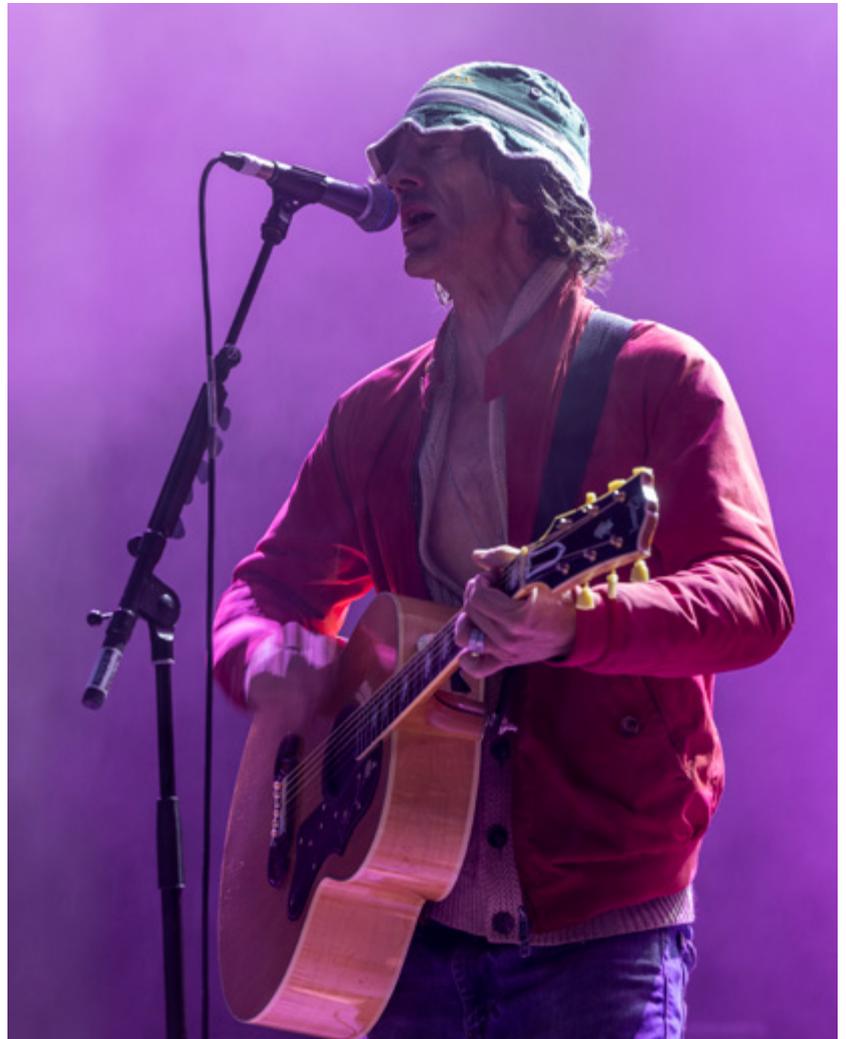
The property has been let to Amegreen Children's Services by the Estate. Amegreen provides children's homes across Hampshire and Berkshire.

Englefield's Head of Rural Property and Land, James Meade, said: "We are delighted to have worked with Amegreen to transform this farmhouse into a small bespoke school for children with additional needs. It is an inspiring and functional space and we are pleased to be able to help address the local need for specialist schools in the area." **H**



HERITAGE LIVE

*Summer*  
**SOUNDS**



**Where better to spend summer evenings than the grounds of Englefield House enjoying fabulous live music?**

In July, we once again opened our gates to welcome thousands of guests to the Heritage Live summer concert series.

“Despite some challenging weather conditions, the three nights of entertainment did not disappoint,” said Events Manager Peter Carson, who worked alongside concert promoters Heritage Live to deliver the events.

The festivities kicked off on Friday 21st July with The Bootleg Beatles, alongside special guests The Counterfeit Stones and Noasis. Songs from the much-loved back catalogues of each of the three original iconic bands brought the audience to life.

On Saturday 22nd July, Richard Ashcroft took to the stage – one of rock’s iconic frontmen who found fame with The Verve. He was supported by Ocean Colour Scene and The Sherlocks.

We were thrilled to have multi-platinum singer and songwriter Hozier perform on Sunday 23rd July, as part of his return to the UK for the first time in four years. Opening the show was Victoria Canal, followed by Far From Saints.

“Arriving in Englefield that morning, Hozier insisted on delaying his sound check until the Sunday service at St Mark’s had finished!” Peter added.

And on Monday 24th July, Flackstock returned for its second year, where Sophie Ellis-Bextor, Olly Murs, The Feeling, Matt Goss and Denise Van Outen, amongst a host of other famous faces, took to the stage to create a truly special and joyous atmosphere. **H**



Steve Proud  
at Flackstock  
Below: The  
Samaritans team

# TRIBUTE to *Caroline*

**Taking care of our mental health is essential. The healthy minds event, borne out of a tragedy, makes a powerful contribution to helping the charities that work in the sector**

Flackstock, the fundraising festival in memory of TV presenter Caroline Flack, was held in July in the grounds of Englefield House and raised thousands for its four partner charities.

The event, which attracted thousands of visitors and featured music, comedy and dance, was first held in 2022 as a tribute to Caroline, and to raise funds for the charities she supported. The former X-Factor presenter took her own life in 2020 at the age of 40.

The festival was back for an even more successful second year – and already plans are being laid for Flackstock 2024. With a strong focus on healthy minds, the four charities who benefit from the event are Samaritans, Choose Love, the Charlie Waller Trust and Mind.

All four of them said that raising awareness of mental health issues and reducing the stigma around mental health difficulties was as important as the fundraising. The event is particularly special for refugee charity Choose Love because Caroline Flack was involved in its work from the very beginning.

Choose Love's Director of Partnerships Philli Boyle said: "Caroline was a big part of the creation of Choose Love – she supported us from the day that we began. That support was a big part of what got us to where we are today, from those very early days."

The charity, founded in 2015, helps provide refugees and displaced people with everything from lifesaving search and rescue boats to food and legal advice. Choose Love also supports community organisations helping refugees along migration routes around the world. The charity has become well-known for its visually striking merchandise, including the Choose Love t-shirts that Caroline regularly wore.

"We work with organisations that can help support refugees in the longer term, obtaining skills and supporting them practically, but also helping to deal with issues around their mental health," Philli added. She stressed that funds raised at Flackstock would be ring-fenced for use in that part of Choose Love's work.

The Samaritans, also part of Flackstock for the second year running, brought along Oscar winning artist and filmmaker Charlie Mackesy – a Samaritans' supporter – to meet fans in the Mindfulness tent.

Charlie was presented with his Oscar in Hollywood earlier this year for the best short animated film, *The Boy, the Mole, the Fox and the Horse*. He has publicly spoken about his battle





**H** Above left: The Mind team. Above centre: The interactive wall by Murwalls honours Caroline Flack. Above right: Charlie Mackesy is interviewed on stage

with anxiety and depression. Samaritans’ Fundraising Manager Beth Simons said: “It was an incredibly special and emotional moment for everyone – Charlie was amazing; the way he spoke about the journey he’s been on.

“Raising awareness of the support Samaritans offer is also hugely important as festival-goers at Flackstock are likely to have been impacted by suicide or mental health, either previously at some point in their lives or currently.

“Englefield is such a beautiful site,” she added. “With the backdrop of the house, woodland, and lakes, it’s a truly distinctive space to host a mental health awareness festival. It’s small enough to easily navigate but also feels quite intimate which helps in creating that community and family feel.”

During the day-long festival around 150 people made contact with the charity’s volunteers with 36% revealing they had suicidal thoughts or feelings, Beth said. “On the day we were constantly reminded of why Samaritans should be a part of this wonderful event.”

The links between music and mental health were brought into sharp focus at Flackstock for another of the beneficiaries, the Charlie Waller Trust. Head of Fundraising at the charity, Nick Appleby said festival goers were encouraged to suggest a song for the Trust’s playlist, creating a collection of feel-good music to help maintain a healthy mind.

“The connections between music and mental health are well-documented,” he said. “People were keen to add their songs and we created a playlist on Spotify of the best ones.”

Charlie Waller, after whom the charity is named, took his own life in 1997 at the age of 28 and suffered from depression. Nick said Flackstock was an important event for the Charlie Waller Trust, both as a fundraiser and an awareness raising opportunity.

He said: “It’s a really positive feel-good event and I think the focus is unique in the festival space, and the charities they pick to be involved and benefit from it reaffirms that special message. We spoke to a lot of people who had travelled quite a long way to attend.

“

Festival goers were encouraged to suggest a song for Trust’s playlist, creating a collection of feel-good music

”

“We saw a big spike in traffic to our website following Flackstock, with a 43% increase in downloads of our resources, which shows the impact of the event on our profile and awareness of the support available.”

Katie Quick, Senior Community Fundraising Manager for the mental health charity Mind echoed the views that raising awareness of mental health issues and providing help and support to people was a vital aspect of Flackstock.

Among the exhibits Mind brought to the festival was a 6ft tree, a representation of the charity’s “everlasting forest” designed to help people remember a loved one they have lost. “People could come along and have a conversation with us, or they could stick a leaf on the tree in memory of Caroline or someone they had lost. It was a lovely thing to have and really resonated with the audience.”

She said Mind was honoured to be one of the four chosen charities at Flackstock for its second year running and brought practical information for visitors to share, including mindfulness festival colouring sheets, healthy festival guides with wellbeing tips, and Box Fit coaches from the charity’s Sport England partnership who ran a non-contact Box Fit session to demonstrate the benefits of physical exercise on mental wellbeing.

Katie praised the backdrop of Englefield House which she said added to the enjoyment of the event. “It was so lovely when the light was going down and the house was all lit up,” she said.

She said Flackstock 2023 definitely hit the right note. “It was poignant and respectful, but also fun and enjoyable – it really is the best kind of event at which to remember Caroline.” **H**

## ENGLEFIELD ESTATE

**It has been another busy year at Englefield, with the House, gardens and wider Estate being used as a filming location.**

In September, Englefield played a starring role in the movie *Two Neighbours*, due for release in 2024. A dark comedy inspired by Aesop's fable *Avaricious and Envious*, the film tells the story of a struggling writer and a beautiful heiress who become entangled in a dangerous conflict, fuelled by a modern-day genie.

We spoke to the film's location scout Mark Ellis – whose credits include *Downton Abbey*, ITV period drama *Belgravia*, and *The Pursuit of Love*, a mini-series starring Lily James and Andrew Scott – about what he looks for in a film set and his career.

A keen actor from a young age, Mark studied at drama school before spending

five years in touring stage productions. Realising it was a challenging career to pursue, but still with a passion for the entertainment business, he took a year out and began work as a TV runner.

"I worked hard, was polite, and absorbed as much as I could from everyone around me," Mark said. "I then took the next step in my career working on *A Waste of Shame*, a BBC production about William Shakespeare's sonnets, where I worked as a unit manager and the location manager took me under his wing."

A unit manager is responsible for overseeing the smooth running of the time on set, supporting the technical crew, and managing any on-site issues.

"My 'big break' was as location manager for *Downton Abbey*. That was a huge step for me, and I started to become

known for my knowledge of sets for period dramas," Mark added.

When a film or series is commissioned, the location manager is one of the first people called in. Their role is an involved process, essential for realising the creative vision of the director and production designer.

"I'll be given the script and a brief of what is required and then research and scout six or seven locations and share these with the production designer," Mark explained. "We will narrow these down to three or four and then we'll present them to the director. And this process repeats for each set.

"There are a lot of things to take into consideration, but when visiting different sites, you can just tell when one is perfect for the brief.

"Seeing the locations in the final film or

# Let's MAKE the MOVIE



Seeing it all together with the make-up, costume and production is very exciting



series is really rewarding, especially those wide angle or drone shots that really make an impact. Seeing it all together with the make-up, costume and production is very exciting.”

Mark also worked on the 2012 film *Great Expectations*, an adaptation of the Charles Dickens novel, which saw Englefield House transformed into the home of Miss Havisham (Helena Bonham Carter).

“One of the reasons Englefield House is so popular, is because it is close to London and the newly opened studios in Berkshire, which is helpful for a lot of crews. There is also so much space across the Estate. When you have a big production with hundreds of extras, filming at an estate is always great.

“And of course, Englefield is such a beautiful venue, and it has everything – the House, the church, the parkland and woodlands – and the approach along the drive is just phenomenal.

“The fact that it’s not always open to the public is a benefit to a location manager too. Logistically it makes it easier to shoot there and it can help when you’re working on a project that you’re trying to keep under wraps.

“I plan to use Englefield more and more.” ✨

## Space and time at Englefield

Sarah Kate Lewis, whose credits as a location manager include *Mission: Impossible – Fallout*, *Mary Poppins Returns*, and the 2015 James Bond film *Spectre*, chose Englefield House for its role as ‘Hellman Hall’ in the 2021 Disney movie *Cruella*.

Working for major film and TV companies like Netflix, Warner Bros., Apple TV and Universal Pictures, she explained how the location team starts work early on to then establish the production schedule.

“Some locations might already be agreed by the time I get the script, but for others the process of scouting and planning begins,” she said.

“I’ll work from the script alongside the production designer and director to understand exactly what is needed and will be thinking about if we can build things on-site too.”

She explained that as well as considering how the location looks, she also has to keep in mind how easy it is to access and service the site.

“I enjoy working on a private estate, like Englefield,” she said. “You’ve got much more space and, for the time you’re there, you essentially own that location. It can be a bit like a travelling circus... so it’s a real relief to have plenty of space.

“The Englefield Estate is so vast and varied, often people just focus on the House as the location.

“And you can’t talk about Englefield without mentioning the contribution that the House and wider Estate departments make to ensure a smooth operation. Led by Peter Carson, Events Manager, they all have such a great attitude, an open mind, and worked with us to solve any problems.

“During *Cruella*, I almost felt like I had permanently moved into the House as we were on-site for so long! It was refreshing to have that flexibility to work in such a wonderful setting.” ✨

# RIGHT HERE!



✨ The house and grounds of the Estate are the backdrop to a number of film and TV productions



✦ *Graduates of the  
You Make It programme  
celebrate at the De  
Beauvoir Block*



# A BOOST FOR GOOD CAUSES

For more than 50 years the Englefield Charitable Trust has supported a broad range of charities and good causes and this year was no exception, maintaining a long tradition of backing those most in need



## More than 80% of those who have completed the scheme are now in full-time employment, have returned to study, or are working on their own businesses



The Englefield Charitable Trust has provided vital support to a number of good causes this year, choosing predominantly local charities that work across a range of sectors, including those that can sometimes be overlooked by other donors.

At the Benyon Estate in London, the charity has helped De Beauvoir Town-based charity You Make It with a mentoring programme that helps women from minority ethnic backgrounds into work. One of the graduation ceremonies was held at the De Beauvoir Block, owned and managed by the Benyon Estate.

Since its foundation, the charity has empowered over 500 women to transform their lives. Participant Michaela said: "You Make It breathes life into women who others have left by the roadside."

More than 80% of those who have completed the scheme are now in full-time employment,

have returned to study, or are working on their own businesses. All of them said they felt happier and more self-confident upon completing the programme.

Founder Asma Shah, who established the charity in 2011, said her personal experience of racism motivated her to make a change. "Our holistic and uplifting approach to job seeking puts individuality and self-esteem at its core. This is not just an employability scheme - that is just one of the outcomes," she said.

Another project close to home that has been given support is Thyme Together, a friendly social group for

seniors with a focus on activities that enhance health and wellbeing in a natural garden environment. The group meets weekly and is operated by the Five A Day Garden, a horticultural charity based in Englefield village. The aims of Five A Day are to improve the well-being of everyone in the local community by managing a growing space to provide horticultural education, horticultural therapy and to access healthy, naturally grown produce.

Part of the grant has also helped with the installation and maintenance of a composting toilet for use by the garden volunteers at Five A Day.

Yvonne Redgrave who co-manages Five A Day with her colleague Glenys Higgins, said they were extremely grateful to the Englefield Charitable Trust for the donation.

She said the Thyme Together members met weekly for a chat and light gardening activities. "They have their own area of the garden which they plan and then grow vegetables and fruit. They take away what they want and the rest of it is sold to raise funds for Five A Day. They meet in the garden in the summer and in the winter in the village hall for a variety of activities including Christmas crafts, quizzes, and memory boxes."

At the other end of the age spectrum, the Englefield Charitable Trust gave a grant to the Friends of Young Carers (West Berks) to support the provision of respite activities for young people who are caring for a member of their family.

The carers, all aged under 18, might be looking after someone with a physical or mental illness, a long-term health condition, a terminal illness or an adult with drug or alcohol misuse problems. Sometimes they can live in single parent families and be the main carer.

Although they might receive basic support from statutory agencies, they often miss out on the simple enjoyable experiences most children take for granted. Many long for a break from their

responsibilities, however brief, when they can be treated like children again.

One young carer told the Help for Carers team: "I look after my Mum and help her cope, but sometimes, I feel lonely, different, sad, embarrassed and resentful. I never knew there were so many other young carers, just like me."

Respite for Young Carers is hoping to raise £20,000 by February 2024 to help the 200 registered carers on its books enjoy some fun activities outside of school.

The Trust has also given financial support to help with running costs for Chapter2, a charity that provides dedicated one-to-one mentoring by men for boys growing up without fathers or other male role models in their lives.

The charity points out that the "consistent and engaged presence of a man in a boy's life can be an effective antidote to feelings of worthlessness and low self-esteem commonly associated with children with absent fathers."



*Chapter2 provides mentoring for boys growing up without a father*

Chapter2 was set up to help tackle the problems caused by family breakdown in the UK, which means that some two million children have no meaningful contact with their father. ❧



The founder of a Berkshire-based charity that benefits from Englefield Charitable Trust donations is helping turn around the lives of young boys blighted by the absence of a father.

Richard Kay, a trustee of Chapter2, said boys growing up without a father can suffer a range of challenges - some of which stay with them into adulthood - but that solutions, through mentoring, can be found within the community.

Chapter2 recruits men to become mentors to boys, giving them time and commitment for at least two years as they grow up. The Englefield Charitable Trust has made two awards to the charity which, Richard said, were invaluable for a small organisation that can struggle to get support from mainstream donors.

He said boys growing up without fathers

## The benefits of mentoring

was a rarely discussed problem in society. "It's a sensitive subject we don't always like to talk about," he said. "Our philosophy at Chapter2 is that the solution lies within our communities. It is not realistic to think that social services or government can fix this.

"What we are trying to do is harness what's in the community, find good men, recruit them and train them. We work in partnership with the churches in Reading, where we recruit from congregations and we also work in the wider community."

Richard said there was powerful anecdotal evidence to suggest there was an absence of men in community roles today, which made the lack of positive male role

models for fatherless boys an even greater concern.

He warned: "My observations are that our society is becoming more individualistic, insulated and fragmented. We don't really think we need each other any more and we are not integrated with our communities or with each other...it's a dangerous cultural shift."

Among the statistics Chapter2 has discovered is that a child sitting their GCSE examinations today is more likely to own a smartphone than be living at home with their father. The link between crime, drug abuse and other social ills and not having a father figure is also well documented.

But Richard said the solution, through mentoring, brought benefits not just to the boy, but the mentor as well. ❧



✦ *The fully refurbished St Mark's House has gone from an EPC rating of 'E' to 'C'*

# Improving ENERGY Efficiency

When properties become vacant Englefield's property team are ready to move in and carry out major improvements

**H** *Rev. Julia Myles  
at work in the  
garden room*



**Updating older buildings to meet modern standards can be a challenge, but a regular programme of work has been taking place throughout the year to refurbish a number of Estate properties to make them energy efficient and better suited to 21st century living.**

Steve Forster, our Assistant Building Surveyor, described how two major projects have blazed a trail for work across the Estate to improve the Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) rating of the homes and make other significant improvements.

Work at St Mark's House in Englefield village and at 52 Parker's Corner on the other side of the Deer Park, has shown that it is possible to improve the energy efficiency and practicality of Estate homes – without compromising their heritage and character.

Steve said: "Improving the energy performance of a property is something we are always trying to achieve and it is something that tenants are always interested in. If you have two similar properties but one has a

much better energy rating that, generally, is the one a tenant would choose."

St Mark's House underwent a complete refurbishment over six months, using new materials sympathetic to the building, retaining the original wood burning stove and wooden mantel, and creating a new garden room in place of the conservatory, built with bricks sourced to match those of the original property.

The old oil-fired boiler was replaced with an air source heat pump. Underfloor heating, with individual temperature controls in each room, was installed.

Steve said switching from a traditional boiler-powered heating system to air source heat pumps required significant improvements to the insulation of a property, but the results were impressive.

"It's a very different way of heating a home and sometimes takes some getting used to," he said. "Rather than a burst of heat when you switch on the boiler, the air-source system keeps the building warm

**B** *Benyon Estate  
Residential Lettings  
Manager, Lali Anderson*

through the day, but we are happy with the results at St Mark's House."

As a result of all the work – from boiler replacement to installing energy saving lightbulbs in every room – the EPC rating of St Mark's House has gone from an 'E' to a 'C'.

The Rector, the Rev. Julia Myles, said she is delighted with all the improvements that have been made. She has settled in, after arriving in the parish last year, and she and husband Paul took up residence in St Mark's House in March.

Julia said the property had been transformed, inside and out, by the refurbishment. It works well, both as a home and meeting place, and had already hosted the school staff social and a meeting of the Deanery clergy. "We want it to be a gathering place and we have the most huge patio – we could hold a ball there," she added.

She went on: "I think the most beautiful space in the house is what we call the garden room. It has large windows on all four sides, so you get an almost 360 degree view. It's off my study but I think I prefer to work in the garden room, it is so beautiful."

Julia said the air source heat pump and underfloor heating made it a pleasure to walk around barefoot. "I don't think we'll ever be cold in this house," she said.

At another of the Estate's properties, 52 Parkers Corner in Englefield, the refurbishment has involved major internal work to re-organise the living space, remove unused chimney breasts to create more room and the replacement of windows, installing new wooden frames, made from sustainably sourced timber and of a design to match the house.

With a new kitchen and bathroom, this traditional brick-built semi-detached family home has also undergone a range of energy efficiency improvements, taking its EPC rating from an 'E' to a 'C'. These two projects are just a small part of the work that has been going on around the Estate's property holdings, ranging from the new build homes at Burghfield Common to the re-thatching of Poplars Cottage, Ufton Nervet.

Steve Forster said: "To carry out major improvement work that involves installing new insulation you often need to take the property right back to its shell. We can obviously only do this when it is justified and the property needs a complete upgrade – and when the tenants are no longer living there. But we have found, where that's the case, this work is really important in boosting energy efficiency and cutting costs for tenants." **H**



**H** *Refurbishment works at 52 Parkers Corner*



**H** *Work underway at St Mark's House*



## Hyperfast broadband comes to Town

Fast internet access is essential in the modern home. And in De Beauvoir Town the Benyon Estate has invested £145,000 in a ClearFibre hyperfast broadband network to more than 200 of its residential properties.

The aim was to futureproof the attractive 19th century houses and cut utility bills for tenants. Take-up by new and existing tenants for the service, which delivers 250 megabits per second (Mbps) for £20 a month and 1,000 Mbps for £35 a month, has been good.

Estate Manager, Edward Benyon, said: "We are committed to making our historic properties fit for modern living. This is another step in enhancing the services offered to our tenants and making homes comfortable and connected."

Residential Lettings Manager, Lali Anderson, said that with more people working from home fast and reliable broadband was now a "must have" for many.

The new infrastructure also means there is less external wiring on the properties, which are located within the Conservation Area of De Beauvoir Town. **H**

“  
I think the most beautiful space in the house is the garden room. It has large windows on all four sides, so you get an almost 360 degree view

✠ Children tuck into a banquet



✠ Ufton Court



✠ Archery practice



✠ The Viking village



Sarah Lindsell has no doubts about the value of giving children the space to play outside in nature.

After a year in which the Ufton Court Education Trust welcomed nearly 18,000 five to 12 year-olds to the Englefield Estate, the benefits to the schoolchildren who attend are clear to see.

“We’ve had an amazing year,” she told the Echo. “Children really need the outdoors; they need to be in nature. Every day you can hear the squeals of delight as children run through the woods, pretending to be a Viking or looking for the deer.”

The Trust, under Sarah’s leadership since summer 2022, has been able to offer children a range of opportunities, from day visits to longer stays. And it is not just the children who benefit, she believes.

recycling rainwater and using ‘grey water’ in some newly installed eco-toilets. “Right across the site we are really maintaining that everything we do today cannot have a negative impact on tomorrow,” Sarah said.

That includes the creation of a new ‘tree-house’ – a sizeable structure that can comfortably accommodate 30 to 40 children and even host some on overnight stays. It was built using timber from the Estate with gravel dug from a nearby gravel pit.

Sarah has two asks of the community – more volunteers to come and help the Trust and – she admits slightly bizarrely – a request that anyone with an unused drinking tankard donate it to Ufton Court. She said: “Volunteers can come to work with the gardens or the woodlands – or help with the children.”

# MAKING A DIFFERENCE

**Children who get to play outdoors in nature are generally happier and healthier. Ufton Court has given 18,000 young people the chance to do just that in the past year**

“The school days feel very short and pressured for teachers,” she said. “Teachers struggle to fit in school trips. You can clearly feel the relief for teachers as well as the excitement for children when they arrive at Ufton and get off the coach.”

Helping children learn about the environment and behave more sustainably has been a focus at Ufton Court in the past 12 months. In part it is addressing the climate change anxiety said to be affecting 70% of young people.

Sarah explained: “We are seeking to give children some control over that, helping explain the little things they can do to help change the climate emergency – to give children the skills and the confidence to work with us.”

Ufton Court is also doing its bit, introducing a food waste audit to cut down on waste from mealtimes,

As for the tankards, she said Ufton Court has a nightly banquet for visiting children. “At the moment some are having to drink out of plastic cups,” she said. “How much better would it be if they could all have tankards to drink out of? So I am asking anyone who has that old tankard pushed to the back of the cupboard to look it out and bring it to us – we will make really good use of it.”

It is clear to the many people involved at Ufton Court that it is making a difference to children’s lives, particularly those from more deprived backgrounds. Now research, in conjunction with the University of Reading, is now being undertaken to measure those benefits more precisely.

Sarah said she was determined to share the results of what works – and what doesn’t – as widely as possible – and continue to expand and improve on what Ufton Court offers. ✨

## New Starters

We welcomed **Harriet Thresh**, right, as Rural Estate Surveyor in February. She joined us from an estate in Gloucestershire and is responsible for all aspects of rural estate management.



**Katie O'Neill**, far right, joined in September as PA to Edward Crookes, having previously worked with senior officers at Thames Valley Police.

Two new starters joined the team at Englefield House – caretaker **Dan Hemley** in March and archivist **Anna McLean** in June. Welcome to you both.

We also welcomed apprentice gardener **George Mackie** and gardener **Emma Pealing**, who joins us whilst **Caroline McCarthy** is on maternity leave.

The Benyon Estate welcomed **Lali Anderson** as Residential Lettings Manager – well placed for the role as an Estate tenant herself! And congratulations to **Bianca Christie**, who previously held this role but moved to become the De Beauvoir Block Building Manager in June. ✂

## Goodbyes

**Sara Ward** retired in April after over eight years with the Estate. She has been an exceptional PA to Edward Crookes and a much-valued colleague to everyone at Englefield, and we would like to wish her all the very best for her future adventures.



The Benyon Estate said farewell to De Beauvoir Block Manager **Olivia Powell** in January, who has moved just next door to tenant business DICE to work as Head of Workplace Experience. Part of our team since 2017, few people knew The Block better, as Olivia worked in the site office for several months before the building was complete.

We send our warmest wishes to **Karen Perochin**, who left in November and was Lady Benyon's housekeeper for six years.

We bid a fond farewell to **Cas Cramer**, who worked as a Nanny to Louis and Jimmy Benyon and has been an integral support to the family for over 16 years. Our best wishes for the future. ✂



## In memory

We fondly remember **Howard Hipwood**, long-standing resident of Englefield, who died in June aged 73. Often described as the country's most famous polo player after the King, he captained England to victory in the US Open, was twice finalist in the Argentine Open, and was on the winning team in tournaments including the Cowdray Gold Cup and the Cartier Queen's Cup. After a successful career on the field, he later turned to umpiring and was voted best professional umpire in England in 2006 and, in 2008, he and brother Julian were both awarded a Hurlingham Polo Association lifetime achievement award. Our thoughts are with his partner Janine and his family. ✂





BENEDICT TUFNELL FOR BRITISH ROWING

# Congratulations!

Our congratulations to **Tory Benyon** and **Tom Russell** who married in July 2023.

We would also like to congratulate Head Keeper at Glenmazeran **Murray Wilson and new wife Ella** on their marriage in June. Murray and Ella also visited Englefield in August, meeting fellow gamekeepers David Wiggins and Calum Shortland, and taking a tour of the Berkshire estate.

Congratulations to **Thomas and Rose Benyon** who welcomed a daughter, **Sienna Rose**, in September. Our very best wishes to the three of them.

Well done to **Tom Bryce**, son of tenant farmer Jim of Butlers Lands Farm, who was selected to represent Great Britain in the under 23 men's eight at the World Rowing Championships in Bulgaria in July. Congratulations to cox Tom and his team who came home with the gold.

Former Englefield Estate Warden, **Ian Langrish**, celebrated his 90th birthday in August. Ian spent 22



years as Warden within the Estate's forestry team, caring for woodland around Mortimer, Burghfield and Ufton Nervet, before retiring in 2017. Happy birthday to Ian from all your friends at the Estate. 🇬🇧

- 🇬🇧 Top left: Murray Wilson and his new wife Ella
- 🇬🇧 Top right: Tory Benyon and new husband Tom Russell
- 🇬🇧 Above: Tom Bryce, front right, and the U23 rowing team
- 🇬🇧 Left: Sienna with her proud father and great-grandmother



# ENGLEFIELD ESTATE

2023

This Echo is made possible with the kind help of all staff, family, tenants and friends of the Englefield Estate.  
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