

## **Grange Farm Trust**

- by EFDC external bodies representative Councillor M. McEwen and M. Sartin

For those newer members who may not be aware of the Grange Farm Centre, the Centre, which sits in High Road, Chigwell, covers an area of around 90 acres and operates as a community facility run by a charitable trust. Three of the nine trustees are appointed by EFDC and two are Essex County Council appointees. Cllrs McEwen and Sartin along with Barry Scrutton from Chigwell Parish Council are the current EFDC appointees. A full history and present-day activities on site can be found on the Centre's website - <http://www.grangefarmcentre.co.uk>

As far as regular activities are concerned, Colebrook Royals Football Club continue to have the site as their base. They currently run junior, youth and adult teams as well as seven girls' teams. The upstairs meeting room in the Pavilion is being well used by groups in the locality including Bridge Clubs, fitness groups and activity groups for young children and is also booked for functions.

The Pelican Playground which was installed three or four years ago has been a hugely successful facility, being extremely well used by local families as well as bringing people in from further afield. This last summer it did, in fact, become a victim of its own success after visitors saw it as an ideal place to come and hold private events. Unfortunately, notices have now had to be put in place stating conditions for its use.

Essex Wildlife Trust have a base in the Pavilion and, as well as encouraging visitors to come to the site, they run a variety of activities. Most recently they had a Forest School day for children in Half-term week and a bat evening. They also have school groups visiting the site, Grange Farm Trust offering grants to schools to cover transport costs for these when required.

As well as all the walks and wildlife areas a bee keeper has now placed three of his hives in suitable places within the site and sheep are being kept within Chigwell Meadows.

Although already a well-used centre, Trustees have been looking at ways of bringing more people into the site. Various plans have been submitted to EFDC's Planning Department to bring about improvements and increase facilities. Machinery had been stored in a very old Nissan style hut and a workshop had been based in the lower level of the Pavilion. Planning permission was obtained to build a new machine store and combined workshop on the original site of the Nissan hut and this has greatly improved the storage element and brought the workshop under the same roof. In doing this it freed up some space for other uses within the pavilion.

Currently building work is taking place to extend the Site Manager's flat, providing more space for him and his family. Alongside this, permission was also obtained to provide an additional meeting area on the ground floor which will provide space for school classes and other groups to use when visiting the site.

The latest planning application was to allow a small area to be used as a Community Garden. Permission was granted at the end of September and work has begun on constructing pathways, etc. The Trust itself is providing some of the funding for this project

with the rest coming from Essex County Council as part of CIF (Community Initiatives Fund). Local groups and organisations are being invited to get involved in this project.

The Trust continues to offer grants to community groups within the Metropolitan Police Authority area and Epping Forest District Council area. Local groups who have been awarded grants within the past year have been Loughton Youth Project, 1<sup>st</sup> Chigwell and Chigwell Row Scouts Group, Epping Bowls Club, South Loughton Cricket Club and Epping Foresters Cricket Club. Financial support has also been given to VAEF to help with the cost of transport for groups of people with Learning Difficulties who visit the site and also to cover the cost of their session worker.

Much of what goes on at Grange Farm Centre is driven by the Site Manager and the Trust is extremely fortunate to have someone with the vision and drive that Rob Draper brings to that role.