

EPPING FOREST & COMMONS COMMITTEE
Monday, 12 January 2015

Minutes of the meeting of the Epping Forest & Commons Committee held at
Committee Room - 2nd Floor West Wing, Guildhall on Monday, 12 January 2015 at
11.30 am

Present

Members:

Alderman Gordon Haines (Chairman)
Deputy Stanley Ginsburg
Deputy John Barker
Deputy Catherine McGuinness
Barbara Newman
Verderer Peter Adams
Verderer Michael Chapman DL
Verderer Richard Morris
Verderer Dr. Joanna Thomas
Alderman Ian Luder (Ex-Officio Member)

Officers:

Natasha Dogra	Town Clerk's Department
Sue Ireland	Director of Open Spaces
Andy Barnard	Superintendent, Burnham Beeches, Stoke Common & City Commons
Paul Thomson	Superintendent, Epping Forest
Jo Hurst	Open Spaces Department
Shelley Ross	Open Spaces Department
Caroline Brown	Open Spaces Department
Jeremy Dagley	Open Spaces Department
Alison Elam	Chamberlain's Department
Roger Adams	City Surveyor's Department
Greg Williams	Public Relations Office
John Park	Public Relations Office

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies had been received from George Abrahams, Alderman Evans, Virginia Rounding and Alex Deane.

2. MEMBERS' DECLARATIONS UNDER THE CODE OF CONDUCT IN RESPECT OF ITEMS ON THE AGENDA

Deputy Catherine McGuinness declared a non-pecuniary interest as a Trustee of Epping Forest Centenary Trust.

3. MINUTES

Resolved: The minutes of the previous meeting were agreed as an accurate record.

4. **BURNHAM BEECHES CONSULTATION GROUP DRAFT MINUTES OF 13TH NOVEMBER 2014**

The committee was provided with the draft minutes of the 13th November 2014 meeting of the Burnham Beeches Consultation Group. The Chairman thanked Barbara Newman for chairing the consultation group on his behalf.

Received.

5. **SCHEDULE OF VISITS 2015**

The Committee considered the schedule of visits for 2015 and agreed the following dates:

Date of Visit	Epping Forest and Commons Committee
7 th March	Epping Forest
9 th May	Epping Forest
20 th June	City Commons
12 th Sept	Burnham Beeches
26 th June	Epping Forest Ladies Day
5 th Sept	Epping Forest
30 th June	Lord Mayor's Visit to Dorneywood
7 th November	Epping Forest

6. **PUBLIC RELATIONS UPDATE**

Members were updated on Public Relations activities in support of the services for which the Open Spaces and City Gardens Committee were responsible during the period October 2013 to November 2014. The activities in the report were also in support of the *Communications Strategy 2014- 2017*. Highlights of the support for the services of the Committee included:

- Media
- Public Affairs
- Events
- Website
- Digital communications and social media
- Literature and related activities
- Member and internal communications
- Filming
- Sponsorship

Members thanked Public Relations Officer John Park for all of his hard work throughout the year.

Received.

7. SUPERINTENDENT'S UPDATE

The Committee received the following update from the Superintendent:

Staff changes and training

- The new Head of Visitor Services would commence work in mid-March
- A permanent Grounds person At Wanstead Flats has been successfully recruited.
- A Senior Conservation Officer secured an Achievement in Learning and Development Award from the City. The award was for 'Putting Learning into Practice to Improve Individual Performance' and recognised the Officer's work for his final year project which was developing a Highways vegetation management system for Epping Forest

Volunteers

3,359 volunteer hours were accrued between October and November

Weather

2014 rainfall was 794mm at Epping Forest, continuing the trend of recent years of higher than pre-2002 levels. Rainfall remained lower than the regional total of 1048mm. In particular, November's 92mm rainfall was 50% higher than 1979-2002 average of 60mm. A fortnight's rain fell in just one day on 29th November putting a real strain on Forest paths and drainage systems. The winter storms, including the forecast 'weather bomb' which 'bookended' Christmas were much milder than originally anticipated and had not caused any major damage.

Christmas Events

The hugely popular Christmas Greenery evening was revived and received 55 bookings. The event has already been relisted for 2015 due to popular demand. 450 bookings for Father Christmas at the Hunting Lodge across 13th and 14th December were sold out within a month of being offered for sale, turning over £6,000 at the increased price of £12.95/child.

Molton Brown 'A Splendid Christmas Affair' Campaign

A Tom van Schleven video promotion filmed in July saw part of High Beach at Epping Forest featured as the fairy-tale backdrop for a national campaign by London-based beauty products company Molton Brown.

Saffron Walden Camera Club

Thanks were extended to Forest Keepers by the Camera Club for access to the Deer Sanctuary during the deer rut.

Epping Forest in the news

Senior Forest Keeper Nick Baker was interviewed by Angela Ripon for BBC1 TV's 'Rip Off Britain' on the problems of commercial fungi picking. Further interviews were recorded by Dr Jeremy Dagley for national press and Nick Baker for the Wall Street Journal.

The Newham Recorder covered the Newham Secondary Schools Cross Country Championships – 6 races, 17 schools and 400 school pupils which were held at Wanstead Flats.

Hill Wood Tea Hut

The Hill Wood tea hut has also continued to be covered in the media including articles on the hut's speedway links, family history and local philanthropic activity.

Highams Park Lake

The last section of the cast concrete dam floodwall was completed on 12th December and has now been largely clad in bricks. The drawdown structure is also nearing completion alongside repairs to the landing stage fronting the dam. Some 5,000 cubic metres of silt have now been removed from the Lake and sent to specialist landfill.

Great Gregories Out wintering Facility

Construction of the new barn is now complete barring snagging, alongside the new drainage system which is working well. Works are now underway on pads and the new internal road system. The Local Planning Authority's late condition of a balancing pond are being reported to the Project Sub-Committee.

Calving at Great Gregories

The Redpoll and Longhorn herds, together with Sussex cattle from City Commons are now all on site.

Reservoir Inspection – 13 and 18 November

Dr Andy Hughes completed his second inspection of the year. Dr Hughes was again complimentary over the further improvements in dam vegetation maintenance. A statement of concern has been provided by Dr Hughes concerning Baldwins and Birch Hall Park Ponds which are the subject of a report to be considered by your Committee.

Football at Wanstead Flats

Wanstead Flats hosted 1,352 football matches across the first half of the season – a 60% utilisation, 613 (85%) at Harrow Road, 481 (55%) at Capel Road, and 258 (36%) at Aldersbrook Road. The Flats hosted 5 leagues, 86 clubs, and 212 teams on a regular basis.

Plans are already underway in partnership with London Playing Fields for the 2015/16 season which will celebrate 125 years of football at Wanstead Flats.

Senrab Football Club

One of Wanstead Flats longest serving clubs - SENRAB FC - won the Daily Mirror Pride of Sports Awards 2014 in the Local Team of the Year Category and enjoying a Gala award ceremony at the Grosvenor House Hotel on London's Park Lane on 3 December.

Parkrun

Wanstead Flats Cross Country 'Parkrun' is now into its 4th year with a weekly 5km timed run 9am every Saturday morning. Events now total 192, with 1,879 runners, 12,553 runs and a record attendance of 139 runners at one event.

Community Payback

Following a successful 10 week pilot Community Payback now a regular weekly activity in partnership with London Probation (Serco), clocking up an impressive 1,184 voluntary hours carrying out cleaning, minor maintenance and repainting duties at Harrow Road including litter picking an incredible 776 black bags of rubbish, plus assorted larger items from Harrow Road, Bushwood and Jubilee Ponds.

Fly tipping

Fly tipping incidents had decreased across 2014, however, a series of seasonal sale-related fly tips have appeared across the Forest. A further incidence of cannabis-related fly tipping has been reported to the Police. A fly tip at Crown Hill and 2 fly tips at Fishers Green Lane together resulted in over 70 tonnes of landfill material after our contractor had removed recyclable materials. The cost of disposal of the 11 lorry loads was £7,655.

Rough Sleepers

A total of 53 incidents involving the removal of rough sleeper camps were recorded in 2014, down 12% on 60 incidents in 2014, including a further 5 camps since the last presentation to Committee.

Byelaw Enforcement

Forest Keepers conducted a successful prosecution of Directional Media at Barkingside Magistrates Court 12.12.14 for erecting an advertising hoarding without permission. Directional Media were fined £200 + Victim surcharge £20 with costs of £2,341.50.

New Countryside Stewardship scheme

The launch of the £900M CAP Reform inspired New Environmental Land Management Scheme (NELMs) now rebranded as 'Countryside Stewardship' was launched in November but was somewhat overshadowed by DEFRA's 10 year national pollinator strategy to provide more bee-friendly habitats.

Heritage linked to public wellbeing and community pride

November saw the launch of English Heritage's annual 'Heritage Counts' research which demonstrated for the first time that heritage visits make people happier and account for more spend/head than sport related visits.

Natural England Report on Climate change adaptation and potential Report

November also the launch of a major report that aims to identify localised wildlife *refugia* where wildlife may be able to best adapt to climate change. The indicators appear to be based around persistence rather than adaptation/colonisation. Initial mapping suggests Epping Forest & SW Essex has a low refugia value.

Fred Wigg and John Walsh Towers, Wanstead Flats

The Superintendent met with London Borough of Waltham Forest Officers regarding the potential redevelopment of Fred Wigg and John Walsh Tower Blocks which overlook Wanstead Flats. Tenders for design work are expected in Spring 2015 with the intention of infilling the gap between the towers and developing improved public realm benefits in association with Wanstead Flats.

GLA 'Mini-Holland' Proposals

Further to reports to your Committee in May 2014 regarding the Mayor of London and London Borough of Waltham Forest's £33M 'Mini-Holland' cycling improvement programme, LBWF have now approached the Conservators ahead of their public consultation to discuss changes to the Whipps Cross roundabout.

In response to a query from Members Officers explained that *Refugia* are places where isolated or contracting wildlife populations can best survive or retreat to (i.e. refuge). Officers were aware of the roadworks on the A121 Woodricken Hill and the associated 'rat-running' through Forest roads. Officers were already in discussion with the Highway Authority over width and weight limits which would help manage this continuing problem. The Superintendent would email Members the date when roadworks were expected to be completed.

In response to a query regarding cycling at Pole Hill, the Superintendent agreed to investigate the current policy approach and report back to Members.

Members noted that there had been cases of cyclists digging in to Forest land to create jumps. Officers were aware of this in more areas than Pole Hill and had promptly removed the jumps and repaired surface damage. Officers confirmed that such activity was a byelaw offence of 'disfiguring the Forest'. Officers said that the Corporation has no obligation to provide a facility for cycling, however, in order to manage the problem it may be necessary to provide some 'challenging' areas, away from main routes. Members agreed that being able to cycle in the forest was a great privilege which should not be undermined by the actions of a small minority. A member referenced the recent Local Meeting minutes noting that sport applications were excluded the City Bridge Trust eligibility criteria. Members underlined the importance of the Committee's work in sport and recognised the need to explore other funding avenues to maintain this work.

Members queried whether the correct levels for the landing stage works at Highams Park had been agreed, and the Superintendent was confident that Balfour Beatty were working to the correct levels. In response to a query regarding road verge clearance works, Officers noted that while welcoming the clearance works by the Highway Authority, the Corporation remained responsible for clearing away any hazardous arisings from the roadside.

Members congratulated Officers on their excellent work with the Learning and Development award and thanked the Superintendents for encouraging their staff to undertake such activities.

In response to a query regarding reduced incidents of fly tipping, the Superintendent observed that while the trend on incidents was declining volume was increasing and some incidents were proving to be very expensive.

The Chairman noted that some Members of the Committee had been approached by Forest users to discuss matters of concern. The Chairman encouraged members to contact the Superintendent and his staff for background to these issues to ensure a consistent message was being provided.

8. BALDWIN'S AND BIRCH HALL PARK PONDS - GATEWAY 3 - OPTIONS APPRAISAL

Members were informed that Baldwins Pond and Birch Hall Park (Deer Sanctuary) Pond both store water by virtue of earth dams which are over 100 years old. Both ponds are currently managed under the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1973 and are subject to precautionary biannual inspection.

Excessive wet weather over Spring 2012 highlighted leakage at both ponds as well as an overflow problem at Birch Hall Park Pond. Both ponds have been identified since 2010 through the biannual Panel Engineer's inspections as requiring works to stabilise the existing structure and manage leakage.

Members noted that the total estimated cost range of £0.675m to £2.93m has increased significantly since Gateway 2 (£0.4m to £1.5m). The main reason for the significant increase in estimated costs had come from experience gained in developing other reservoir projects.

Discussions ensued regarding the cost of the project. Members were concerned that the projected costs were seriously underestimated and must be revised by Officers in the Department of the Built Environment. There were concerns over the implications to the surrounding area of the ponds.

Members queried whether the Corporation was moving to a legal position where Members were Non-Executive Directors and had personal criminal liability. Officers explained that a recent Committee report had explained issues around Trustee liability and that Health and Safety performance was now reported annually to the Open Spaces Committee. Members were well protected in this case as Officers had extended the Reservoirs Act inspection regime to reservoirs managed under the Health & Safety at Work Act.

Members noted that access and work to Baldwin's Pond would have dramatic implications for the Forest, and Officers assured the Committee that they were looking closely at implications for the Forest under each option. Discussions with the appropriate bodies would also accompany this work.

A member of Loughton Residents Association had approached a Verderer as they wished to cover these proposed works in their newsletter. The Verderer advised them to wait for further information before doing so.

Members agreed that the Options for repairs seemed sensible but concerns were raised regarding the ongoing maintenance. Officers said there were many

lessons to be learned from the 2000 construction and that the new solution must be more durable.

Resolved – That Members:

Agreed to support the Officer's recommendation to the Projects Sub-Committee to develop to the next Gateway. Members noted that at the current gateway, none of the above options are to be discounted, although Option 2 is the least preferable at the present time due to cost and complexity.

9. EPPING FOREST PERMISSION TO OPERATE CIVIL MARRIAGES AND PARTNERSHIPS AT THE QUEEN ELIZABETH'S HUNTING LODGE

Members were informed of the opportunity to utilise the licensing regime under the Marriages Regulations 1995 to generate future income by permitting the use of Queen Elizabeth's Hunting Lodge (QEHL) for Marriages and Civil Partnership ceremonies. The significant heritage of the listed building and the idyllic surroundings of the Forest make the building very desirable as a venue for these ceremonies.

Members noted that in order to use QEHL as a venue for ceremonies a licence must be granted by the local authority, London Borough of Waltham Forest), at a cost of £600 for a 3 year licence, together with appropriate public advertising costing £1,000.

An updated report will be brought to the January 2016 Committee to review the hosting of ceremonies at QEHL.

Members stated that full payment must be sought within a reasonable time and a strong cancellation policy must be drafted. Members also raised concerns regarding parking availability which would be investigated.

Officers informed Members that there is a central monitor of income production for schemes like this and Officers were scrutinising Service Based Review related projects to ensure they delivered projected income.

Resolved – **That Members:**

- Approved submission of an application to London Borough of Waltham Forest to licence Queen Elizabeth Hunting Lodge to host for marriage and civil partnership ceremonies.
- Approved the use of QEHL for marriage and civil partnership ceremonies, for the licence period of 36 months.
- Agreed to review the use of QEHL for marriage and civil partnership ceremonies at the January 2016 meeting.

10. ANNUAL UPDATE OF DOG INCIDENTS WITHIN EPPING FOREST AND THE BUFFER LANDS - 1 DECEMBER 2013 TO 30 NOVEMBER 2014

Members noted the level of dog-related incidents, recorded on Epping Forest and the Buffer Lands that have been reported to Forest Keepers

between December 2013 to November 2014, together with the number of prosecutions and official warning letters for dog-related offences.

There have been 507 reported incidents from 1 December 2013 to 31 November 2014, identical to the overall figure for the same period in 2012/13. The latest figures confirmed a continuing fall in a range of dog-related incidents, particularly dog attacks on people, other animals and other dogs. Dog fouling reports have also fallen. In contrast there has been a further increase of incidents involving dogs not under effective control, which have risen by 25.8% from 310 to 390 incidents.

Received.

11. **LICENCE AND PRODUCE CHARGES 2015**

Members were updated on the charges levied for the management of various Forest licences and produce sales at Epping Forest and were requested to approve the proposed charges for 2015/16.

The licencing of activity (excluding filming and photography) on Forest Land and sales of produce has raised a total of £27,326.43 so far in the 2014/15 financial year. Horse Riding Licences raised £12,015.62 + VAT, the licencing of regulatory activity realised £9,724.00, while produce sales have generated £2,155.43.

In line with the Service Based Review targets for increased income between 2015/16 – 2017/18, it is proposed that charges for licences and produce sales in 2015/16, be raised by a figure of 10% with the exception of Horse Licence charges. Horse Licence charges have remained fixed since their introduction in 2003. The proposal was to raise those charges in line with the guidance outlined in the “Additional Byelaws for the Regulation of Horse-riding” which amounts to a 37.5% increase.

A Verderer informed the Committee that she had had much involvement with riders and Forest users on this subject recently. Unfortunately, there was a great deal of misinformation in the public domain. – some have it completely wrong how much we are increasing by and to. Concerns were raised regarding the attempt at consultation through appropriate forums and there was perceived unfairness from targeting a known and visible group as they are not the only users of the surfaced rides. Members agreed that there was a need to look at making this system more equitable.

Members agreed that cost collection needed to be reviewed, suggesting that a five-year scheme may be more useful. Members queried whether other events which were charged for needed to be reviewed. There was a suggestion that changes to charges should apply whenever RPI indicated a rise of £1 or more.

Officers said that there was some consultation, and smaller increases may have been better in hindsight. The charges were being increased in line with inflation only and the licences were very modest when compared with Windsor

Great Park and Ashdown Forest both charging well in excess of £100. In response to a question from a Verderer calculations showed that a single licence holder would have saved £80.94 over the past 11 years due to the lack of intervening increases.

Officers needed to review the damage that all of our different users do to the Forest. Licencing was founded on the established principle that horses do proportionally more damage than others users, however the growth of mountain biking needed to be considered. There was some consideration of charging for bikes, but that is a complex matter.

Resolved – That Members:

- Approved the proposed charges for 2015/16
- Served the appropriate statutory notice upon the public for changes to horse licence charges
- Approved the delegation to the Superintendent of discretionary powers to set terms and conditions and impose deposit arrangements for licences, and to set charges in the case of unusual licence requests.

12. EPPING FOREST WORK PROGRAMME OUT-TURN 2013-14

Members noted the work completed as part of the access and habitat Work programme for Epping Forest from April 2013 to March 2014 inclusive.

Received.

13. EPPING FOREST GRAZING MONITORING AUDIT

Members were informed of the progress with monitoring work on grazing and were provided the third annual assessment by the Independent Grazing Assessor, Dr Peter Dennis of Aberystwyth University.

Resolved: Members:

- Noted the observations of this 3rd Grazing Assessor report and progress with the conservation grazing monitoring programme;
- Approved the production of a 4th report by the Assessor, to be provided to the Management Plan Steering Group for consideration prior to being submitted to Committee by January 2016.

14. AUTHORISATION OF AN EPPING FOREST OFFICER

Members were requested to exercises powers delegated by the Court of Common Council to authorise Superintendent, Paul Thomson, to appear on behalf of the City of London in Magistrates' Courts.

Under the "Courts Act 2003" sections 8 and 10, Officers that have been authorised by the Committee and sworn in by a Magistrate can present a case at any Magistrates Court that is chosen by the Local Authorities that have Epping Forest land within their boundaries. The Authorities are the London

Borough of Waltham Forest, the London Borough of Redbridge, the London Borough of Newham and Essex County Council.

In response to a query from Members, the Director clarified that this authorisation was to ensure that the Corporation was fully compliant in any Court proceedings. It would also allow the Superintendent to start any such process when he encounters byelaw offenders in the Forest.

Resolved: Members recommended that in accordance with Sections 101 and 223(1) of the Local Government Act 1972 and Section 31(4) of the Epping Forest Act 1878 that Paul Thomson be authorised to appear on behalf of the City of London in Magistrates' Courts.

15. **SUPERINTENDENT'S UPDATE**

The Committee received the following update from the Superintendent:

Countryside Partnerships

The two countryside projects that we support, the Lower Mole Countryside Project and the Down lands Countryside Project (£15k each so £30k in total), have been merged under a single management unit along with a third - the Surrey Heathland Project - to form the Surrey Countryside Partnerships. The partnerships have a new organisational structure and new governance arrangements, including a Project Board to oversee their work. At recent Project Board meetings the partnerships have reported a funding shortfall for 2015/15 and funding partners have been asked to provide additional financial support. We have stated a reluctance to provide any additional core funding (against backdrop of SBR etc.) although it might be possible for us to accommodate additional task days to allow them to earn some additional money.

Burnham Beeches and Stoke Common

At Stoke Common, small scale heathland restoration was undertaken in October with 38 Cubs, Scouts and Explorer Scouts from Aylesbury plus leaders and Friends of Stoke Common attending. We cleared a 200metres by 150metres area of small birch in a 5 hour day. We have had an average of 2 volunteer sessions per week focussing on heathland restoration from Mid-September until Early December.

The Litter & recycling officer led his last task before retirement on 27 December.

The dog control order (DCO) project was a focus for November. Old 'No Cycling' signs were taken out and 36 dual message signposts installed, made from Oak cut at BB and milled locally. The sign installation took 1 week and Rangers patrolled more in the build up to the 1st December when DCOs came into force. Rangers have been continuing these high visibility patrols and handing out leaflets to educate people for the lead in period (4 weeks).

For the first month since the introduction of DCOs, Rangers have been increasing their patrols, concentrating in the busiest areas. This has been done

as an educational exercise, issuing DCO leaflets and informing people about how and where the DCOs apply and how they can comply with the new rules, if they weren't already. On the whole the majority of visitors seem to be adhering to the new rules – of those that aren't most seem to have made a genuine mistake and have complied when asked to do so but a small minority have persisted in breaching the new rules. Rangers are making notes of people they speak to and having weekly debriefs to flag up any regular issues.

About 200 people attended a very popular Christmas Carols event on 14 December.

Ashtead Common

Bridleway 29 at Ashtead Common was resurfaced in October. The contractor used crushed granite to restore the degrading right of way. The bridleway is of particular importance since it takes the public past the majority of the Common's veteran trees.

In November and December, Ashtead Common Volunteers cleared scrub and Sycamore at Willow Field and Craddoks to allow more light to the woodland and grassland flora and coppiced Hazel near Bridleway 33. Volunteering on these projects took place on 19 days between with volunteers giving a combined total of almost 1,100 hours of their time.

Veteran tree work is ongoing at Ashtead Common. In December, the most iconic tree on the Common – King Oak (pictured before work), had its crown trimmed as part of the conservation work to extend the life of the tree. Each veteran tree has its own management plan to determine what treatment will be done when. The crown trimming mimics natural processes, such as the snapping of branches. In January, halo release work will be undertaken on selected veteran trees – clearing woody vegetation from around trees to minimise the competition for resources, such as water, light, nutrients and crown space between old veteran tree and young vigorously growing trees. Halo release will also support ground flora such as wild flowers and brambles. Bramble patches are an important habitat for nesting birds and dormice and fruits are an excellent food source.

Coulsdon Commons

The annual Remembrance Parade, led by the RAF, was held on Remembrance Sunday at Kenley Airfield. A two minute silence was observed at 1:00pm and the Superintendent laid a wreath on behalf of the City of London.

Kenley Revival Project

Following a meeting with HLF at the end of November Officers have been progressing the application towards the concept design stage (RIBA C). The conservation workshop held in June altered the approach taken to conserving the airfields heritage assets and meant that further consultancy work needed specifying and procuring to ensure designs and costs reflected the new approach. This delayed development work and meant that the proposed

submission date of December was no longer achievable. At the time it was thought that this work, together with the completion of the Conservation Management Plan, Activity Plan and Maintenance Plan could be completed in time for a March submission. However further feedback from the HLF indicates that this is no longer viewed as possible, so we are now aiming for the next available submission date in June. Unfortunately this means that we will not know the outcome of the bid until after August, which is when Kenley will mark the 75th anniversary of 'The Hardest Day' of the Battle of Britain.

Two charcoal making activities were run at Kenley Common in November using timber from scrub clearance. Rangers and volunteers worked together to clear the scrub at Bunker Bank to reveal heritage features of the old airfield and extend the chalk grassland habitat. There were 9 days of volunteering on scrub clearance and charcoal burning at Kenley Common, a combined total of over 300 hours of volunteering time.

Blood tests were carried out on the breeding herd ahead of the majority going to Epping Forest. All clear for everything except 4 new cases of Neosporosis. These may have picked it up from the ground and the likely cause would be dog faeces. Neosporosis has already caused the abortion of one calf this year, a reminder of the importance of picking up dog mess. We will not breed off animals that have tested positive as the disease can be passed on this way. They will be kept as part of the grazing heard. 10 pregnant cattle were moved to Epping early in December. The remainder of the breeding herd were moved to Epping shortly before Christmas. All will be returning to our Commons in April or May dependant on conditions.

New hi-tech nature trail at Farthing Downs and Happy Valley. The new Nature Trail uses 'QR codes' which can be scanned by smart phones and similar devices to tell visitors about the wildlife and history of these areas. The project was made possible by partnership working between Croydon Council, the City of London Corporation, the Friends of Farthing Downs and Quadron Services Ltd. Article in Croydon advertiser.

West Wickham Commons

Heavy horses were used at Spring Park during the first week of November to tow approximately 25 tonnes of timber out of the wood as part of the Small-leaved Lime Conservation Project. This project was funded for a second year by the SITA Trust, who awarded us £5,000 for this year's work at Spring Park, which has the largest population of the rare Small-leaved Lime tree in London. Heavy horses were used as they are kinder to the woodland ground, roots and understory than machinery. The heavy horses week was well promoted with a printed article in the local NewsShopper paper, online news articles and event listings and through social media. Other activities during the week included a tea and coffee gathering which attracted about 30 people, an opportunity for a local photography group to come behind the scenes to see the horses up close, and the chance for volunteers to try layering of the Small-leaved Lime trees. A local film group has also kindly volunteered to create a video of the horses in

action from footage they gathered during the week. We should receive this sometime in January and will use this to promote the work further.

The West Wickham & Spring Park volunteers (WWaSPs) met on 10 days in November and December and volunteered over 130 hours of their combined time. The WWaSPs cleared holly from the edge of West Wickham Common's heathland which forms part of an ongoing restoration project which will eventually increase the area of heath to the edge of the easy access path. November was also Hazel Coppicing week where the WWaSPs came to Spring Park to coppice another compartment on the scheduled rotation of coppicing in the wood.

Members queried the use of 'QR' codes, and Officers agreed to investigate whether this could be implemented at other Open Spaces. Officers confirmed that usage information could be retrieved should Members like that data.

16. QUESTIONS ON MATTERS RELATING TO THE WORK OF THE COMMITTEE

A Verderer raised a query regarding the forthcoming excavation of a possible Egyptian artefact in Wanstead Park regarding the licence conditions, and whether there was any commitment from CoL towards further work or expenditure on the conservation of the artefact. Officers confirmed that the excavation would be funded by the Friends of Epping Forest and the process was being overseen and licenced by Forest Keepers. Any further work or other obligation regarding the artefact would be subject to another report and approval from this Committee. The letter sent to Wanstead Research Group gave no commitment to further undertakings.

17. ANY OTHER BUSINESS THAT THE CHAIRMAN CONSIDERS URGENT

The Town Clerk circulated the terms of reference to the Committee for the annual review and Members agreed that the document was up to date.

18. EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC

MOTION: It was agreed that under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Part I of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act.

19. NON-PUBLIC MINUTES

Resolved: That the minutes of the previous meeting were agreed as an accurate record.

20. CROSS ROADS, HIGH BEACH REFRESHMENT SITE - LETTING

The Committee received the report of the Superintendent of Epping Forest.

21. CONSTRUCTED NATURAL PLAY PROPOSAL BY THE LONDON BOROUGH OF WALTHAM FOREST FOR LEYTON FLATS

The Committee received the report of the Superintendent of Epping Forest.

22. **BUTLERS RETREAT CAFE - LEASE RENEWAL**
The Committee received the report of the Superintendent of Epping Forest.
23. **ARBITRATION LAND - RESTRICTIVE COVENANTS**
The Committee received the report of the Superintendent of Epping Forest.
24. **NON PUBLIC QUESTIONS ON MATTERS RELATING TO THE WORK OF THE COMMITTEE**
There was one non-public question.
25. **ANY OTHER BUSINESS THAT THE CHAIRMAN CONSIDERS URGENT AND WHICH THE COMMITTEE AGREE SHOULD BE CONSIDERED WHILST THE PUBLIC ARE EXCLUDED**
There was no urgent business.

The meeting ended at 1.20 pm

Chairman

Contact Officer: Natasha Dogra
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