



Epping Forest Centre Joint Consultative Committee

Date: WEDNESDAY, 14 MAY 2014

Time: 11.00am

Venue: EPPING FOREST FIELD CENTRE, PAUL'S NURSERY ROAD, HIGH BEACH, LOUGHTON, ESSEX, IG10 4A

Members: Alderman Gordon Haines (Chairman)
Verderer Peter Adams
Verderer Richard Morris
Geoff Brown, FSC Honorary Treasurer
Anthony Thomas
Deputy Stanley Ginsburg
Deputy Catherine McGuinness

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Lunch will be served at the rising of the Committee.

John Barradell
Town Clerk and Chief Executive

AGENDA

Public Agenda

1. **APOLOGIES**

2. **DECLARATIONS BY MEMBERS OF ANY PERSONAL AND PREJUDICIAL INTERESTS IN RESPECT OF ITEMS ON THIS AGENDA**

3. **MINUTES**

To agree the public minutes of the previous meeting.

For Decision
(Pages 1 - 4)

4. **HEAD OF CENTRE'S REPORT ON ACTIVITY**

Report of the Head of the Epping Forest Field Centre.

For Information
(Pages 5 - 10)

5. **HEAD OF CENTRE'S REPORT ON PROGRESS IN 2014**

Report of the Head of the Epping Forest Field Centre.

For Information
(Pages 11 - 14)

6. **QUESTIONS**

7. **ANY OTHER BUSINESS THAT THE CHAIRMAN CONSIDERS URGENT**

8. **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

Members are requested to agree the date of the next meeting.

For Decision

EPPING FOREST CENTRE JOINT CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE

Friday, 19 April 2013

Minutes of the meeting of the Epping Forest Centre Joint Consultative Committee held at the Epping Forest Field Centre, Loughton, IG10 4A

Present

Members:

Chris Kington (Chairman)
Alderman Gordon Haines
Barbara Newman

Verderer Peter Adams
Roger Chapman
Anthony Thomas

Officers:

Rakesh Hira	- Town Clerk's Department
Alison Elam	- Chamberlain's Department
Paul Thomson	- Superintendent, Epping Forest
Steve Bunce	- Epping Forest Field Studies Centre
Antony Fenwick	- Visitor Services Manager, Epping Forest
Robert Lucas	- Field Studies Council
Richard Walker	- Field Studies Council
Mark Bolland	- Field Studies Council

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Verderer Richard Morris, Andy Simpson and Geoff Brown.

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

There were no declarations.

3. MINUTES

The public minutes of the meeting held on 26 October 2012 were agreed as a correct record.

Matters Arising

Epping Forest Visitor Services

In relation to the tender process for the existing visitor centre building it was noted that the outcome would be reported at the next meeting.

Fund Raising Pack

The Superintendent reported that a fund raising pack for individual schools was still in the process of being produced.

FSC Central Costs

The Chamberlain explained that discussions between the FSC's Director and the Chamberlain's Department in relation to the FSC Central costs would take place.

4. **HEAD OF CENTRE'S REPORT ON THE DISCOVERING EPPING FOREST WORKSHOP**

The Committee considered a report of the Head of Centre, which provided Members with information in relation to the final *Discovering Epping Forest* workshop. The report referred to: -

- The seventh and final champions' workshop;
- The project legacy and;
- The future

The Head of Centre explained that the *Discovering Epping Forest* workshop was designed to inspire teachers to continue to use Epping Forest as a learning resource. He pointed out that the workshop was reasonably well attended and that feedback had been positive. He explained that those who were unable to attend the workshop would also be encouraged to attend future sessions and continue to use the Forest and the services of the learning providers.

In response to a question it was noted that a bound version of the full report had been produced by the City and given to the partner Schools and learning providers.

The Head of Centre gave a verbal presentation on the management of project legacies in relation to 'step-change', total quality management and continuous improvement. He indicated that he would normally endeavour to take forward a range of project legacies in a range of ways. This would include consideration of what could be done in relation to each of the new resources, systems and services, the curriculum and pedagogies, the audiences and partnerships as well as the relationship with the funders. He explained that he would be taking a similar approach in the consideration of the *Discovering Epping Forest* project legacy in conjunction with the other partners.

RECEIVED

5. **HEAD OF CENTRE'S REPORT ON THE PERFORMANCE OF THE CENTRE IN 2012**

The Committee considered a report of the Head of Centre which informed Members on the activity and performance in 2012 at the Epping Forest Field Centre.

The Head of Centre explained that all the key performance indicators had been met in 2012 and that it had been by a number of measures the best year yet; customer satisfaction had been good with 98% of learners saying that they had

a significant increase in the understanding of the environment and that their expectations had been met or exceeded. The teaching and grant income had been good in 2012 and some decisions had been taken to reduce staff costs.

In response to a question, the Head of Centre reported that the furthest outreach site was in West Ham Park, a discussion took place on the importance of working with the deprived/challenging environments bordering the park and the value of the work being done by the Centre and various other partners in this respect.

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6. HEAD OF CENTRE'S REPORT ON PROGRESS IN 2013

A report of the Head of Centre provided an update on the progress at the Epping Forest Field Centre in the first quarter of 2013.

The Head of Centre reported that the Centre was on target to meet its Key Performance Indicators. He explained that two valued staff members had left and that further staff turnover was expected.

In response to a question it was pointed out that over the next three quarters there was capacity to teach people who came to the Centre and that Key Stage 4 had been a growth area.

The Head of Centre gave a short presentation on the '*Lessons from Nature*' project explaining that the website brought together different learning materials and that it was envisaged that it would be delivered in Schools. It was noted that a further update on the project would be provided in the autumn.

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7. QUESTIONS

There were no questions.

8. ANY OTHER BUSINESS THAT THE CHAIRMAN CONSIDERS URGENT

Wild Challenge

Mr Lucas reported that the 'Wild Challenge' project, which aimed to connect children more to nature, was being developed and that the Sustainability Unit aimed to get people out to the natural environment more which could potentially increase the number of families/visitors to the Centre.

Barbara Newman

As this was Mrs Newman's last meeting she wished colleagues well for the future and the Committee thanked her for her contributions to the work of the Committee.

9. **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting of the Epping Forest Joint Consultative Committee would be held on 9 October 2013 at Guildhall.

The meeting closed at 12.44pm

Chairman

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Inspiring environmental understanding through first-hand experience



Epping Forest Field Centre Head of Centre's report on activity in 2013



The Centre is managed by FSC for, and on behalf of, the City of London

Purpose of report: to inform the Joint Committee; I recommend that the report be RECEIVED.

In my progress report to the October meeting I referred to operational challenges arising from reduced levels of staffing but indicated that I thought that we had avoided any significant service issues and that we were broadly on track to deliver the 2013 Plan. I am now pleased to be able to confirm this and that the progress against the 2013 Plan was very satisfactory.

Overview

Our operations were highly effective in 2013. We achieved really well against KPIs and important objectives, overcoming the challenges of 9% fewer contracted staff days in 2013 than 2012 and with 63 days lost to sick leave.

22,304 Learner experiences

99.20% Expectations met or exceeded

100% of criteria met (again) for the Northgate Arisno Gold Shield Health & Safety Award

In addition the projected deficit was turned into a modest surplus as predicted in my October report.

We delivered learning experiences to learners of all ability levels, aged from four to 'experienced', from a very diverse range of ethnic/social groups. We used 46 well researched learning sites within and outside of Epping Forest, frequently taking learning nearer to the learners.

Grant funded projects

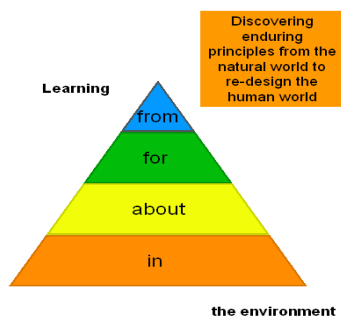
2,664 grant funded learner experiences were delivered in 2013 – (giving rise to a total of 8,620 which, after just three years, exceeds the target figure of 8,000 (10% of target for total learner experiences) in our four year business plan. This provision included:

'Loughton Big Family Pond Dip' - connecting people with natural world, exploring local environment, families learning together - funder Loughton Town Council

'Biodiversity Family drop-in-day' for families of children at Epping Primary School - wide range of fun and explorative outdoor activities to increase awareness, knowledge and understanding of biodiversity - funder Epping and Theydon Garnon Joint Charities.



The EU funded **Lessons from Nature (LfN)** project, developed and delivered with our European NGO partners, came to end in the autumn and the EU Assessor has subsequently affirmed that the Project delivery was of an appropriate standard. The project has enabled us to build on LfN learning pioneered at EFFC in 2008. The creation of the LfN website with its very significant learning resources has helped us to take a huge step towards the aspiration in the 2011-2014 EFFC Plan to make LfN a major part of the learning provision of the Centre. The challenge for 2014 and beyond will be to promote this resource and our related services to schools and to other audiences and we hope to secure funding to support this.



For LfN we have developed discovery learning that considers the immense potential of the consistent application of enduring principles of nature to the design of products and industrial and economic systems.

Significant new resources are now online at lessonsfromnature.org



The City Bridge Trust funded '**Learning for Biodiversity for Londoners**' project - delivered targeted provision to learners from 6 partner London schools - with additional informal Family drop in sessions and Adult courses – in school grounds, local parks and in Epping Forest. The project leaves a strong legacy of innovative programme and learning resources, enhanced capacity and improved networking and collaboration.



Winter Wonderland Week – we delivered our 19th annual programme to Special Needs schools with funding support from the Associates of Epping Forest Field Centre.

In May Sarah Etherington returned to Astana, Kazakhstan to work with Nazarbayev University to continue to work on the EU funded FSC Global project in that country.

Service user feedback

99.20% Expectations met or exceeded

Cross-referencing with other data we believe that this was mainly **exceeded**:
2013 feedback 'overall' in the highest category on a 5 point scale was as follows:

Schools	91%
Eco-Activities	93%
Adults	83%

Number of complaints received: **Nil**

'An excellent day. The children loved it, and so did the adults' Teacher

'Excellent tutor. The course was extremely well structured and clear. We have exactly the information that we need for our controlled assessment' Teacher

'Extremely useful in tackling each item of the marking criteria provided by Edexcel for the individual investigations' Teacher

'Fantastic, fun, well-managed, relaxing, approachable, helpful staff' Parent on Family course.

'Very insightful and practical. Clear instructions and really useful to get hands-on experience' Adult learner.

Benchmarking and recognition

Northgate Arinso Health and Safety Assessment:

'Congratulations on being the first centre to achieve 100%... Congratulations on maintaining the Gold award' Terence Rebanks, CMIOSH, MIIRSM, NorthgateArinso.

Quality Badge Assessment:

'The centre has a strong ethos of dedication and enthusiasm for environmental learning which pervades through the teaching and learning at the centre. ...Sessions are very well organised and examples of excellent group management were seen which helped to maximise learning' QB Assessors.

Recognition for our 'Lessons from Nature' provision:

'I have been hugely impressed by its innovative re-presentation ESD and Learning Outside of the Classroom ... resources are excellent (and) explore unusual and complex ideas through a coherent set of activities (that) ...frequently pose very challenging questions' Cris Edgell, Qualifications Manager Science, AQA.

'These are really valuable materials which fill a gap in provision, giving teachers much needed support to help them tackle the big issues faced by society, and engage young people in real life learning' Beth Gardner, Chief Executive, Council for LOTC.

Recognition for our Learning for Biodiversity provision:

'An example of outstanding learning through well structured and innovative activities and staff who constantly challenged and support pupils to achieve to the highest levels possible' QB Assessors.

Recognition for our contribution to Discovering Epping Forest:

'HLF monitors, Mike Harding and Sharon Goddard, ...use Discovering Epping Forest as exemplar for other HLF learning projects, especially evaluation techniques and data presentation' Catherine Cavanagh, 'Branching Out' Project Manager.

Promotional activity

Web-content improvements included better pre-course and post-course information, updated course descriptors and more photographs and information about our learning sites. Twitter was used to good effect with the LfN Project. Facebook photo galleries have continued to prove popular including 'Autumn Fungi', Death's Head Hawkmoth, Wildlife Spot of the Day and photographs from our grounds. Improvements were made to existing publicity material, newsletters and the use of social media.



Review of Learning in Epping Forest

The quality of learning provision in the Forest was recognised by Sara Hoskins and Sally Williams, in their 'Review of Learning in Epping Forest' for the City of London, March 2013, in which they recommended that:

'The City of London should commit to sustaining the current level learning provision in Epping Forest and to further develop it to build on the strong outcomes of DEF and other programmes including CBT-funded projects'

The work to find the ways in which this might be achieved continues. The Epping Forest Learning Providers Forum continues to provide a means for City Officers to develop proposals for a vision for learning in EF, with strategic intentions and aims and actions to support this.

Gifford Wood Project

Centre staff collaborated with the City of London's Northern Forest Keepers Team to deliver a tree planting and learning session at the newly created Gifford Wood. More than 5,000 trees will be planted on 8 acres to help create the new woodland now added to Epping Forest as a result of the Lord Mayor's Appeal in 2013. We also provided a souvenir leaflet/tree key indicating that 'as part its 70th anniversary year, FSC is pleased to support this exciting vision of the Conservators, by donating staff time, this leaflet and other resources' to help establish this woodland.



Facilities/CO2 reduction/Grounds

The Facilities remain well-maintained City. The refurbishment of visitor toilets, linked to the 20 year maintenance plan, was particularly pleasing. This included installation of light tubes in the staff toilets to provide very welcome natural lighting as well as light sensors in the girls and boys toilets to help with further energy/CO2/cost reductions and to promote positive perceptions of shared commitments to continuous improvement of environmental impacts.



Peter Read longstanding member of the 'Friends of EF' very kindly refurbished the 'Greenwood' bench outside the Centre having installed it some 40 years previously. Peter also kindly provided us with some interesting articles about the first education sessions in the Forest and the opening of Epping Forest Field Centre and has since refurbished a further two benches.

The MET office has installed a new fence for the MET pen which from December has housed automated meteorological recording equipment.

Volunteers and the Associates

We ensured that the outputs of volunteering achieved the anticipated impacts through effective task allocation and mentoring support. However we could only utilise 343 volunteer/days in 2013, against a target of 525, as a consequence of reduced staff time to advertise, recruit, train and manage. I am most grateful to all those who give up their valuable time to support our work.

The Associates 2013 Action Plan approved at Associates of Epping Forest Field Centre AGM on 28 November reveals the continuing transformation of the Associates into an active community based organisation to promote and raise funds for the Centre and to be a focal point for volunteering. In 2013 the Associates transferred £770 to fund activities. There are currently 723 members.

Finance and staff performance

Income and Expenditure is recorded in the table below. The figures in the 2013 Budget column are those that were approved by the Joint Consultative Committee on 26 October 2012. The figures in the 2013 Actual column have been agreed with The FSC Director of Finance and reflect the figures in FSC's audited accounts. These figures exclude maintenance costs borne by the City of London.

Account Heading	2013 Budget	2013 Actual	% Variation
Course income	£271,000	£280,652	4%
Grants and sponsors (including restricted funds)	£32,500	£21,292	-34%
Other (including sales, hire, rent, charging for staff time)	£20,507	£20,868	-11%
Investment fund	£2,375	£2,611	10%
Sub total	£326,382	£325,423	-1%
City of London Payment	£52,752	£52,752	0%
TOTAL EFFC Income	£379,134	£378,175	-1%
Salaries	£293,000	£266,834	-9%
Training	£650	£414	-36%
Heat & light	£13,000	£13,373	3%
Insurance	£8,700	£7,465	-14%
Transport	£2,750	£2,637	-4%
Library & equipment	£3,000	£3,192	6%
Food	£5,750	£3,710	-35%
Cleaning	£1,350	£1,375	2%
Uniform	£200	£301	51%
Premises, furniture and estate	£1,500	£1,975	32%
Admin	£10,500	£10,708	2%
Rates & water	£7,360	£6,862	-7%
Depreciation	£1,050	£816	-22%
Gross EFFC Operating Expenditure	£348,810	£319,662	-8%
FSC Central Costs at 14% of budget (includes auditing, HR, H&S, marketing and promotion)	£48,833	£48,833	0%
Total Operating Expenditure	£397,643	£368,495	-7%
Operating Surplus / Deficit	£-18,509	£9,680	

In the 2013 Plan we indicated that:

'It is hoped that the additional income secured for 2013 will enable us to cover the deficit shown'.

However following the approval of the budget it became clear that there was an opportunity to reduce staff costs further and this was taken to address the projected deficit with to reduce financial risks. We responded to staff turnover arising from the departures of one of our Team Leaders and one of our tutors early in 2013 by appointing replacements at the bottom of the teaching scale.

The impacts of these changes, together with the consequence of reduced staffing levels already emplaced, meant that we were unable to commit time to the generation of 'additional' (non-core) income. This had been predicted in the 2013 Plan:

'the main impacts of the reduced staffing level willbe ... speed at which we can ... progress work of a developmental nature'

We were, however, successful in strengthening our core work and this contributed to increased course income which, together with significantly reduced expenditure, produced a pleasing outturn.

Achieving this financial performance and delivering KPIs alongside ambitious project work arose from huge (unsustainable) efforts by the staff team to try and address the many challenges that we faced in 2013. I am most grateful to them; they were brilliant.

Steve Bunce
Head of Centre

April 2014

Inspiring environmental understanding through first-hand experience






Head of Centre's report on progress in 2014



The Centre is managed by FSC for, and on behalf of, the City of London

Purpose of report:

The purpose of this report is to inform the Joint Committee on progress at the Epping Forest Field Centre in 2014. I recommend that the report be RECEIVED.

Criteria	2014 Targets	2014 Performance at end of first quarter
Learner experiences	22,000 (aspiration)	On target
Volunteer days	350	On target
 INVESTORS IN PEOPLE	Maintain standards for IIP. [Externally assessed in 2012]	Maintaining standards and seeking continuous improvement
 Quality Badge awarded by Council for Learning Outside the Classroom	Maintain standards for the Quality Badge.	Maintaining standards and seeking continuous improvement, especially in relation to QB Assessor recommendations
 Northgate Arinso employer services Safety Shield Gold	Maintain standards for the Safety Shield.	Maintaining standards
Meet or exceed service user expectations	> 90% of service users to record 'yes' on feedback forms	On target
Increase environmental understanding of service users	> 90% of customers to record 'yes' on feedback forms	On target

Staffing

One of our Team Leaders left in April after nearly ten years at the Centre to take a senior role at FSC Malham Tarn. As an interim step we have replaced her with a new member of our education team so that we can continue to deliver courses without disruption. The summer term would not be an easy time to train a new Team Leader it would deflect our attention from high priority work. I and the remaining Team Leader will share all of the leadership and management until there is an opportunity to address this matter more fully.

Our Bursar/Administrator leaves on 9 May.

Facilities

Further remedial works arising from the Fire Risk Assessment (FRA) undertaken in the summer of 2012 should take place in the near future (order 601319). The Contractor has indicated that they will shortly come on site to plan and schedule the work. This should address most outstanding FRA remedial actions. The possible exceptions to this relate to the testing of the lightning conductor and also to the advice to install emergency lighting in the adult toilets. The intentions regarding these are still unclear to me at the time of reporting.

The boilers for the main building were taken out of commission on 17 January when they were declared unsafe by contractors. Whilst the support from the Superintendent and his team (temporary use of the Visitor Centre and a supply of portable electrical heaters) has been much appreciated the absence of appropriate heating has created a number of issues:

- negative impacts on customers - especially on cold and wet days
- cumulative negative impacts on staff of working in frequently very low (office) temperatures and supporting cold customers
- increased energy costs and negative CO2 impacts
- power outages due to circuit overloading
- the negative impacts of power outages on the ICT network server which ultimately appear to have led to the complete failure of server and the need to send it off for data recovery with disruption arising from a lack of access to data and time spent on data transfer and setting up a new network server

These difficulties for Centre staff have also been compounded by the present arrangements for maintenance. Whilst some maintenance receives exemplary attention and our direct City staff contacts are always very helpful, it is sometimes difficult to understand why other maintenance issues are dealt with in a protracted way where there seems to be a considerable lack of clarity regarding process and intended outcome and where many people seem to be involved in resolving things that would appear to be resolvable in a less time consuming and complex manner. I raise this as comment and not complaint and in the context that I have reported appreciation at previous meetings for the City's efforts in ensuring that the facilities are of a high standard. I am hoping that the comment will be helpful at all levels.

Progress

In recent months we have:

- hosted a webinar for SEEd on 'Biodiversity in the new Science Primary Curriculum'
- delivered a workshop for 15 trainee teachers from the Consortium for School Centred Initial Teacher Training (West Essex)
- delivered a 'biology in the new curriculum' CPD workshop for teachers
- had an article relating to curriculum change, by our team leaders, published in 'Primary Science'
- introduced a new ICT related adult course 'Wildlife in the Cloud'
- caught up with some intended improvements to core course materials
- produced a new look with new content for the 'Associates' website; membership was up from 763 in 2013 to 849 at the end of the first quarter and continues to rise.

The final phase of the Learning for Biodiversity project has just been concluded. A series of short videos using 'footage' taken by staff and children during the project with stop motion animation is in the final stages of edit. This will be used on the website to help to promote the innovative activities and programme developed through the project.

Although this has been a challenging time for the Centre team I am hopeful that we will have a more settled future going forward and that we will stay on target for another very successful year.



Outdoor learning can help children flourish in science and across the curriculum — THE FSC TAKES A LEAD

Key words: Learning outside the classroom
Types of activities

Hannah Rose and Anneke Kempton of the Field Studies Council explain why the outdoors is such an important place for teaching and learning and how the FSC helps schools to deliver it

We cannot hide from evidence supporting the value of outdoor learning. George Monbiot's article for the Guardian, "The problem with education" (Children aren't feral enough) (2013), reminds us that this value is not just about academic learning, but also about providing students with opportunities to develop personal skills that can aid their willingness and ability to learn. The recent explosive growth of the Wild Network (see 16sites), which exists to champion and support connection with nature and wildness in children and young people, suggests that there is a groundswell of support for getting young people outdoors. Taking children to outdoor education centres has many benefits: the suitability of the locations, the health and safety hoops jumped through for you, the specialised facilities and enthusiastic educators who know their stuff about the natural environment (Figure 2). But we should not see one visit to such a centre during the child's primary career as "the box ticked"! Howard Gardner (1999) talks about "naturalist intelligence"; we would argue that this intelligence is often more instinctive for some, but that it can be acquired through exposure to the natural world. Similarly, Crispin Andrews (2007) discusses the power that the outdoor environment can have in children's learning and argues

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New permanent markers for orienteering courtesy of volunteer Andy



A common lizard on the reptile mound recently renovated by volunteer Gary



Workshop for teachers

Steve Bunce, Head of Centre

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