



## Epping Forest Centre Joint Consultative Committee

**Date:** FRIDAY, 15 MAY 2015

**Time:** 11.00 am

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

**Members:** Geoff Brown  
Tony Thomas  
Dr John Hopkins  
Jenifer White  
Plus 5 Members of the Epping Forest & Commons Committee due to be appointed at their meeting on 11<sup>th</sup> May 2015.

**Enquiries:** Natasha Dogra 0207 332 1434  
[Natasha.dogra@cityoflondon.gov.uk](mailto:Natasha.dogra@cityoflondon.gov.uk)

A buffet lunch will be available 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 IN 2014**

To receive the report of the Head of Centre on activity at the Epping Forest Field Centre in 2014 (copy attached) - *please note that the Head of Centre has also, in response to Member requests, included a spreadsheet with additional contextual information for income and expenditure together with a spreadsheet with data that relates to graphical information shown in the report.*

**For Information**  
(Pages 5 - 14)

5. **HEAD OF CENTRE'S REPORT ON PROGRESS IN 2015**

To receive the report of the Head of Centre on progress at the Epping Forest Field Centre in 2015 (copy attached).

**For Information**  
(Pages 15 - 20)

6. **QUESTIONS ON MATTERS RELATING TO THE WORK OF THE COMMITTEE**

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

**HEPPING FOREST CENTRE JOINT CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE**

**Monday, 6 October 2014**

**Minutes of the meeting of the Epping Forest Centre Joint Consultative Committee held at the Guildhall EC2 at 11.15 am**

**Present**

**Members:**

Alderman Gordon Haines (Chairman)	Verderer Richard Morris
Geoff Brown, FSC Honorary Treasurer	Anthony Thomas

**Officers:**

Katie Odling	Town Clerk's Department
Sue Ireland	Director of Open Spaces
Paul Thomson	Superintendent, Epping Forest
Steve Bunce	Epping Forest Field Studies Centre
Simon Ward	FSE London
Jo Hurst	Open Spaces Department

**1. APOLOGIES**

Apologies had been received from Deputy McGuinness, George Abrahams, Mark Bollard and Verderer Adams.

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

There were no declarations.

**3. MINUTES**

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

**4. HEATING ARRANGEMENTS AT EPPING FOREST FIELD STUDIES CENTRE**

Members were informed that the Epping Forest Field Centre at High Beach consisted of a main block housing five classrooms and office space, and other buildings used as accommodation (Ravensmead, Buxton and Harting) as well as a sundry classroom known as the Timber Hut.

On Friday 17th January 2014 a Mitie Inspector visited the premises and confirmed "*both boilers locked off & oil line shut as they are immediately dangerous*" this was due to hazardous levels of carbon monoxide being produced from the system. Although it was initially believed that parts could be found and replaced quickly, not all the replacement parts could be sourced from the Italian manufacturer due to the age of the system. The City Surveyor therefore

determined it was not economical to repair, and a wholesale replacement was required.

Members noted that heating in the teaching block would be compromised for an extended period of many weeks, and large numbers of temporary electric units could not be used due to loading on circuits. The Epping Forest Assets Manager made the temporarily vacated High Beach Visitor Centre available to the Field Centre Team for lessons. This building's wood-chip fired boiler was also inoperative at the time, so this space and teaching block offices were heated using supplementary electric units. This arrangement lasted through the cold months until the site was taken over by the Friends of Epping Forest and full heating of the Teaching Block was not required.

In response to a query, Officers clarified that the costs of lighting, heating and some cleaning of the High Beach Visitor Centre building through this period were met by Epping Forest local risk budgets.

## **5. EPPING FOREST FIELD CENTRE PROGRESS AND BACKGROUND TO PLANNING**

Members noted that the Epping Forest Field Centre (EFFC) delivered the City of London's environmental learning service in Epping Forest; it was established to commemorate the European Year of Conservation in 1970. From its inception the service has been managed by the Field Studies Council (FSC) for, and on behalf of, the City of London Corporation. FSC was an independent educational charity that inspires environmental understanding through first-hand experience. The buildings (teaching and ancillary facilities and staff residences) were maintained by the City.

Members noted that they received reports in 2013 and in 2014 at the meeting in May and noted pleasing progress and achievements. EFFC connected a diverse range of learners (school children, adults and families) of all abilities to the natural world in Epping Forest. The majority of learners are from Greater London with a significant number also coming from Essex with comparatively high numbers of pupils that have free school meals, 'English as an additional language' (BME backgrounds) and/or diverse ethnicity. The service promoted Epping Forest as '*a wonderful place for discovery and learning*' and fostered responsible behaviours in relation to Epping Forest and the wider environment.

Officers said that the Centre delivered its 500,000th learner experience in 2011. Delivery against the 2011-14 Plan had been effective as outlined below.

Maintenance was carried out by contractors employed by the City of London. (Defect reporting and monitoring, cleaning duties, grounds maintenance duties and routine repairs will be undertaken by Centre staff). The Centre continued to be generally very well maintained by the City and its contractors. The Centre Grounds and nearby learning sites continued to be very suitable for the provision of a range of great learning experiences.

The Head of Centre was supported a ten full-time staff of which two are at senior level. Eight members of the staff had field teaching as the main part of

their responsibilities. One member of staff is the Administrator (reception, bookings & finance processor) another is Centre Support Facilitator (main duty person, liaison with contactors, clients, volunteers, visiting tutors). Income generation from courses in 2014 is strong. Our 2014 Plan indicated the 'need to focus more on course income and viability (and on quality) rather than overly focussing on high numbers of learning experiences'. As at the summer of 2014 Officers were on target to match or exceed the 2014 course income budget estimate.

In response to a query, Members noted that a 36% staff turnover in 2014 was proving to be challenging especially at a time of updating for curriculum reform and coping with heating related issues and other disrupting factors, especially staff sickness. A consequence of these factors was slower than desired progress with funding acquisition, development work and promotional activity. However, income and expenditure for the year appeared to be broadly in line with budget estimates and visitor feedback continues to be excellent and there has been good progress with some developments. The performance probably exceeded that which might reasonably be expected and the new team were enthusiastically embracing the challenge of making further progress in the Autumn Term.

#### **6. EPPING FOREST FIELD CENTRE PLAN AND FINANCIAL ESTIMATES 2015**

Members were informed that progress in the period 2011-14 had been very good. The Committee received a report on 2013 performance at its meeting in May 2014 and noted the strong financial performance and significant achievement. As at the summer of 2014 the Centre performance remained broadly in line with budget. Income generation remained strong despite a challenging economic back drop and delivery costs had been effectively constrained.

In recent years the Centre had delivered its services at what is effectively capacity level for the physical and human resources of the Centre. The prospects of maintaining this in the future were very good given the exceptionally high levels of service user satisfaction. Flexibility and diversity of provision had been crucial to success and were likely to continue to be important factors in coping with the impacts of curriculum reform and other changes in the operating environment.

Members noted that staffing remained the crucial controllable determinant of income as well as expenditure. It was also the resource that determined the degree of success in the delivery of mission and achievement of the objectives in this Plan; retention and successful succession planning would continue to be of crucial importance.

Officers informed Members that subject to funding it was hoped that Officers could:

- significantly increase biological recording and the utilisation of this important data.

- pair subject expert Associate Tutors with dynamic and highly skilled ‘new generation’ tutors (this should build the field skills and taxonomic/ecological expertise of the latter and the capacity for continuation of this learning long into the future and ‘freshen’ presentational styles in the short term).
- tower and low ropes project.
- ICT technology (extract from development fund application).

7. **QUESTIONS**

There were no questions.

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

There was no urgent business.

**The meeting closed at 12.55 pm**

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Chairman

Inspiring environmental understanding through first-hand experience



**Epping Forest Field Centre**  
**Head of Centre's report on activity in 2014**



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

The purpose of this report is to inform the Joint Committee of performance in relation to the delivery of the City of London's environmental learning service in Epping Forest in 2014; I recommend that the report be RECEIVED.

2014 was always going to be a challenging year with a lean staff structure and a challenging operating environment. The challenges became significantly greater with the previously reported heating issues (from January to October) together with a number of broadband drop outs, telephone outages and the loss of data from the main server. Relatively high levels of staff sickness and a greater than 50% turnover of staff heightened difficulties. In the light of this it is very pleasing to be able to report that the 2014 performance was strong especially in relation to the 'key priorities' from the 2014 Plan.

The 2014 Plan had indicated the 'need to deliver ..... an additional 100 courses beyond those that come from repeat bookings and the normal level of new custom' (to replace courses from the externally funded projects of preceding years). Taking this into account, the 21,067 learner experiences delivered in 2014 (table 1) should be regarded as a significant achievement reflecting the huge effort made by all those that worked at the Centre during the year.

Table 1:	2013	2014
Paid for learner experiences	19,640	20,961
Subsidised learner experiences	2,664	115

The figure of 20,961 learner experiences is significantly above long term averages. It is comfortably within the 'range of 20,000 – 22,000' indicated in the 2014 Plan and exceeds the target of 20,000 from the 2011-2014 Plan. The high number of learner experiences reflects a continuation of operations at the Centre that, in term time, are pretty much at practical maximum occupancy.

'Learner experiences' reported to the JCC are taken from the FSC bookings data base. The data is produced following agreed protocols from which all invoicing and audited records are derived. The data provides a reasonably reliable indicator for year on year comparisons. It is broadly equivalent to the 'student/days' data that was reported to the Committee prior to the change to 'learner experiences'. A primary school pupil attending for a course from 10:00 am to 2:30 pm counts as a single learner experience as does an Advanced Level student attending from 9:00 am to 4:30 pm. A student attending a five day course would be counted as 5 learner experiences.

FSC now uses learner hours to account for variations in course length (ie teaching contact time); it is envisaged that learner hours will be used as a significant KPI for future reporting. Learner hours in 2014 were at an all time high of 113,179 narrowly beating last year's record of 113,025.

Recognising the implications of reduced funding support, the 2014 Plan had stressed the 'need to focus more on course income and viability ..... rather than overly focussing on high numbers of learning experiences. With this in mind, it is particularly pleasing to report the highest ever number of paying learners (table 1 above). This, together with a focus on higher income generation courses (Advanced and GCSE), led to the highest ever income generation from courses (table 2):

Table 2	2013	2014
Income from courses	£ 280,652	£297,725

The high level of income generation is reassuring. It confirms that there is a strong demand for the services provided by Epping Forest Field Centre and fosters shorter term viability. However, sustaining this level of income in the longer term may prove to be rather too challenging with pressures on staff and very limited time for development work. The ongoing support of stakeholders and the benefits from being part of the FSC London Region will be very important in the future. It is hoped that ways can be found to return to the delivery of more subsidised learning to target particular groups, pilot innovative learning provision and to achieve aims that are significantly broader than meeting the fieldwork needs of Advanced level and GCSE specifications.

Graphically the 2014 profile of learners and course income now looks like this:

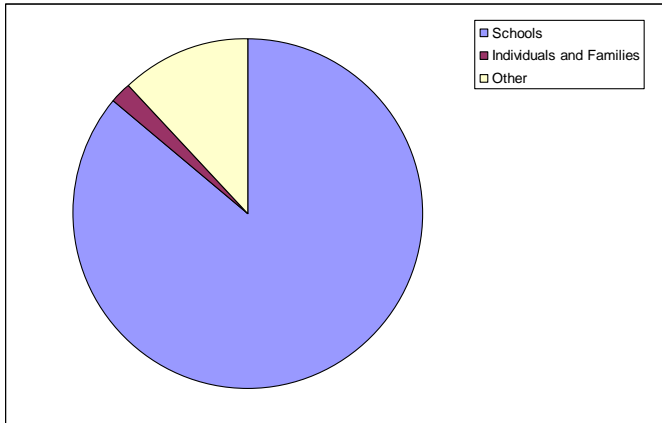


Figure 1: Percentage of learners by school / informal / other

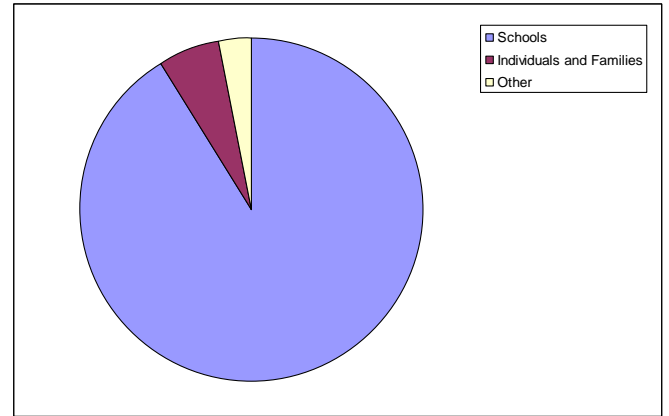


Figure 2: Percentage income by school / informal / other

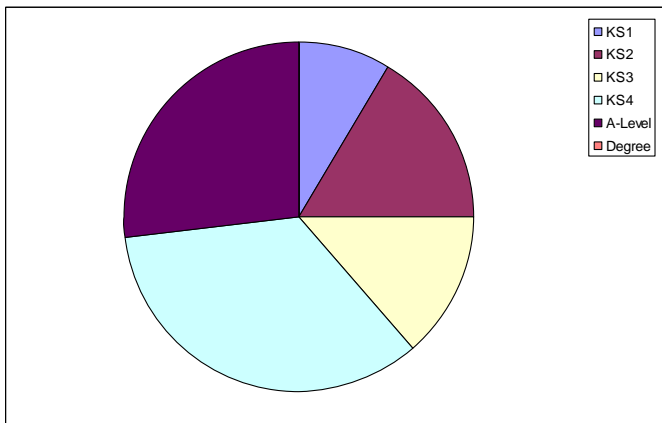


Figure 3: Percentage of school learners by Key Stage

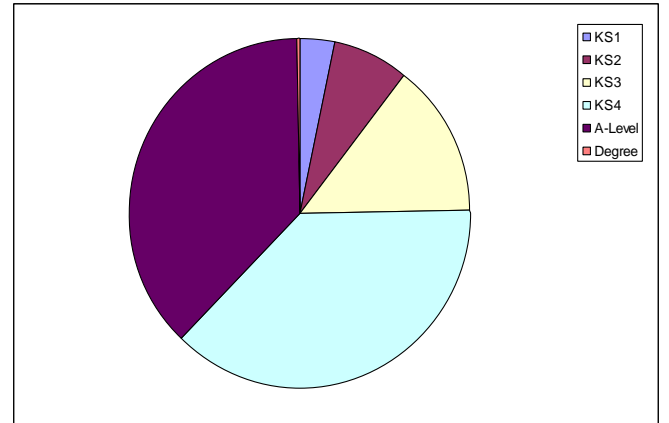
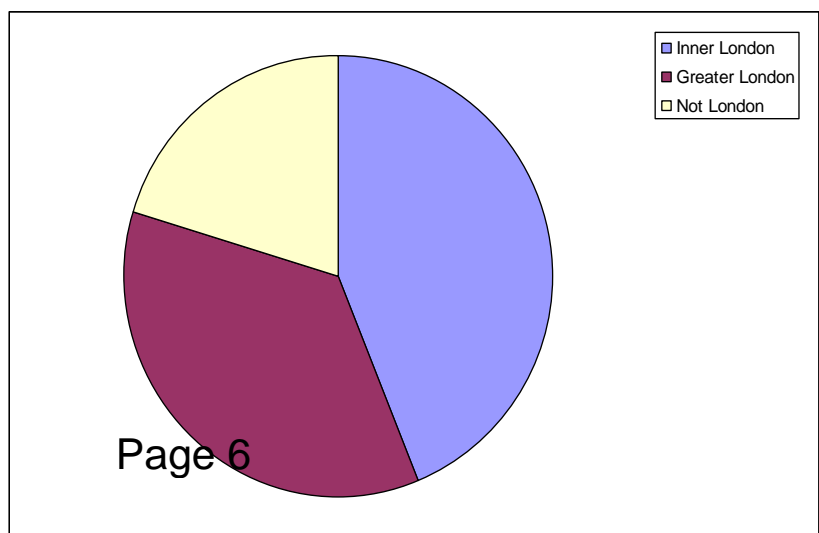


Figure 4: Percentage of school income by Key Stage

The graphical representation of the percentage splits between schools from Inner London, Greater London and beyond Greater London looks like this (figure 5):



*A spreadsheet version of these graphs with the data from which they have been produced has been prepared to accompany the agenda papers sent by email*



As in previous years we delivered our courses to learners of all ability levels from diverse backgrounds facilitating access and inclusion for the widest range of learners.

Feedback forms indicate that we met or exceeded expectations for **98.92%** of service users. We believe that that expectations were mainly 'exceeded'; **more than 90%** teachers rated our schools provision in the **highest** category on a 5 point scale. No complaints were received.



'Outstanding teaching leading to outstanding learning' – Teacher

'Fabulous! Outdoor learning in an amazing environment' – Teacher

'So good I came back a second time' – Adult learner

'A great learning experience for both adults and children' – Family course participant

Figure 6: Family Course (identifying freshwater invertebrates)

Maintaining and developing the FSC/City of London partnership in financially challenging times remains of crucial importance. The ongoing support for the work of EFFC from Members and Officers from both organisations is greatly appreciated. The developing FSC London Region has been welcomed as an opportunity to foster increased collaboration; reciprocal support arrangements, especially with teaching cover and interviewing, have been enhanced.

Six members of our team left in 2014, one having been with us for ten years and another for six years. The demand for induction training and for coaching inevitably increased with the arrival of new colleagues. This was used as an opportunity to foster the continuous development of services and systems of work. During the summer holidays a series of workshops took place to share best practice and to disseminate knowledge about courses and sites. We ensured that outputs of volunteering achieved very useful impacts through effective task allocation and mentor support. I am most grateful to all those who give up their valuable time to support the work of the Centre.

The Centre continues to be generally well maintained by the City and its contractors. However the breakdown of the boilers in January 2014 and the use of not entirely adequate temporary heating created a number of challenges through to October including overloaded electrical circuits. Conditions improved after the City's contractors installed new boilers and made them operational (subject to snagging, completion of peripheral works and final commissioning) from October onwards.

The Centre Grounds and nearby learning sites continue to be very suitable for the provision of an excellent range of learning experiences.

Of particular note in 2014 was:

- hosting a webinar for SEEd on 'Biodiversity in the new Science Primary Curriculum'
- delivery of a workshop for 15 trainee teachers from the Consortium for School Centred Initial Teacher Training (West Essex)
- delivery of a 'Biology in the New curriculum' workshop for teachers
- a new ICT related adult course 'Wildlife in the Cloud'
- an article relating to curriculum change published in 'Primary Science'

- production of short stop motion animation videos using ‘rushes’ taken by staff and children

The Associates of Epping Forest Field Centre membership has steadily increased and now stands at **over 1,000** compared to 763 in 2013. An Action Plan was approved at the Associates’ AGM on 1 December. This Plan should continue the transformation of the Associates into an increasingly active community-based organisation to promote and raise funds for the Centre and to be a focal point for volunteering. In 2014 the Associates celebrated 21 years of supporting the Centre. The Associates secured £500 to fund Summer SEN sessions in 2015, funded a Winter Wonderland session and also secured a donation of paint. Associate member Anna Galbraith rode in Ride London 100 to raise funds for the work of the Associates.

Our ‘Learning for Biodiversity for Londoners’ project that had been initiated in 2011 came to an end with the submission of the final project report to the funders, the City Bridge Trust (CBT). Tim Wilson, Principal Grants and Social Investment Officer, for City Bridge Trust wrote:



*‘It was a comprehensive and extremely well prepared report. The appendices were very informative and it was evident that this has been a popular programme. EFFC clearly has good data capture systems in place. The photos really helped bring the report to life. Thanks to all involved for the time and care taken – the hard work done on the project and the report came across well’.*

In December 2014 Keep Britain Tidy renewed our Eco-Centre Award. This award recognised our commitment to careful management and continuous improvement of impacts upon the environment and also the promotion of learning for sustainability in recent years. Key features in our evidence portfolio included the *Lessons from Nature* project and the *Learning for Biodiversity for Londoners* project and also the installation of solar tubes, movement activated lights and push taps when the toilets were refurbished in 2013.



Figure 7: An OWL Electricity monitor (installed for trials in December 2014) will be used to collect energy usage data.



Figure 8: Monitoring of the bin usage accuracy\* revealed that this was significantly more accurate for students where more sophisticated looking purpose designed bins were provided. This led to budgeting for a rollout of the new bins to all classrooms in 2015. [\*landfill and recycling separation by students from the same schools in different classrooms].



The financial performance in 2014 was much better than anticipated with the exceptionally high level of course income and with some CBT funding reaching the account a little later than had been anticipated at the time of budget forecasting in September 2013. In summary, operations in 2014 were efficient, economic and highly effective with the delivery of a very significant number of high quality and well received learning experiences.

<b>Table 3: Income &amp; Expenditure Account Heading</b>	<b>2013 Actual (JCC 14 May 2014)</b>	<b>2014 Estimates (JCC 9 Oct 2013)</b>	<b>2014 Actual (JCC 15 May 2015)</b>	<b>Notes</b>
Course income	£280,652	£285,000	£297,725	especially from A level and GCSE courses
Grants	£21,292	£6,800	£24,953	final part of City Bridge Trust funding of Biodiversity Project
Other	£18,248	£20,000	£21,785	includes charges for staff time, sales, hire of facilities and rent received from residential staff
Investment fund	£2,611	£2,500	£2,731	
Sub total	£322,803	£314,300	£347,174	
City of London payment	£52,752	£52,752	£52,752	
<b>TOTAL INCOME</b>	<b>£375,555</b>	<b>£367,052</b>	<b>£399,946</b>	
Salaries	£266,724	£276,000	£273,414	staff turnover led to some cost reduction
Training	£414	£500	£935	staff turnover led to increased costs
Heat and light	£13,373	£11,500	£10,307	reduced oil, increased electricity, inadequate heating
Insurance	£7,465	£8,700	£6,708	
Transport	£2,637	£2,500	£2,218	
Library and equipment	£3,192	£2,500	£3,082	individual investigations increased demands
Food	£3,710	£3,500	£2,809	
Cleaning	£1,375	£1,300	£1,679	unexpected repair of floor scrubber and purchase of recycling bins for trial (Eco Centre action)
Uniform	£301	£100	£303	staff turnover led to increased costs
Premises, furniture, estate	£1,975	£1,500	£1,890	unexpected washing machine repairs and purchase of heavy duty microwave
Admin	£10,708	£10,000	£8,550	
Rates and water	£6,862	£7,800	£6,732	
Depreciation	£816	£1,050	£646	
<b>Total Operating Costs</b>	<b>£319,552</b>	<b>£326,950</b>	<b>£319,273</b>	
FSC Central Costs (includes auditing, HR, marketing and promotion)	£48,833	£45,773	£45,773	
<b>Total Operating Expenditure</b>	<b>£368,385</b>	<b>£372,723</b>	<b>£365,046</b>	
<b>Operating Surplus/Deficit</b>	<b>£7,170</b>	<b>-£5,671</b>	<b>£34,900</b>	

**Notes:**

These figures exclude maintenance costs borne by City of London. The figures in the 2014 Estimates column are those that were approved by the Joint Consultative Committee on 9 October 2013. The figures in the 2014 Actual column have been agreed with the FSC Director of Finance to reflect the figures in FSC's audited accounts.

*'2014 income has grown to within a nudge of £400,000 with particular growth in course income. It is very encouraging see that costs have been held not only within budget but also to a lower level than 2013'*  
(Comment from FSC Director of Finance on the final 2014 figures).

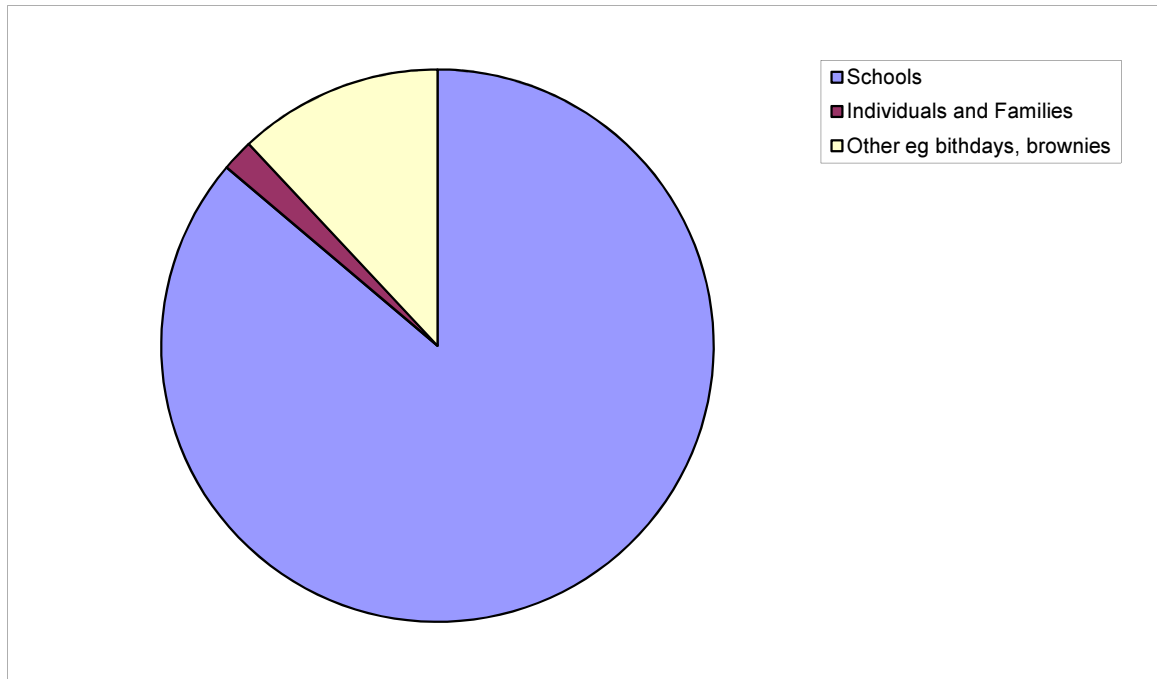
A spreadsheet version of this income & expenditure is also being sent to JCC members with the agenda papers sent by email



Account Heading	2013 Actual (JCC 14 May 14)	2014 Estimates (JCC 9 Oct 13)	2014 Actual (JCC 15 May 15)	% Variation	2015 Estimates (JCC 6 Oct 14)
Course income	£280,652	£285,000	£297,725	4.5%	£305,000
Grants and sponsors (including restricted funds)	£21,292	£6,800	£24,953	267.0%	£0
Other (including sales, hire, rent, charging for staff time)	£18,248	£20,000	£21,785	8.9%	£20,000
Investment fund	£2,611	£2,500	£2,731	9.2%	£2,500
Sub total	£322,803	£314,300	£347,174	10.5%	£327,500
City of London payment	£52,752	£52,752	£52,752	0.0%	£52,752
<b>TOTAL EFFC INCOME</b>	<b>£375,555</b>	<b>£367,052</b>	<b>£399,946</b>	<b>9.0%</b>	<b>£380,252</b>
Salaries	£266,724	£276,000	£273,414	-0.9%	£276,000
Training	£414	£500	£935	87.0%	£500
Heat and light	£13,373	£11,500	£10,307	-10.4%	£11,500
Insurance	£7,465	£8,700	£6,708	-22.9%	£9,000
Transport	£2,637	£2,500	£2,218	-11.3%	£2,100
Library and equipment	£3,192	£2,500	£3,082	23.3%	£6,000
Food	£3,710	£3,500	£2,809	-19.7%	£4,700
Cleaning	£1,375	£1,300	£1,679	29.2%	£1,500
Uniform	£301	£100	£303	203.0%	£200
Premises, furniture and estate	£1,975	£1,500	£1,890	26.0%	£2,400
Admin	£10,708	£10,000	£8,550	-14.5%	£10,000
Rates and water	£6,862	£7,800	£6,732	-13.7%	£8,000
Depreciation	£816	£1,050	£646	-38.5%	£1,100
Gross EFFC Operating Expenditure	£319,552	£326,950	£319,273	-2.3%	£333,000
FSC Central Costs (includes auditing, HR, marketing and promotion)	£48,833	£45,773	£45,773	0.0%	£46,620
<b>Total Operating Expenditure</b>	<b>£368,385</b>	<b>£372,723</b>	<b>£365,046</b>	<b>-2.1%</b>	<b>£379,620</b>
<b>Operating Surplus/Deficit</b>	<b>£7,170</b>	<b>-£5,671</b>	<b>£34,900</b>		<b>£632</b>

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Learners by category	Number of learners
Schools	18153
Individuals and Families	393
Other eg bithdays, brownies	2521
Overall	21067



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Inspiring environmental understanding through first-hand experience



### Epping Forest Field Centre Head of Centre's report on progress in 2015



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

The purpose of this report is to inform the Joint Committee on progress at the Epping Forest Field Centre in 2015. I recommend that the report be RECEIVED.

We are making very good progress with most of the 'broad objectives' listed in the 2015 Plan approved by the JCC; there are no significant exceptions to report at this stage.

#### Service user feedback and continuous improvement

We continue to regard service user feedback as a performance indicator and continuous improvement tool. From the beginning of 2015 we have been using *PollDaddy* (software) in place of 'clunky' MS Access databases to record and analyse service user feedback. Set up time was minimal compared to the time that would have been taken to set up new Access databases for 2015. Processing time is also quicker and the production of report data is much easier. Using *PollDaddy* has also facilitated the introduction of web-based feedback and the opportunity to provide feedback on iPads during the course as well as online later. Visitors on family courses and courses for individual adults are now encouraged to leave feedback on the FSC website at <http://www.field-studies-council.org/individuals-and-families/about-fsc-customer-reviews.aspx>

Here is some recent feedback from service users:

Primary - *'Fantastic - I would highly recommend it to other schools/other year groups'*

KS3 - *'Terrific in all aspects. The Tutor was fantastic'*

KS4 - *'Exceptionally well led course and very well tailored to the course we are studying - completely in line with expectations and all objective achieved'*.

Advanced - *'Fantastic, work was directly focused on AS criteria with great knowledge of each site'*.

Adult - Birthday Party - Family - *'Fabulous- really learned a lot. Excellent tutor'* - *'Brilliant'* - *'Perfect'*



Figure 1:  
Birthday party

Strong support from the management team and a very well embedded culture of learning and development for staff have offset any potentially negative impacts from significant staff turnover. There have been no poor course reviews and expectations have been met or exceeded for 98% of teachers completing feedback forms. Given that five of our six tutors joined the team since the first quarter of last year with two of these coming in at the tail end of 2014, it is not surprising that schools feedback is little less strong in the early part of 2015. There has been a fall from around 90% to (a still rather good) 84% of responses in the highest category on a five point scale for the year to date for 'overall'. We envisage a full return to the highest levels of visitor satisfaction in the coming months.

From the start of 2015 we have asked service users, on our feedback forms, whether or not our courses lead to a significant increase in appreciation of Epping Forest. Initial data indicates that 85% of teachers believe that the experience for their group did lead a significant increase in appreciation of Epping Forest. 10% indicated that this was not applicable and 5% indicated that there was no significant increase in appreciation. Fieldwork techniques courses, and courses that are mainly in the Roding Valley, are not seen by teachers to have a significant impact on appreciation of the Forest. We will be giving further consideration as to how we might further enhance the limited opportunities to foster appreciation of the Forest on these particular courses.

Our feedback also ask if service users are if they are aware that EFFC delivers the City of London's environmental learning service in Epping Forest Feedback from the beginning of the year indicates that 65% of service users (schools) were aware of this before their visit. Members will undoubtedly have spotted that the mechanism now ensures that 100% of teachers completing feedback forms are made aware of this by the time that they complete their form.

### **Booking patterns and curriculum change**

Booking patterns in recent years and in this year to date are encouraging; they indicate a strong demand for our services. The challenge now is to maintain high numbers of learners and effective income generation with changed requirements from schools arising from dramatic curriculum reform. Significant effort by the EFFC team, well supported by FSC at Regional and Charity wide level, is being channelled into meeting this challenge. Detailed information on this appears in the appendix to this report.

### **Quality Badge (QB)**

OFSTED inspector Jane Woodall, with Andy Pratt (Head of FSC Slapton) will be at EFFC on 9 and 10 June to undertake a QB assessment. It is our hope that they will comment favourably on progress reported in the appendix and on our continuous improvement process and on the outputs of this including:

- learning walls which will help students to contextualise, set & track their learning objectives
- use of handheld whiteboards in the field to support (assessment for) learning
- new starter and plenary activities including 'ecosystem dingbats' and 'sampling strategy dominoes'
- new question cue cards for higher ability learners
- continuous course improvement log and actions to track and embed a culture of continuous improvement
- new display material with the trialling of augmented reality
- enhanced use of ICT in the field and using iPads in the classroom



Figure 2: iPads in use for locating sites and comparing underlying geology

## **Ipads**

An exciting development has been the acquisition of iPads for the EFFC team that should help with productivity, collecting and sharing digital images, using social media and, most importantly, enhance learning and teaching. Initial indications are encouraging that this planned development will prove to be very effective. The next step is to acquire class sets of iPads for student use. Following the suggestion of Verder Morris at the October 2014 meeting of the JCC the Associates of EFFC have agreed to try and raise funds to help support this. An appeal letter has been prepared and will be distributed as soon as Gift Aid arrangements are properly in place.

## **Epping Forest Learning Providers Forum, DEF, Freshwater habitats and taxonomy**

As part of the Epping Forest Learning Providers Forum, with City, Epping Forest Centenary Trust and Suntrap colleagues, we are currently drafting a pack for Primary Schools to guide teachers in securing funding and other support for fieldwork in Epping Forest. The pack will refer to a Discovering Epping Forest legacy programme. The updated offer will give schools a range of options. Teachers will be able to download free material and run their own programmes and/or book courses with the Learning Providers. Learners can complete the full learning programme or participate in any combination of modules to suit the school's own preferences. However the Learning Providers will strongly recommend the completion of the whole programme. This will be presented as the best way to ensure that all learners make great progress across very significant parts of the National Curriculum and develop a fuller understanding of the natural heritage in their local forest.

Two of the original six Discovering Epping Forest (DEF) modules will morph into pre and post course work for teachers to deliver in school. Teachers will also be able to download material to enable them to lead fieldwork at Forest a teaching site near to their school. The City's Lifelong Learning Officer in EF and the EFCT Chairman are updating and developing a module that will focus on the historical use and management of Epping Forest and on practical conservation. The Head of Suntrap is developing a woodlands discovery module incorporating elements of modules previously developed and delivered by EFFC.

I am currently working on a pond discovery module that will be delivered at Epping Forest Field Centre. This will incorporate elements of the freshwater module delivered by Suntrap and EFFC's 'Learning for Biodiversity' course. Learners have an opportunity to meet curriculum requirements to work scientifically, understand how living things can be classified and learn about differences in lifecycles. The learning experiences will also encourage appreciation of ponds as an important part of the natural heritage in Epping Forest and an understanding of the need for biodiversity and conservation.

Linked to the development of the new discovery course, there remains a much bigger aspiration to build upon EFFC's reputation for freshwater ecology and taxonomic learning at all levels and to increase the attention that this receives. In turn, this is linked to a strong desire to ensure the conservation of the existing ponds at EFFC and the habitats of the very significant populations of great crested newts. The creation of an additional pond (or pond complex) at the Centre, as previously discussed at the JCC, is a crucial development in the context of these plans. It is my belief that these developments will become increasingly important to stakeholders for reasons of conservation as well as for engagement, learning and enjoyment especially with freshwater habitats under pressure and maintenance challenges ever greater.

I am delighted to be able to report that Ken Adams, our long standing Associate Tutor, has very generously donated £9,000 from his personal funds to facilitate the purchase of microscopes. Ken has recognised that, whilst this sort of specialist equipment has been impossible to fund in other ways in recent years, it is crucial to maintaining the capabilities and reputation of EFFC to host advanced level taxonomic courses. I am asking FSC colleagues at corporate and regional level to consider how we might build on this funding and draw in additional funding to further build microscopy resources at EFFC.

## **Buildings and health and safety**

As part of FSC's Charity wide risk management strategy, Fire Safety Consultant, Jamie Davis, undertook a follow up fire risk assessment (FRA) on 29 April along the lines of the 2012 FRA reported to the Committee. No significant unmanaged risks to life were identified.

The consultant noted that the following remedial actions had been referred to the City Surveyors, by the Epping Forest Asset Manager, but had not been addressed prior to this FRA:

- rectify a defect with the main fire alarm control panel
- replace 'out of date' fire extinguishers
- test the lightning conductor (outstanding from the 2012 FRA)

The following (non-essential) improvement suggestions were made by the Consultant:

- zonation map by fire alarm control panel – (we are asking the Epping Forest Asset Manager to consider this, perhaps in relation to the remedial works)
- better vegetation clearance at exits – (whilst acceptable it was not exemplary – a higher specification and increased frequency for this regular task is being recorded on the task list - this will be in place before the meeting of the JCC)
- additional fire exit sign – (this will be in place before the meeting of the JCC)
- the moving of the fire extinguisher in the photocopier room to the main corridor – (we are asking the Epping Forest Asset Manager to consider this, perhaps in relation to the remedial works)

The FRA report, once received, will be shared with City Officers. It should confirm that there are no significant risks to life and that no immediate actions are required. In the unexpected event that there is anything of importance that has not been referred to above this will, of course, be reported to the next meeting of the JCC.

We are also expecting an FSC organised external health & safety inspection for ('Gold Shield' re-accreditation) in July or August. There are unlikely to be many shortcomings. Based on informal discussions with the City's Legionella risk assessment contractor, it is thought that minor works may be required to address a stagnant water issue in tanks that supplied hand wash basins prior to refurbishment of the toilets in 2013. If this is the case, evidence that timely works are being carried out would seem to be important. It would also be useful to have copies of the City's latest tree safety risk assessment records for EFFC sites together with appropriate safety (and other) information relating to the new boilers and confirmation that, after additional works earlier this year, the boilers have been properly commissioned.

## **Development work**

The Essex Learning for Sustainability Forum, of which we are a member body, is to change its name to Essex Learning Outside the Classroom. We have agreed to deliver a curriculum change impacts workshop on behalf of this Forum to the National Association of Field Studies Officers (which became part of Institute for Outdoor Learning from April 2015) when its annual conference is held in the Lea Valley in January 2016.

Building on our link with Wat Tyler Country Park, we have added several specialist outreach natural history courses led by Associate Tutor, Ken Adams to our programme for 2015. These include courses in salt marsh ecology and microscopy. Similarly, building on our link with Forty Hall Farm we are also offering a Phase 1 Habitat Survey training course led by Associate Tutor and EFFC volunteer, Sharon Brown. These developments are part of our strategic intentions to diversify our provisions to improve longer term prospects for viability, work in partnership with others to find synergies, take learning closer to the learners and join up provision to facilitate learning journeys that take individuals to a variety of learning locations.

In March, following the inaugural courses last year, we delivered a second geography fieldwork course for the Consortium for the School Centred Initial Teacher Training (Essex) with 16 trainee teachers in attendance; we hope to build on this SCITT link.

Also in March we endeavoured to find partner schools in the UK to work with us in putting together, with partners from the EU funded Lessons from Nature Project a successor project, 'Natural Futures'. Unfortunately whilst we still have a dialogue with schools on learning for sustainability, we could not find partner schools on this occasion. This was largely due to tight time scale (for schools), the cautious

approach of UK schools to committing to innovation outside of the core curriculum and the previously mentioned unhelpful new curriculum for ESD.

Following the success of the previous ‘Loughton Big Family Pond Dip’ for Loughton residents at Staples Road Pond, the Town Council has agreed to fund this event again in 2016.

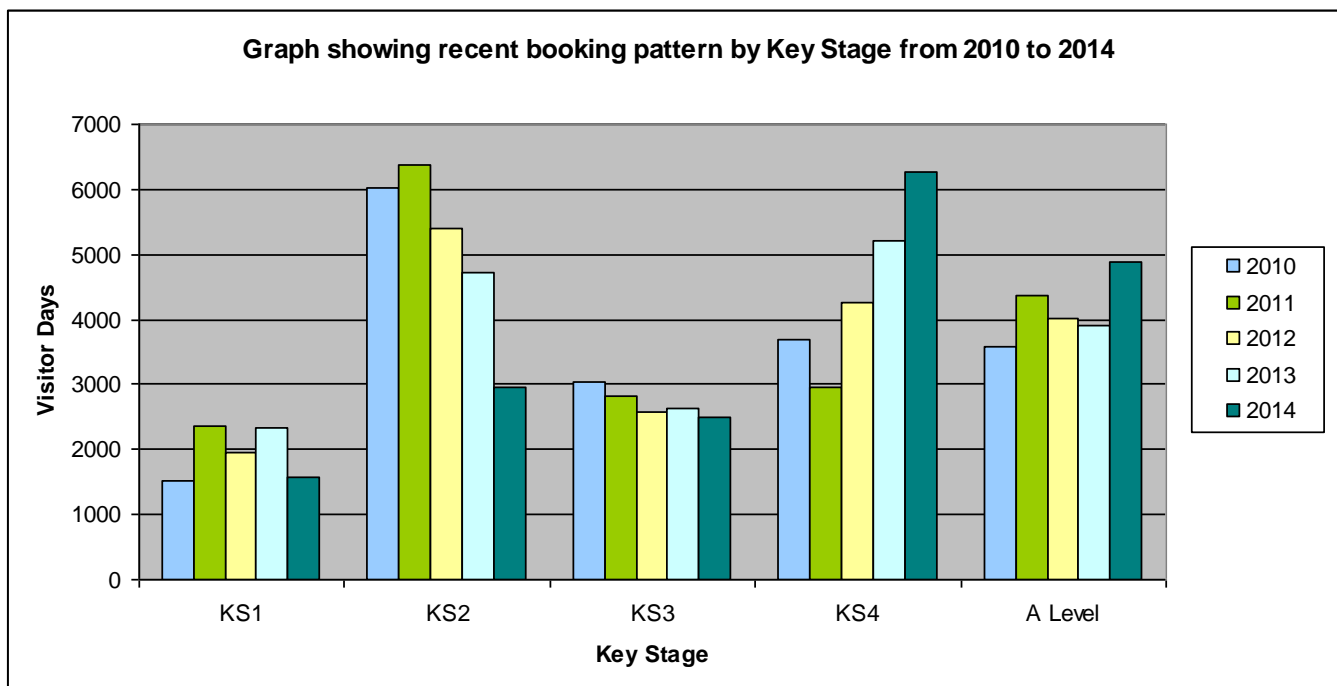
We have not been able to give as much attention to fundraising, planning for the longer term and to growing our social media presence as we would have liked. Nevertheless, we are making very good progress with most of the ‘broad objectives’ listed in the 2015 Plan approved by the JCC.

**Steve Bunce, Head of Centre (April 2015)**

**APPENDIX to this report: Booking patterns and curriculum change**

In accordance with our plans, we have invested efforts into strengthening our courses and our tutor capacity and capabilities sought to build our ‘core’ business income generation around strong Key Stage 4 and Advanced level bookings where income generation is highest. Key stage 4 bookings generate a relatively strong per capita income (currently c £18 per head/day) with relatively large groups. Advanced Level bookings, whilst having smaller group sizes have a very strong per capita income (currently £27 per head/day). It is pleasing that bookings for both levels have been good in the period from 2010 -2014 and have led to unprecedented levels of income generation. We have been able to meet increased demands for Key Stage 4 Geography where Controlled Assessments of fieldwork have been part of the Specification.

As indicated to the Committee previously, head teacher, governor and parent concerns about cost are a very significant factor at KS 1 & 2. With coach transport costing around £300 and an EFFC fee of £220 per group per capita costs are in the region of £17. Alongside developmental aims and financial reasons one of the reasons for seeking grant funding for past years was to subsidise learners at KS 2 especially from areas of deprivation. This led to high numbers in the busy project years of 2010 -13 and a then fall in KS 2 bookings in 2014.



The challenge now is to maintain high numbers of learners and effective income generation with changed requirements from schools arising from dramatic curriculum reform. This is the story so far:

At Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 we have updated content incorporated resources and pedagogies trialled in projects into our mainstream programmes and changed course titles to reflect changes in the curriculum. These courses are additional to FSC programme courses and our hope is that our strong and relevant offer and reputation will maintain or grow (non grant funded) bookings from primary schools.

The new curriculum at Key Stages 3 and 4 does not appear to present especially exciting opportunities to increase the likelihood of day course fieldwork. Nevertheless, the need for learners 'to work scientifically' and the increased emphasis on the application of mathematical concepts have been noted and used to guide modification of our Scientific Skills course. Similarly, the increased emphasis on geographical skills and ICT may attract teachers to our updated Geographical Skills course. We will work hard to ensure that our reformed Geography fieldwork days are an effective replacement for the Controlled Assessment courses when this assessment is no longer part of the requirement at KS 4. We are also reviewing our BTEC provision.

FSC has identified opportunities for Chemistry and Physics fieldwork courses which could become new courses at EFFC offer as a means of filling any gaps in provision. In the opinion of the Head of Centre the new curriculum is disappointingly unlikely to encourage secondary schools to undertake learning for sustainability courses.

In preparation for new AS / A2 Biology Specifications in the new academic year, tutors attended very helpful FSC training in January. This was followed by a workshop here at EFFC in February to progress the development of non-residential course provision. Generic courses descriptors are in place and specific promotional and learning resources are being developed; information will shortly be uploaded to the website and conveyed to the schools that currently use our services.

Tutors have also attended training in relation to new AS / A2 Geography requirements that will be taught from September 2016. This learning has been cascaded across the tutorial team and the current belief is that we will be able to offer fairly attractive courses including catchment hydrology related to flooding. There may be increased opportunities for urban geography if there is a need to fill gaps in existing provision. Ongoing attention will be given to Geography A level courses with a view to finalising our provision for the academic year 2016/17 early in 2016.

We have been discussing the impacts of curriculum reform with teachers on an ongoing basis. Most are uncertain about what they think the implications will be but express a desire to continue to utilise our services which they hold in high regard. We have introduced questions in relation to this onto the back of feedback forms. We hope that teacher responses will help to develop our understanding of teacher perceptions and fieldwork needs.

We held an advisory teachers workshop, in the Easter holiday period, for local teachers. Our main focus for the Workshop was to get feedback and creative input from 'critical friends' on the work we have been doing to continuously improve our learning provision and pedagogy. It was reassuring that they indicated a shared belief that we are on the right track. Further workshops are being planned for the next half term holiday and for the summer holiday. In the interim we will endeavour to maintain links as best we can under the constraints of available time.

Teaching staff took part in 'regional' training hosted at FSC Flatford Mill. They led sessions relating to biodiversity learning education at KS2 and to managing challenging behaviour and benefited from sessions relating to new higher standards for Quality Badge plus (QB) assessment.

**Steve Bunce, Head of Centre**

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