

Inspiring environmental understanding through first-hand experience



Epping Forest Field Centre

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



Head of Centre's report on Discovering Epping Forest (DEF)

DEF exit strategy and legacy

Purpose of report:

This report is intended to provide information to the Committee in relation to the exit strategy and legacy for the DEF Project. I recommend that this report be RECEIVED.

Whilst there is some more work to be done before the funding stops and the Project closes there are no known issues in relation to the delivery of Project and we shall soon be able to demonstrate that:

- all Learning Partners contributed effectively to and benefited from the project
- the project achieved its aims, delivered the intended outcomes, achieved some valuable unintended outcomes
- the project has a worthy legacy
- valuable further work could be undertaken should further funding become available

There is good evidence of achievement against the intended outcomes identified in the Learning Plan [Section 5.4 'Legacies and new resources for learning which will become available through the project']:

- *Increased awareness and appreciation of Epping Forest among participating students and teachers.*
- *A clear agreed statement of the new relationship between the partners who deliver the programme for schools with/for the CoL, using the strengths of each.*
- *Promotion of all the Forest Learning Partners' services through the programme and online materials, raising the profile of Epping Forest.*
- *A network of teaching professionals in local schools committed to teaching in and about the Forest, acting as 'Epping Forest Champions'. This includes actively participating in the DEF modules, enthusing their schools with regards to Epping Forest, meeting with each other at least twice per annum and working together to develop cross-curricular educational resources for KS2, based on the programme modules.*
- *A growing number of primary schools which have it built into their timetables and thinking to use the Forest regularly.*
- *Raised levels of skill, knowledge and confidence about outdoor teaching, within participating schools.*
- *Greater use of Epping Forest by schools arriving by foot or on public transport will increase understanding of how the Forest can be accessed this way without schools incurring any costs, and without bringing extra traffic.*

The only exception to this is in relation to the following:

- *Higher profile within the local area for the EcoSchools award scheme and more schools taking part in it.*

In this case an agreed change to the content of the learning programmes, prior to the commencement of the Project, made this unimportant. (The learning was focussed strongly on the character of Epping Forest and learning for sustainability course content was withdrawn). With this in mind it has been an agreed intention that Eco-schools will be signposted to DEF schools in the remaining two workshops as an optional 'next step' for those schools who choose to undertake this rather than distracting schools with unsupported content during the active phases of the Project .

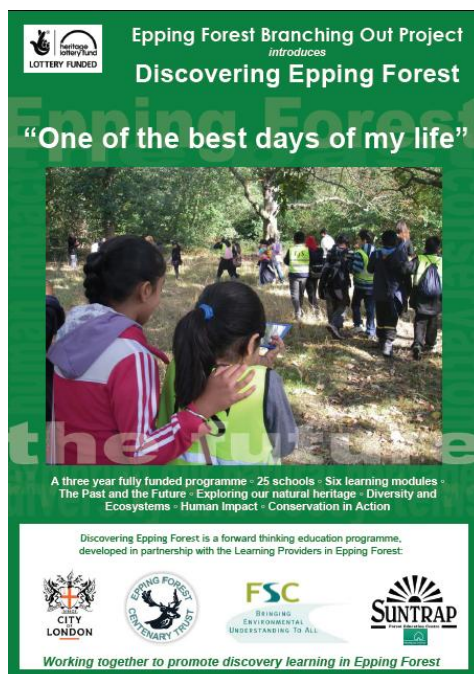
At Workshop four (reflecting on the second academic year of the Project) Champions were asked to identify the DEF Project impacts. These are some of the things they said:

- *Children worked in home and at school.*
- *Parents were involved from the start and received a handout with the learning objectives. The children were set homework based on this (this resulted in parents and children taking trips to Epping Forest independently).*
- *Our school now has an integrated curriculum with its own 'Forest Module' which will continue after the Project.*
- *The Project provided opportunities for relevant writing exercises which made it more interesting.*
- *The children were able to do follow up work across other areas of the curriculum including: poetry, instruction writing, IT skills, persuasive writing and art.*
- *Sustainability: The plan is to continue to take the children to the Forest after the lifetime of the project.*
- *Children created books based on projects the idea being:*
 - o *Children have something to be proud of*
 - o *Encourage the parents to take children out into the Forest – to learn more about the Forest together*
- *Learning has been shared with the rest of the school.*
- *School has 'working weekends' with parents and the community.*
- *Other year 5 groups have visited the Forest independently of the project.*
- *Teachers involved feel confident to take other year groups (Champion has taken her Year 1 class to the Forest independently).*
- *Whole school approach – school now has a vegetable patch and wildlife area.*
- *School held an 'Environment Day' at a local open space.*
- *Teachers feel more confident taking children to the Forest and leading activities.*
- *The Project has provided ideas and activities.*
- *Improved professional skills as a teacher as a result of being involved.*
- *Parents got involved which was really good as the community the school is based in rarely leave their local area.*
- *During a whole year trip, the children that had participated in the DEF module really stood out as they were more confident being outside and noticeably more knowledgeable about natural habitats because of their experiences on the project.*
- *DEF work can be incorporated into all curriculum subjects.*
- *Activities have been used across the school in KS1 as well as KS2.*

One of the operational negatives has been that staff turnover in schools has resulted in having to induct a significant number of replacement Champions in partner schools and also to replace a few partner schools where their capacity to continue with the Project made continuation untenable. Ironically this could add to the legacy in that significantly more than the intended number of Champions have benefited from learning and development and the Network has, in a sense, been widened. Workshop five (preparing Champions for the final academic year) included a presentation from EFFC staff on 'Spreading the word' – encouraging schools to do more outside of the visits as well as asking Champions to draw up 'top tips' they would pass on to new Champions.

The Learning Providers (CoL, EFFC, EFCT and Suntrap) met at the Warren on Friday 10th February 2012 specifically to discuss exit strategy and the Project legacy. These discussions will continue, as appropriate, at EF Learning Provider Forum meetings and learning and at the next Teachers' Workshop and at the Learning Provider end of Project debriefing meeting. The following DEF outputs were agreed at that meeting:

- A full evaluation report on the Project (an Executive Summary) will be written by EFFC staff with input and comment from the other providers. The report will refer to each of the six modules and to the teacher workshop with analysis of feedback from teachers, pupils and learning provider delivery staff. The City of London will commission the production of 50 full colour copies (one copy for each school, three copies for each Learning Provider, two copies for the HLF and two copies for the London Metropolitan Archives with nine spare copies. These will be professionally bound to include the project DVD that has also been commissioned by the City of London.
- The finalised temporary DEF website will have loads of valuable content and this will be migrated and re-presented for an exciting public access internet learning location that the City of London will develop and host. This will continue long after the temporary site expires (February 2013). The new site will be more accessible.
- The Learning Providers are continuing to explore other legacy opportunities and these will be discussed at the Teachers' Workshop that will be held on June 29th at the new Visitor Centre, Rangers Road, Chingford. This workshop will also be a celebration event, with invites sent to HLF monitors. We will give strong encouragement to Champions to liaise with other non-participating schools to use the online resources and other Learning Provider services as part of extending the Local Teachers' Forest Schools Network.
- The final Workshop (the seventh) will be held in November 2012 at Epping Forest Field Centre. In addition to being the opportunity for schools to receive their copies of the evaluation report and see the first public screening of the Project DVD, this workshop will outline the exciting offer of the learning services available in Epping Forest emphasising how DEF schools can continue to benefit from the legacies of the project.



I am intending to bring a further report to the JCC in October 2012 after all work other than the final Project workshop will have been concluded.

