

Committee(s)	Dated:
Epping Forest and Commons	10 09 2018
Subject: Epping Forest - Superintendent's Update for June to July 2018 (SEF 34/18)	Public
Report of: Superintendent of Epping Forest	For Information
Report author: Paul Thomson – Epping Forest	

Summary

This purpose of this report is to summarise the Epping Forest Division's activities across June to July 2018.

Of particular note was the extremely hot weather and lack of rainfall which has affected the Forest leading to falling lake and pond levels and 36 fires reaching a damaging burn of approximately 60 acres at Wanstead Flats; further rises in fly tipping and continued associated enforcement action and a significant rise in Oak Processionary Moth nests identified through survey work.

Recommendation(s)

Members are asked to:

- Note the report.

Main Report

Staff and Volunteers

1. One Forest Keeper resigned and two temporary 17.5 FTE Investigating Officers roles were advertised during this reporting period.

Budgets

2. At 25% through the financial year the budget is at approximately 30%, although this figure is skewed by the delayed payment of grant income and corresponding carry forward of that debt from last year's accounts. The budget for 2018/19 as agreed by your Committee currently includes £80,000 of unidentified savings and work is underway to manage these.

Weather

3. According to the Met Office, the provisional UK mean temperature for June was 14.8 °C, which is 1.8 °C above the 1981-2010 long-term average, making it provisionally the third warmest June in a series from 1910. Rainfall was 48% of average, and most notably well below average over most of England and Wales with less than 10% of average in some southern counties: for England it was provisionally the third driest June in a series from 1910.
4. The provisional UK mean temperature for July was 17.3 °C, which is 2.2 °C above the 1981-2010 long-term average, making the month provisionally the joint second warmest July (alongside 1983, after 2006) in a series from 1910. Sunshine was 138% of average and it was provisionally the sixth sunniest July in a series since 1929, and sunniest relative to normal in England where it was provisionally the second sunniest July after 2006.
5. While in confirmation of the urban heat island effect where Epping Forest has remained up to 2 degrees Celsius below the surrounding urban temperature, the combination of sunny warm temperatures and low rainfall has had a significant impact on Epping Forest.

Sustainability

6. Solar panels at the Warren and Harrow Road are performing well in the long sunlight conditions.

Epping Forest Projects

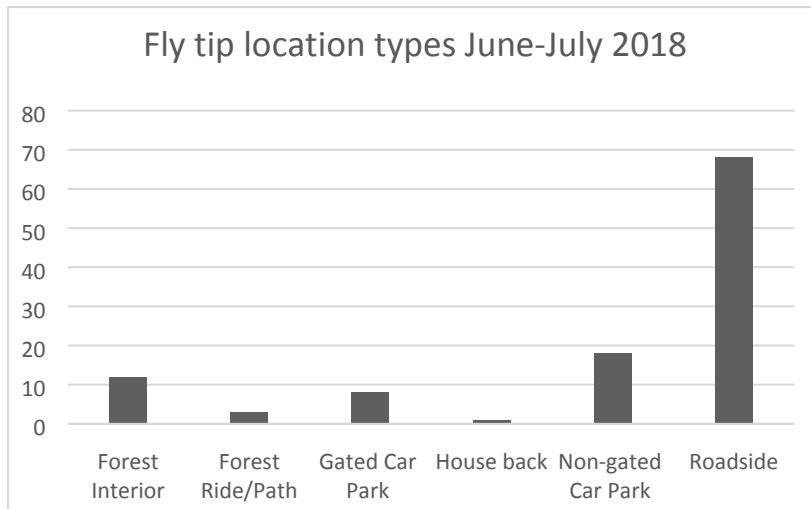
Parklife

7. The Football Foundation have awarded a grant of £34,719 (58.45%) for the feasibility study in to the construction of artificial grass pitches on Wanstead Flats.

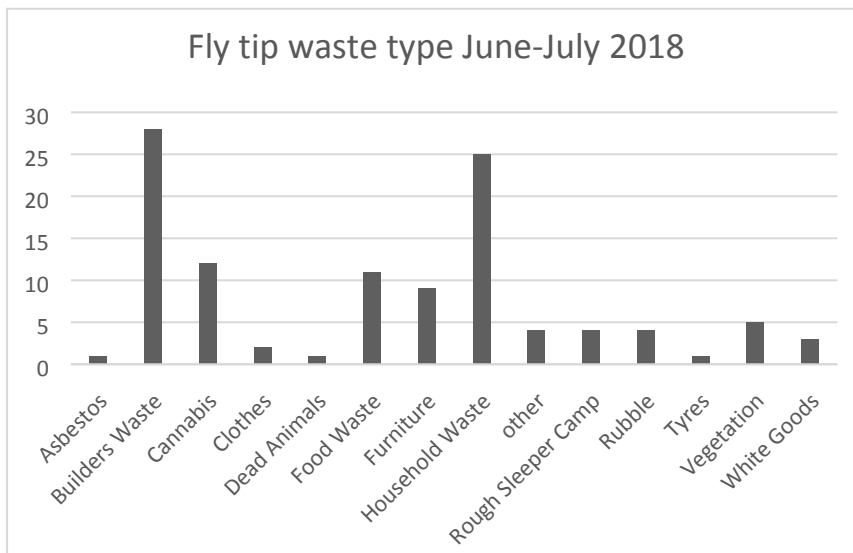
Forest Services

Fly tipping

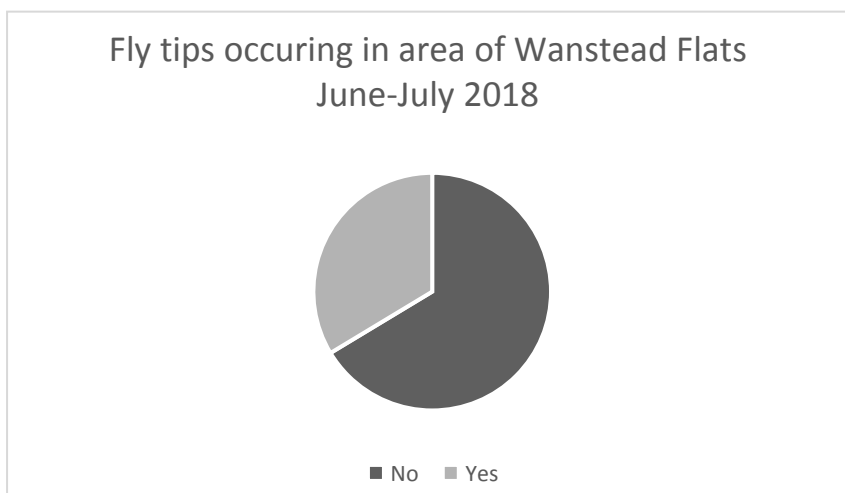
8. There were a total of 110 fly tips upon the Forest in June-July 2018, which is a significant increase 71% compared to the same period last year of 64.



9. Roadsides continue to be the most frequent and vulnerable sites used for fly tipping across the Forest and represent 74% of all fly tips. Fly tips within gated car parks consisted mostly of small household deposits.



10. Builders waste and Household waste continue to represent the highest number of fly tips at 30% & 27.5% respectively.



11. 37 of the fly tips recorded in this period occurred around Wanstead Flats, this represents nearly 33.6% for all Forest fly tips.

Enforcement Activity

12. No prosecutions were heard during the period under report.

13. The Superintendent and Head Forest Keeper issued two written warnings and five Conditional Cautions during the period under report.

Date	Defendant Name	Offence Accepted 33:Deposit 34:Duty of Care	Court Name	Outcome	Costs Recovered
07.06.2018	John Crossey	Conditional Caution EPA 34	The Warren	Admitted Offence	Costs £308
12.06.2018	Rochele Davis	Conditional Caution EPA 33	The Warren	Admitted Offence	Costs £506.32
14.06.2018	June Bulent Sikirci	Conditional Caution EPA 34	The Warren	Admitted Offence	Costs £328
20.06.2018	Nasirahmed Ramzan Chakmakya	Conditional Caution EPA 33	The Warren	Admitted Offence	Costs £228
09.07.2018	Muhhamad Khan	Conditional Caution EPA 34	The Warren	Admitted Offence	Costs £500

14. Extensive work has taken place with the Courts Service to recover full costs in each case. This has led to the first award from the Crown Court case for Shantikumar vs Epping Forest City of London Corporation with the Central Fund awarding £4,874.00. Total costs recovered in this case were £6,327.00, which settles the fine and costs owed. Officers are now reviewing other cost recovery opportunities on other recent cases.

Rough Sleepers

15. Seven camps were discovered in the reporting period in comparison to five camps during the same period 2017. All camps had been vacated following initial visits by Forest Keepers and rubbish was left on site. These figures have been included in the fly tip data as waste collected.

16. The slight increase of camps on the Forest was due to the hot weather when people sometimes prefer to sleep outside in the open rather than in a hostel.

Camps have been found in the following areas Waterworks, Leyton Flats and Wanstead Flats. Work is continuing with local authorities and other agencies to address rough sleeping on the Forest. Epping Forest is now represented on the City of London Rough Sleeper Steering Group and will review Epping Forest engagement procedures to comply with best practice.

Licences

17. A total of 57 licences for events were issued during the two months being reported, which yielded an income of £70,109.30 plus VAT (inclusive of two compounds fees of £28,770.00 and £11,508.00). 33 licences were issued during the same period in 2017 (income of £3,654.20).

Unauthorised Occupations

18. In the period of June/July we had one traveller incursion at Daws Hill, Bury Rd. The travellers were moved on with help of Essex Police. However, a female member of staff was verbally assaulted, and a fly tip had to be cleared once the travellers had vacated the site.

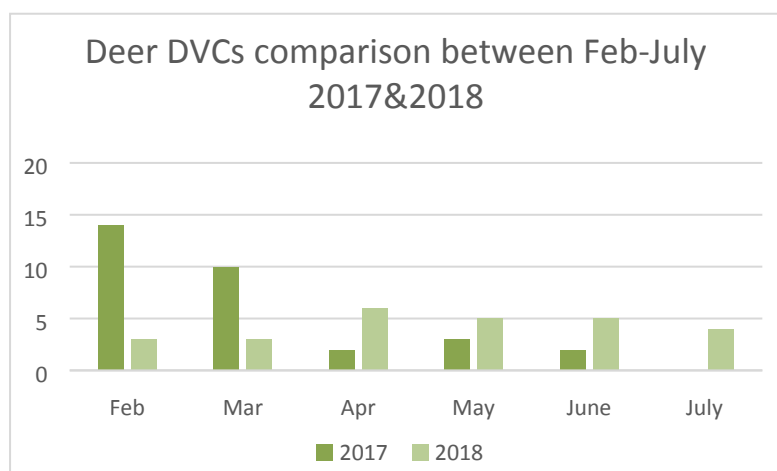
Dog Incidents

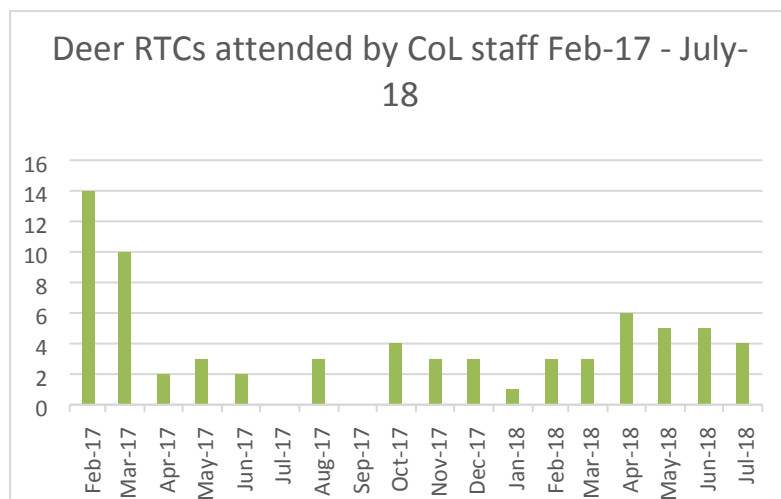
19. No incidents recorded during this reporting period.

Deer Vehicle Collisions

20. The number of reported Deer Vehicle Collisions (DVCs) fell by 16% from 31 (February – July 2017) to 26 (February – July 2018). The absence of consistent reporting means it is not possible to ascertain exactly how many deer were physically hit and where, which must be taken into account when using these statistics.

21. The month with the highest average DVCs in the last six months was February, this is largely due to the hours of darkness coinciding with rush hour/greater deer movement at night. This is 325% higher than July, the lowest month. October/November tends to be the worst month, due to the increase of animal movement during the rut occurring at the same time as the autumn equinox.





Fires

22. In addition to the major fire at Wanstead Flats which is covered in this report under major incidents, the London and Essex Fire Brigades have responded to 37 fires across Epping Forest during the June/July period. Many fires seem to have started from the careless use of disposable barbeques, cooking fires and discarded cigarettes, although arson is also suspected in a number of cases. Forest Keeper and Operations Team Vehicles have been provided temporarily with 1,000 litre Intermediate Bulk Containers to carry water to fires beyond the reach of hydrants.

Heritage; Landscape and Nature Conservation

Biodiversity

23. Red Kites have successfully bred (2 nesting pairs) on the Forest and Buffer Lands this year. This is the first time this species has been recorded nesting on City-owned land. One pair nested successfully at Copped Hall on the Buffer Lands, and raised one chick while the other nest was located within the Forest itself near Theydon. The species was persecuted almost to extinction in the UK by the end of the 18th century with only a remnant population in mid-Wales throughout most of the 20th Century. However, following a series of several successful re-introductions since the early 1990s, using birds from Spain and Scandinavia, the Red Kite population has expanded its range across England.
24. A number of rare invertebrates, flies and beetles, were recorded from the Forest during the early summer months. All were species associated with decaying wood habitats and two are very rare or vulnerable to extinction in the UK and Epping Forest is one of their key sites (these species are marked below with an asterisk*).
25. Of the flies, the Crane fly family was prominent in the areas of beech pollards, with three rarities seen at various sites: - *Ctenophora pectinicornis* (Cone Horned Crane fly), **Ctenophora flaveolata* and *Dolichozepea albipes* (White-footed Ghost Crane fly). Two of the outstanding beetle records were: **Ampedus cardinalis* (Cardinal Click Beetle) associated with ancient oaks and *Platyrhinus resinosus* (Cramp Ball Fungus Weevil) found with its host fungus on ash and beech.

26. Perhaps the rarest of all species recorded this summer is the Oak Polypore, for which Epping Forest is a stronghold. Fruiting bodies were recorded at Barn Hoppitt near Chingford in an ancient pollard. This fungus fruits relatively infrequently and irregularly but has been found across the central belt of ancient oaks in the Forest from Barn Hoppitt to Lords Bushes.
27. Along with other bracket fungi species on oak, like chicken-in-the-woods and beefsteak fungus, this species is part of an internationally important decaying wood (saprotrophic) fungal community on oak trees. And it is not just on oak, as Epping Forest also supports an internationally-significant population of beech saprotrophic fungi. This international importance was confirmed by a recent publication.
28. In July, Natural England's Chief Scientist and the Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC) announced the publishing of a new chapter on fungi as part of the national *Selection Guidance for Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs)*. This new guidance is considered as a major step forward in the conservation of fungi. In fact, the Beech saprotrophic fungi index was tested here at Epping Forest, with our support, over 10 years ago. The guidelines now provide official recognition of the **international importance** of Epping Forest's beech and oak saprotrophic fungi assemblages. As the guidance states:
29. *"Britain is considered to have international importance for several habitat-based fungal assemblages, either because their habitats are internationally restricted, e.g. ancient/veteran trees (Rackham 1990; Farjon 2017), ... or because there is evidence that British sites have some of the highest levels of species diversity recorded within such assemblages across Europe....."*
- 2.2. *Accordingly, internationally important elements of our mycobiota are:*
- *lignicolous saprotrophic fungi on beech (Ainsworth 2004b) and oak (Ainsworth 2017a) "*
30. Continuing the theme of ancient tree habitat conservation, the Ancient Tree Forum, funded by the City Bridge Trust, began the planning of self-guided ancient tree conservation trails at Epping Forest and other City of London open spaces. The self-guided trails will initially be aimed at the training of arboricultural professionals, foresters and conservationists. However, it is hoped that this national initiative may also provide trails which will contribute to a wider public appreciation of our special tree populations.

Agri-environment Schemes and conservation land management

31. The tender process for contract work to deliver part of the Higher Level Environmental Stewardship grant work in 2018 has been completed with two contractors appointed. Work started in July 2018 and will cover areas between Honey Lane Quarters and Lords Bushes.
32. Fieldwork has started to prepare for the Countryside Stewardship Application. The Conservation Section visited Forestry Commission and Natural England staff at Savernake Forest to find out about their Countryside Stewardship application and agreement.

Grazing

33. Grazing continues across the Forest and Buffer lands with grass starting to burn off in the hot conditions. On the Forest the sites benefit from good shade and also a wide variety of vegetation to both graze and browse and cattle remain in good condition. On the heathland sites the very high temperatures in June and July with the lack of rain increased pressure on labour resources to maintain water trough levels because there are no mains water supplies in these areas.
34. Despite the dry conditions, silage and haylage production has yielded 1,500 bales which will cover the expected winter feed requirements for the herd. The contingency supply may yet be needed to cover the late summer period if the current weather and low grass growth continues.
35. An evening “meet the cattle” event was undertaken in conjunction with the Horse Riders’ Forum. Nine horse-riders were given a short talk explaining the importance of cattle grazing in the Forest and how to better understand their behaviour and feel more comfortable around them on horse-back. There was good feedback from the riders who expressed their wish that a larger number of the Forum members had attended.

Heritage

36. Consultants reports are being finalised for the Conservation Statements at Paul’s Nursery, Eagle Pond, and the Parkland Plan for Copped Hall.

Town & Country Planning

37. The Epping Forest District Council (EFDC) Local Plan continued as a key priority for work during the summer. On 25th July, under delegated authority the City Corporation’s proposals for mitigation projects to help protect Epping Forest Special Area of Conservation (SAC) from the pressures of increased recreation and urbanisation were presented to the Local Plan Oversight Group. This group, coordinated by EFDC, involves 11 local district/borough authorities as well as Essex County Council and Lee Valley Park Authority. Natural England officers were also in attendance from both its London and Eastern region teams.
38. The meeting involved detailed discussion about the sharing of responsibilities and costs between the different authorities, in order to protect Epping Forest SAC from the impacts of development. Following the meeting, the local authority representatives are consulting within their authorities to consider the proposals in more detail and examine how mitigation tariffs might be levied on future development. Responses are expected during August.

Land Registration

39. The first-tier Lands Tribunal hearing has yet to take place in the case of the land claim on Forest Land at Broomhill Road, Woodford Green. The initial statement of case from the contestant claiming the land was not accepted by the Tribunal and a re-submission was requested. This re-submission has now been made and the date for the hearing is still awaited.

Operations

Habitat Works

40. Grass cutting: A new three-year grass cutting contract has been tendered and agreed with work starting in July largely in the south of the Forest on fire susceptible sites.
41. Wanstead Park, floating pennywort control - Monthly checks with a specialist contractor are being continued to monitor for and respond to floating pennywort.

Risk Management Works

42. Tree Safety – Arborist teams continue to focus on tree safety works arising from the annual assessment. Notable works have been the re-pollarding of the poplars on boundary with North Farm. These are large trees close to properties which have had a significant reworking to remove very top-heavy crowns. We also had two days of traffic management to allow safe working of a road-side tree we could not access in any other way.
43. Fire Safety: Fire belts have been recut and widened across Southern sites as a part of the response to the recent fires. Conservation grass cutting also commenced across the Forest with sites identified as most prone to fire being prioritised.
44. Highways Vegetation. Work on selected road verges commenced in July. The majority of road verge cutting is scheduled for Aug/Sept.
45. Oak Processionary Moth (OPM): This has been a very busy period for work to survey and manage for OPM. In comparison to 2017 where 4 nests were found the numbers of nests found so far this year as part of the COL organised surveys is 68 and further nests are expected to be identified from surveys being undertaken by the Forestry Commission. It is very evident that OPM is now established across the Forest and we will need to re-evaluate our response given this development.
46. Contractors are being identified to manually remove the OPM nests avoiding the need for pesticide spraying.

Access Works

47. Path verge cutting has commenced across the Forest. This is primarily to control collapsing vegetation reducing the path width and focuses on the surfaced path network. Work continues on developing the long-term path management plans to ensure more paths are maintained more regularly.
48. With the support of the Essex Bridleway Association the City Corporation was able to engage contractor to excavate a long derelict ditch line that has helped to drain a wet section of bridleway along Bury Road near to the entrance with Gilwell Park.
49. Paths across Wanstead Park have been cut. These are included in the highways vegetation management contract to help balance staff workloads at a particularly busy time.

50. New Dragons teeth have been installed at Snaresbrook Road car park allowing it to be reopened. We have opted for a slightly different style of dragon's teeth with the replacement system offering a more cost-effective solution which is easier to maintain. Work on replacing dragon's teeth at Alexandra Lake CP has begun following a couple of significant fly-tipping incidents requiring us to improve security.
51. The Original Tea Hut at Hill Wood was resurfaced around the seating area. In association with our Tenant. The tenant installed a larger concrete pad in the vending area and we laid a finer wearing course onto the original MOT Type-One surface.

Water levels

52. The hot weather and lack of rainfall has seen overall water levels fall at a number of the Forest's key waterbodies. Monitoring suggests the average reduction is in the order of 250% of recorded seasonal levels. Birch Hall Park Pond has fallen from a gauge board level of 0 to 260mm; while Highams Parks Lake has seen gauge board water levels fall by 250mm or 250% to -35cm compared to -10cm at the same time last year. Forest Keepers have been responding with temporary oxygenating pumps to low oxygen events in water bodies, largely caused by the death of oxygenating plants shaded by surface windrows of the aptly-named blanketweed (*Spirogyra spp*).
53. Direct comparison of the water levels for the Wanstead Park cascade of Shoulder of Mutton; Heronry Pond; Perch Pond and The Ornamental Water are difficult because of refilling pumping over the last few years in response to dam repair works, floating pennywort control and the recent failure of the borehole pump. Comparisons with the previous year at the end of July show that Heronry Pond has fallen from -48 to -70 this year; Perch Pond has improved with 0 this year in comparison to -24 last year and The Ornamental Water is -100mm compared to -123mm last year. The City Corporation continues to pump 345,600 litres of water per day to help maintain water levels in the lake system.

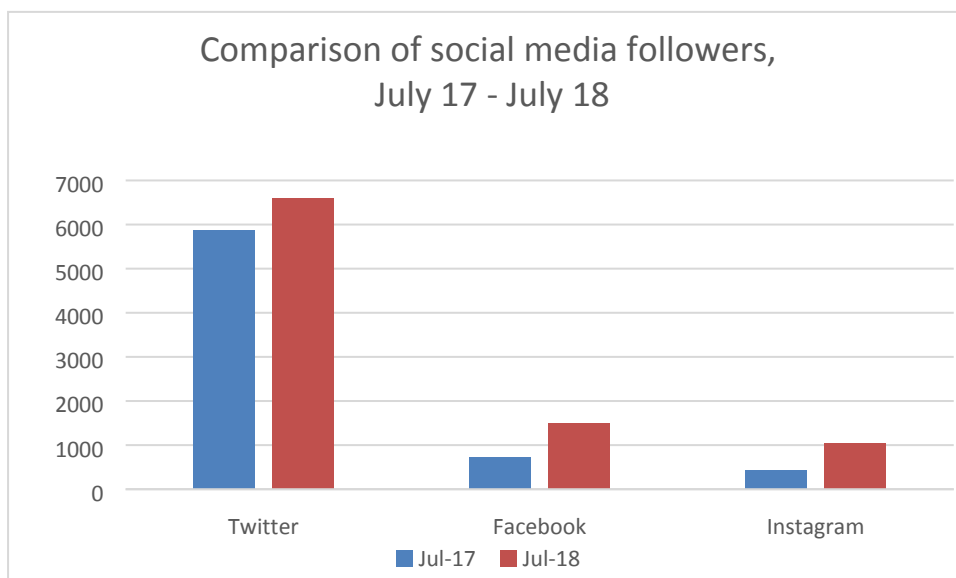
Visitor Services

Communication and Information

54. As at 25 July 2018 our following on social media is as follows:

- Twitter followers: 6,604 (12.7% year on increase)
- Facebook likes: 1,503 (110% increase)
- Instagram followers: 1,036 (141% increase)

- The chart shows a comparison of our figures at the same point in 2017



55. Forest Focus summer edition was a success. The City of London Corporation increased the print run from 6,000/7,000, depending on content, to 10,000, an increase due to demand. The increased costs were managed by a slightly reduced internal page paper quality. Officers have not received any complaints with regards to the paper quality and have been able to greatly increase the distribution and circulation of the publication.

56. The June and July 2018 editions of the local 'Life' publications featured a free, full page article on Epping Forest, with June's promoting the Open-Air Theatre season and July's promoting the 'Top Ten Awards Survey' we are running, as well as promoting the events taking place in July.

Chingford Golf Course

57. The continued hot and dry weather has seen the golf course start to struggle with maintaining conditions as best as possible for this time of year. The Head Green Keeper and his team are continuing to water daily to keep the greens playable and the height of the cut has been kept slightly higher than usual which makes the green's speed slightly slower. More repair work to the irrigation system has been carried out to reduce leakages. Vehicle maintenance was needed on the sprayer which was out of action for a week, stopping the regular spraying for the soil biology programme. Work was carried out to the John Deere machine changing the blades and height to give a better cut and finish to the tees.

58. The Royal Epping Forest Golf Club (REFGC) charity golf day was well received at the end of June with a total of 50 playing. Both REFGC and Chingford Men's Golf Club Captain's day events were also popular considering the dry conditions and heatwave with a combined total of 120+ visitors.

59. Horse riding licences sales have transferred to the Caddie House. Riders appreciate the longer opening hours and improved car parking facilities at the revised sales location. At present we have sold 196 yearly licences, compared to 235 last year.

60. Total revenue from online sales this period is £8,539.50, total revenue from reception was £70,180.93 broken down into:

Breakdown of figures from Reception			
	2018/19	2017/18	Difference (+/-)
Green fees:	£56,126.40	£66,201.81	-£10,075.41
Drinks:	£1,714.40	£2,119.70	-£405.30
Hire Equipment:	£7,399.50	£6,191.55	+£1,207.97
Shop Sales:	£3,779.25	£1,492.35	+£2,286.90
Wanstead:	£120	£0	+£120
Horse Riding:	£1,041.38	NA	+£1,041.38

61. Compared to last year the total difference in revenue equates to being £1,507 down. This is largely accounted for by the new payment system.

62. Online bookings for the same period last year was £4,202 compared to £8,539 this year, making an increase of £4,337.

63. Total revenue from reception last year was £76,005 compared to £70,181 in the current year, a reduction amounting to £5,824. £1,041.18 of this year's takings is however from horse riding licences this year, which we did not administrate from here last year.

64. The first staff change over between the grounds teams happened end of June seeing one member of ground staff move from the golf course down to Wanstead and vice versa for 3 months. A new casual member of staff was set up allowing more reception cover for the busy summer period.

Wanstead Flats Football

65. Booking forms have been sent out for next season. These have been revised to allow greater control over which pitches are used and when. The improved rotation and resting of pitches will facilitate a more effective restoration of pitches, particularly after the very hot summer weather.

66. There have been eighteen School Sports Days, with pupils from 8 schools, held on the Flats in this period. The 8 schools were; Avenue Primary, Davis Lane, Buxton, George Thomlinson, Salisbury, Downsell Primary, Woodgrange and Azhar Academy.

67. Parkrun attracted 1,875 runners during the period June - July 2018. Parkrun is led by Epping Forest volunteers and is a free activity for participants to encourage active lifestyles.

68. The annual deep clean of the 3 changing facilities was undertaken in the last week June and first week in August in readiness for the next season.

69. On the 1 July, the first staff changeover was implemented for the Greens/Grounds Keepers. The team of 4 FTE Grounds and Greens Keepers was created to cover Chingford Golf Course and Wanstead Flats allowing resources to be concentrated at each site in response to season demands. Two of the team have now swapped to their opposite operational site to learn the site-specific needs and share their own knowledge/experience of turf maintenance. The next swap is scheduled for early October.

Visitor Numbers

70. Visitor numbers continue to be lower than previous years due to the continued closure of The Temple and several ad hoc closures of QEHL for refurbishment.

Visitor Numbers	QEHL 2018	2017	View	2017	Temple	2017	High Beach	2017	Total	Total 2017
June	1526↓	2861	3069 ↓	4018	0 closed↓	513	1924....↑	1790	6519	9182
July	2006↓	2599	3299↓	3942	0 closed↓	473	1837....↓	2103	7142	9117

Visitor Services Events

71. Taster Craft Sessions in partnership with London Borough of Waltham Forest Adult Learning Services continued with two sessions: 7 June, 'Nature's Flowers' and 13 July, 'Make a Vintage inspired headband', both inspired by the natural beauty of the Forest. Nature's Flowers invited participants to bring in garden flowers to combine with fallen twigs and leaves from the Forest. The millinery event was a high-level craft afternoon teaching traditional cockade-making to create rosettes and leaf shapes. Both were fully attended to room capacity at The View Community Room.
72. A talk was given at Vestry House in Walthamstow by the Museum and Heritage Manager as part of the Epping Forest 1878 event season. The evening lecture, and handling table of museum objects attracted an audience of around 25 people and supported Vestry House's Forest-related summer art exhibition by artist Rachel Lillie. An article about the exhibition and the talk appeared in the Summer Forest Focus.
73. An exhibition to celebrate 130 years of golf on the Chingford Golf Course was researched and created in partnership with the Royal Epping Forest Golf Club and showcased documents and photographs from their archive. The exhibition encouraged visitor participation by offering the opportunity to add endorsement and comment about the course to the display, as well as a colouring activity for children. The exhibition ran from 16 June to 15 July.
74. A summer exhibition to mark the 140-year anniversary of the passing of the Epping Forest Act of 1878 opened on 21 July. It tells the story of how the Forest was already seen as a place for recreation as well as resources in the early 19th century and explains the years of campaign, protest, court case and City of London action in the 1860s and 1870s. It includes 1874/75 photographs of the Forest. The exhibition is supported by summer holiday children's activities: Victorian replica hats, sketching, hoop-trundling and twig-tower

making and invites members of the public to bring in 'Then and Now' photographs to complement the Victorian forest scenes.

75. Renowned touring theatre company, Illyria, returned to The Temple Enclosure in Wanstead Park on 18 July, for an evening performance of The Pirates of Penzance. Approximately 260 people enjoyed the event with very good feedback received throughout the evening.
76. Successful weddings at Queen Elizabeth's Hunting Lodge were held across the months of June and July, with two taking place in June, on 9th and 23rd of the month, and two in July, on 21st and 26th.

Major incidents

77. Grass and Heathland Fires – The joint multi-agency work at Wanstead Flats was very successful and the Chairman has written to praise the work of the London Fire Brigade, Metropolitan Police, Transport for London, Local Authority Liaison Officers and Open Spaces staff for all their exceptional work in helping to successfully conclude 4 very challenging days.
 - At the height of the fire there were 50 fire tenders (25% of all London's fire tenders) in attendance.
 - Approx. 60 to 70 acres were affected (total area of Wanstead Flats 430 acres) with 40 acres of the Site of Special Scientific Interest damaged.
 - Work has already started on mapping the fire sites with a view to undertaking tree safety works and developing a heathland restoration plan.
 - The skylark nesting site was unaffected but there is damage to their surrounding habitats.
 - There has been a good 'post event' meeting with the Police and Fire brigade and a number of 'learning points' identified which have been shared with the Departments Health and Safety Group and noted as part of the Corporate Risk Register review.

Appendices

- Appendix 1 – Deer RTA 3 x Map Locations

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