

Committee(s)	Dated:
Epping Forest and Commons	19 11 2018
Subject: Epping Forest - Superintendent's Update for August to September 2018	Public
Report of: Superintendent of Epping Forest (SEF 44/18)	For Information
Report author: Paul Thomson – Epping Forest	

Summary

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

Of particular note was continuing reduced rainfall which is accentuating the impact of the summer drought; the arrival of Leisler's Bat and the Ivy Bee within the Forest; the successful extension of the barrierless fencing system at Chingford and Sunshine Plains; positive promotion of Epping Forest at the Commonwealth High Commissioners Banquet; well received work on the restoration of the Long Walk at Wanstead Park and the celebration of 130 years of Golf at Epping Forest.

Recommendation(s)

Members are asked to:

- Note the report.

Main Report

Staff and Volunteers

1. One temporary 17.5 FTE Investigating Officer role has been recruited during this reporting period.
2. One part-time Sports Bookings Assistant left at the end of September. Recruitment for a replacement was undertaken in early October.

Budgets

3. The Revised Estimates process has been completed at Epping Forest, realigning budgets for 2018/19 and setting them for 2019/20, as detailed in a separate report. At the end of September (50% of financial year), overall expenditure budgets for all Epping Forest codes were at 48%, and income at

41%. The low-income figure is dependent on the payment of both this year's and last year's Environmental Land Management Scheme grant income.

Weather

4. August 2018 saw below average rainfall in Epping Forest. Total monthly rainfall (48.2 mm) was 29.7% below the average rainfall recorded for August in Epping Forest since 1979 (68.6 mm). There were 20 days of rainfall in total, the wettest being 11th August, which saw 8.0 mm of rainfall.
5. September 2018 saw below average rainfall in Epping Forest. Total monthly rainfall (34.6 mm) was 23.8% below the average rainfall recorded for September in Epping Forest since 1979 (45.4 mm). There were 9 days of rainfall in total, the wettest being 22nd September, which saw 17.2 mm of rainfall.
6. Due to a problem with the rain gauge, rainfall recordings for 1st, 2nd and 3rd September 2018 are missing, which may affect the data presented above.

Sustainability

7. Staff are investigating the environmental credentials of residential property at Epping Forest after inspections for Environmental Performance Certificate (EPC) at some sites indicated lower than desirable classification.

Epping Forest Projects

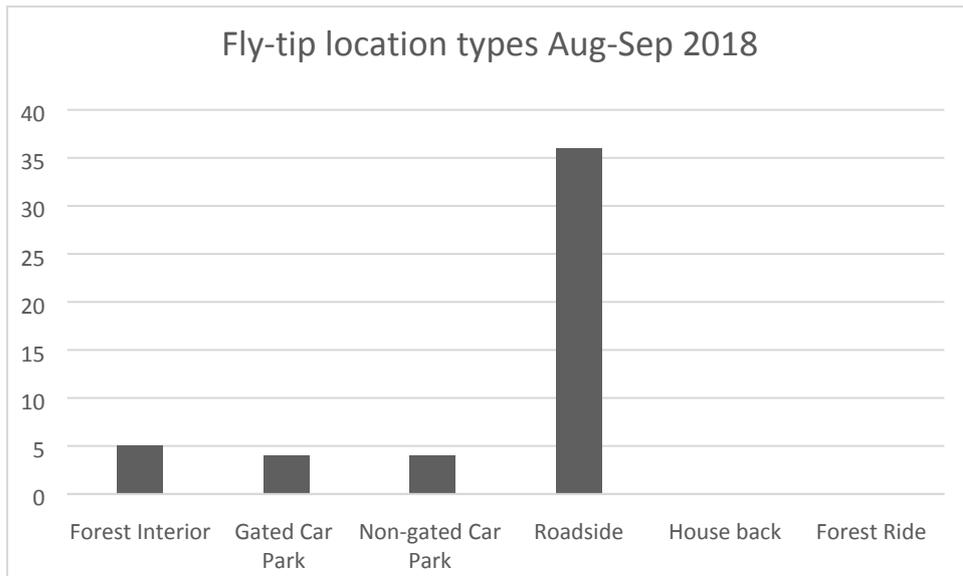
Parklife

8. The framework project managers QMP have been appointed and have completed initial studies including topographic surveys of the Wanstead Flats Sports Pavilion Sites.

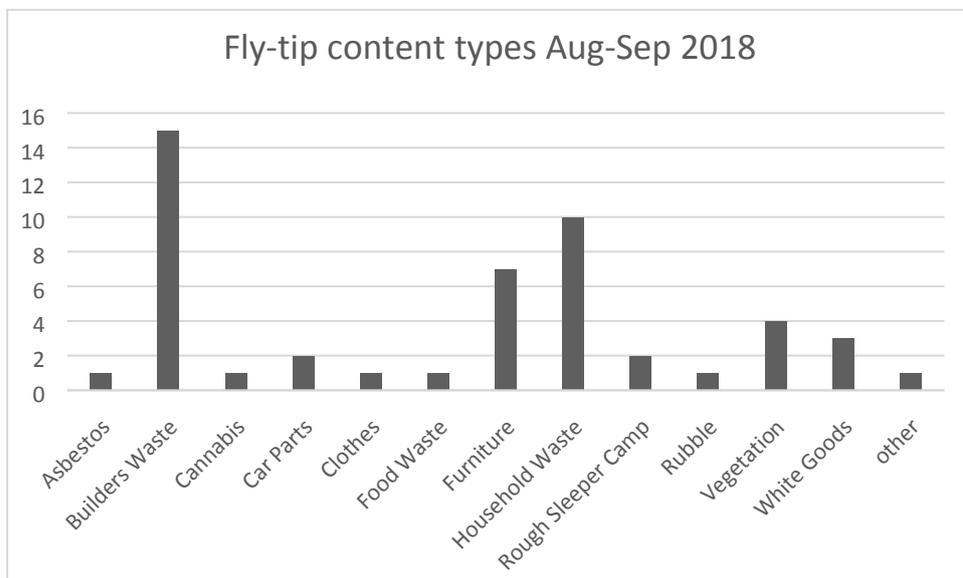
Forest Services

Fly-tipping

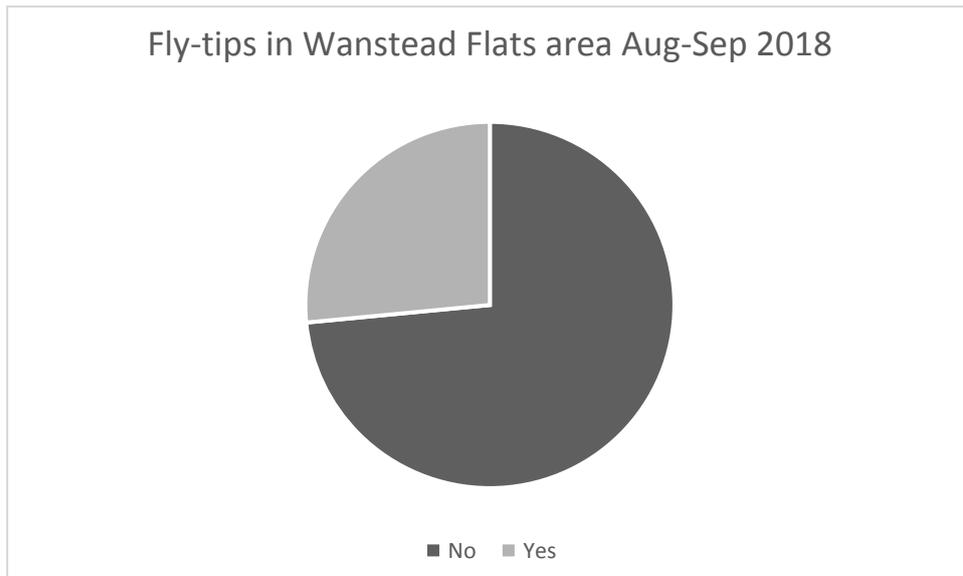
9. There was a total of 49 fly-tips over this period compared to 109 over the same period in 2017, this is a reduction of 55%. This potentially could be attributed to the better weather over this period compared to 2017, which resulted in greater public presence within the Forest in the late evenings. There has also been more increased gate closures and layby logging which has reduced available locations.



10. Roadside locations remain the largest vulnerable location for fly-tipping in the Forest. Over this period these locations represented 73.5% of all fly-tips. Positively for the Conservators many of these locations are the responsibility of the local or municipal authorities to remove. This changed liability does not however reduce the eyesore and potential environmental impact of these tips. It is also noticeable that fly-tipping has increased in the Forest periphery especially in the Epping Forest District Council area.



11. Builders Waste remains the predominant waste type representing 31% of tips. Two of the recorded tips are the removal of Rough Sleeper Camps which is an additional resource requirement when addressing rough sleeping in the Forest.



12. Over this period 26% of the tips collected occurred in the Wanstead Flats area of the Forest. It should be noted that Newham Council have been very swift to remove fly-tips on the Forest border, which although reported to us are not the responsibility of the Conservators.

Enforcement Activity

13. No prosecutions were heard during the period under report. Two written warnings and two conditional cautions were issued during the period under report.

Rough Sleepers

14. Five camps have been found in the following areas. The Triangle Wanstead Flats (one male and one female occupant); Leyton Flats (one male occupant). Wanstead Flats (one male occupant). Bushwood South (one male occupant). A disused camp was found at the Waterworks. All occupants were spoken to and the relevant information and paperwork to help them find assistance were given to all occupants alongside 48 hours' notice to vacate the Forest. The camps were cleared by the litter team, as soon as the camps were vacated.

Licences

15. A total of 53 licences for events were issued during the two months being reported, which yielded an income of £47,682.13 plus VAT. 51 licences were issued during the same period in 2017 (income of £33,866.19).

Unauthorised Occupations

16. There were 3 traveller incursions during this reporting period:
- 7th August – Pyrles Lane/Rectory Lane - The travellers moved on immediately and peacefully.
 - Thursday 19th August – George Green- Using the LBR court injunction, the travellers moved on peacefully within the hour and headed towards Clapton.

- Thursday 30th August – Woodford Green (near Churchill Statue) – 70 travellers in 30+ caravans initially resisted enforcement action and attempted the movement of FK vehicle. With successful multi-agency work, the travellers were removed within 2 hours.

Dog Incidents

17. No incidents recorded during this reporting period.

Deer Vehicle Collisions

18. Over the period of August/September, there were 9 recorded incidents of deer vehicle collisions. Three of these occurred on the same day 23rd September but were not related. Incidents did occur on the Thornwood Road and Woodredon Hill which are repeat hot spots.

Heritage; Landscape and Nature Conservation

Biodiversity

19. A colleague from North London Open Spaces undertook treatment of Japanese Knotweed around the Forest. The treatment appears to be working very well with significant reductions in established stands of this aggressive invasive plant species, and disappearance from other sites.
20. A small family (including juveniles) of Leisler's (*Nyctalus leisleri*) bat were discovered roosting in Warlies Park. The bats were found during monthly bat box monitoring checks at the site. This bat species is extremely scarce in Britain, so the discovery of a small family especially with juveniles, is extremely encouraging.
21. At the end of September, a breeding colony of Ivy Bee (*Colletes hederæ*) was discovered on Warren Hill. This bee was new to Britain, found in Dorset, in 2001 and has been spreading rapidly ever since. It is another insect that has colonised the Forest of its own accord, like the Tree Bumblebee which also arrived in the UK in 2001 and is now one of the three dominant bees of springtime. The Ivy Bee on the other hand is very much a bee of autumn, and one of the latest flying bees, nesting in the sandy soils of heathlands like Warren Hill.

Agri-environment Schemes

22. Preparation for the Countryside Stewardship Application for a 2019 application continues. As part of the required process, all commoners on the Register of Commoners were contacted about the likelihood of exercise of their grazing rights on Epping Forest. This consultation will continue until early November 2018.
23. The Euro:Pound exchange rate for the Basic Payment Scheme was set at 0.8928, which is only 0.2% less than the rate for 2017, so income from this scheme should be very similar to that of last year.

Grazing

24. Invisible fencing wire installed in March have been completed with bespoke above ground storage boxes for the battery's and generators. 29 cattle have

been grazing the new Chingford Plain to Bury Wood loop (52 Ha) since the beginning of September. Water to the site utilises the existing granite metropolitan water trough that was in disrepair and covered with scrub. The Sunshine South new loop (11.5Ha) has been grazed with 6-12 animals from the beginning of September. This site was grazed in the past with an electric fence over a smaller area.

25. The Grazing team visited two sites as part of knowledge sharing and building links with other conservation graziers. Visits included to Sir Charles Burrell's Knepp Estate, Horsham, a place which uses Longhorns and to The Surrey Wildlife Trust reserve holdings which utilise Belted Galloways. Return visits to these sites as well as hosting at Epping Forest has been arranged for early next year.
26. Dr Peter Dennis of Aberystwyth University spent two days in late September conducting surveys of the grazing areas for the Grazing Audit, which will be reported separately to Committee.
27. 10 Longhorn cattle were purchase from Norwich Livestock Market from a dispersal sale of 26 Animals. The cattle were well presented and of excellent breeding (Bloodlines from the renowned Carreg herd in Wales) and the sale attracted other important, large-scale Longhorn breeders.

Heritage

28. The GIS Officer and Museum and Heritage Manager met with a knowledgeable local historian to survey and map (on GIS) the World War 2 features after the Wanstead Flats summer fire.
29. The Conservation Statement for Eagle Pond has been finalised. This will be presented to Committee at a future meeting.

Contractors

30. GTM Rural Limited continues to undertake wood pasture restoration across the Forest as part of the Higher Level Stewardship Scheme. Essex Arboriculture Limited also carried out work at Hawksmouth, near Pole Hill(Chingford).

Land Management (JRD)

Town & Country Planning

31. The Epping Forest District Council (EFDC) Local Plan continued as a key priority for work with detailed discussions with its officers about the interim Mitigation Strategy for which your officers provided the substantive and detailed on-site mitigation proposals for the 14-year plan period from 2019 to 2033. In addition to submitting the detailed table of proposals, amounting to £2.5M-worth of mitigation projects over that period, the case was also made for off-site avoidance/mitigation measures, in the form of Sustainable Alternative Natural Greenspaces (SANGs).
32. In a letter to the Council (14th September 2018), prior to its submission of its Local Plan to the Planning Inspectorate, the Chairman reiterated the vital

importance of avoiding damage by using SANGs to provide alternative areas for recreation to the Forest Special Area of Conservation (SAC). Nonetheless, although the matter of SANGs and the critical issue of air pollution from traffic have not been resolved in a full Mitigation Strategy, the EFDC Local Plan was submitted on 21st September 2018.

33. In the meantime, the interim Mitigation Strategy is due to be debated and discussed by EFDC Cabinet in October and by the other financially-contributing authorities, the London Boroughs of Redbridge and Waltham Forest later in the autumn.

Land Registration

34. The first-tier Lands Tribunal hearing concerning the encroachment at Broomhill Road, Woodford Green is now to be held in 2019 with all the statements now received and accepted by the Tribunal.

Operations (GS)

Habitat Works

35. Wood-pasture Restoration and Management - [Arborist teams have continued with the final phase of the wood pasture restoration across the Forest as part of the Higher Level Stewardship Scheme. The Forest mulcher was hired for a second period to help progress works on holly dominated sites.
36. Branches, wood, bracken and other materials from a wood pasture restoration site were used to create a small section of Epping Forest at the Commonwealth High Commissioners banquet at the Guildhall. This was installed to reflect the environment theme of the conference and also the City's involvement in the Queens Commonwealth Canopy project. Staff from EF worked with a team from the Guild of Master Gardeners to construct the installation. Flailing of existing wood pasture areas has fallen behind this year as the teams have needed to focus on meeting the requirements of the 10-year HLS agreement which ends this year. A period of catch will be required in 2019.
37. Wanstead park:
 - 37.1 Floating pennywort control - [The floating pennywort control work on the Perch Pond has ended for 2018]In total about half a cubic meter of pennywort was removed through the year and it is now much reduced.
 - 37.2 The Long Walk/Glade: Works to restore the width of this avenue to its original width were completed during this period. There was considerable local support for this work as it was being progressed. The avenue trees no longer form a straight line and surprisingly are comprised of multiple species. The next phase of work will be to prepare a strategy for managing these and to undertake thinning as required.
38. Highams Park Lake - [Arborist and grassland team have been working with local volunteers to take forward several projects. The horse ride was widened to allow

more light in and to help the pathway dry out quicker. Volunteers have maintained the cleared lake fringes to help sustain the open views of the lake.

39. Grass cutting: The contract habitat grass cutting program has been completed for 2018. The inhouse team's habitat grassland management program is on schedule for completion with a number of large extra areas completed on the Buffer Lands in support of the grazing project.

Risk Management Works

40. Tree Safety - [This work progresses weekly and we are on track to complete all identified work on time
41. Highway Verge management: This should be completed but our contractor, but work has progressed slower than last year. The end of year contract review will seek to agree a tighter timetable for 2019.

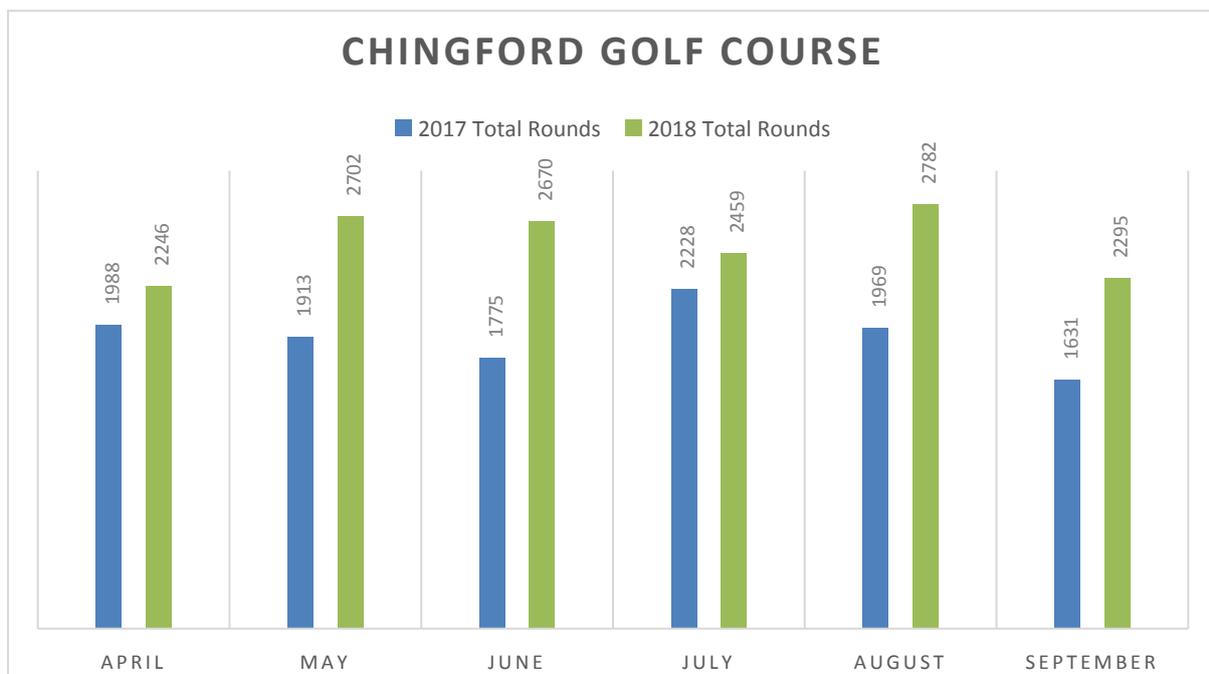
Visitor Services

Chingford Golf Course

42. The Head Green Keeper and his team continued to water daily to keep the greens playable throughout the drought, where the irrigation system has failed. Hand watering was carried out in places with the help of wetting agents along with the regular spray programme to the greens. Work was carried out on extending, levelling and over seeding the 3rd & 10th tees to help protect current tees for increased play and to allow more play options on these holes.
43. 130 years of golf in Epping Forest at the end of August was celebrated. Mini golf and inflatable target golf were hired in for this day, which was a success bringing more families and children to the site. The event attracted 200+ visitors on the day.
44. Total revenue from online sales this period is £6,612, total revenue from reception was £70,086.75 broken down into:

Breakdown of figures from Reception			
	2018/19	2017/18	Difference (+/-)
Green fees:	£54,778.85	£53,044.68	+£1734.17
Drinks:	£1760.10	£1287.50	+£472.60
Hire Equipment:	£7246.00	£6017.00	+£1229.00
Shop Sales:	£3349.90	£2850.40	+£499.50
Wanstead:	£2548.00	£787.00	+£1761.00
Horse Riding:	£403.90	NA	+£403.90

45. Compared to last year the total difference in revenue equates to an increase in income of £8,706.17.
46. Online bookings for the same period last year was £4,006 compared to £6612 this year, making an increase of £2,275 (65%).
47. Total revenue from reception last year was £63,986.58 compared to £70,086.75 in the current year, an increase amounting to £6,100.17. £403.90 of this year's takings is however from horse riding licences, which was administrated from The View last year.
48. The number of rounds played has increased for the first 6 months of the year. Total number of rounds are up 3,650. The EPOS system and daily bag tags has helped to monitor these figures more accurately compared to previous years. Getting everyone to report into reception before going out onto the golf course meant season ticket holders could no longer just walk out onto the golf course without checking in, meaning we missed reporting that round. Increased online sales has helped attract new people to the golf course, again helping to improve the number of rounds played.



Wanstead Flats Football

49. Seasonal block bookings have been secured for the 2018/19 football season. This consists four leagues, 13 clubs and three soccer schools with over 65 matches played weekly.
50. The four leagues facilitate over 100 teams playing competitive grassroots football on Wanstead Flats at weekends, over half of which are youth teams aged between 12 and 18 years.
51. A licence has been granted to provide refreshments to the footballers at Capel Road for the season.

52. Parkrun attracted 1,857 runners over August and September, up 90 runners on the same period last year. This free activity, led by Epping Forest Volunteers, continues to thrive.

Visitor Numbers

53. Visitor numbers continue to be lower than previous years due to the continued closure of The Temple, though The Temple enclosure welcomed visitors to the site for open air theatre in the summer. Numbers visiting The View and Queen Elizabeth’s Hunting Lodge are somewhat but not significantly down from 2017-18.

Visitor Numbers	QEHL 2018	2017	View	2017	Temple	2017	High Beach	2017	Total	Total 2017
August	2902↓	3123	3973↓	4197	0 closed↓	794	2458↓	2564	9333	10678
September	1872↓	1902	3280↓	4215	0 closed↓	722	2055↑	1858	7207	8697

Visitor Services Events

54. ‘The Forest that was saved’ 1878 exhibition at Queen Elizabeth’s Hunting Lodge continued into August and September and was enhanced with drawing, dressing up and play activities for family enjoyment and learning during the summer holidays. Adults and children contributed several hundred drawings to the exhibition boards confirming that this simple sort of participation offer is very popular with the public.

55. The View and Queen Elizabeth’s Hunting Lodge participated in Open House weekend on 22 and 23 September. For the first time we offered pre-booked heritage walks (at Hollow Ponds and from The View) which were fully booked (35 places each) within hours of the booking opening on 12 August. Each Eventbrite entry was viewed around 500 times indicating that this approach is a good promotion of the Forest. Heavy rain on 23 September deterred all but 5 resilient walkers. 341 visits were recorded at The View: 217 visits at Hunting Lodge for the Open House weekend. Some visitors would have visited both sites.

56. Taster sessions run in partnership with London Borough of Waltham Forest Adult Learning continued with 5 September ‘Capture the Beauty of the Forest in Clay’ which attracted 18 participants, several new to Epping Forest.

57. Illyria, the renowned Open-Air Theatre company, returned to Wanstead Park this summer with another successful season. This year, Pirates of Penzance was performed on 18 July (attended by approximately 235 people) and a family, matinee performance of The Adventures of Doctor Dolittle took place on 12 August (attended by approximately 170 people).

58. Epping Forest District Museum with support from Visitor Services and the arborists, held an open day event at 'The Wilderness', re-enacting the opera and dance performances that were held there when it was the residence of Walter Spradbery and his wife.

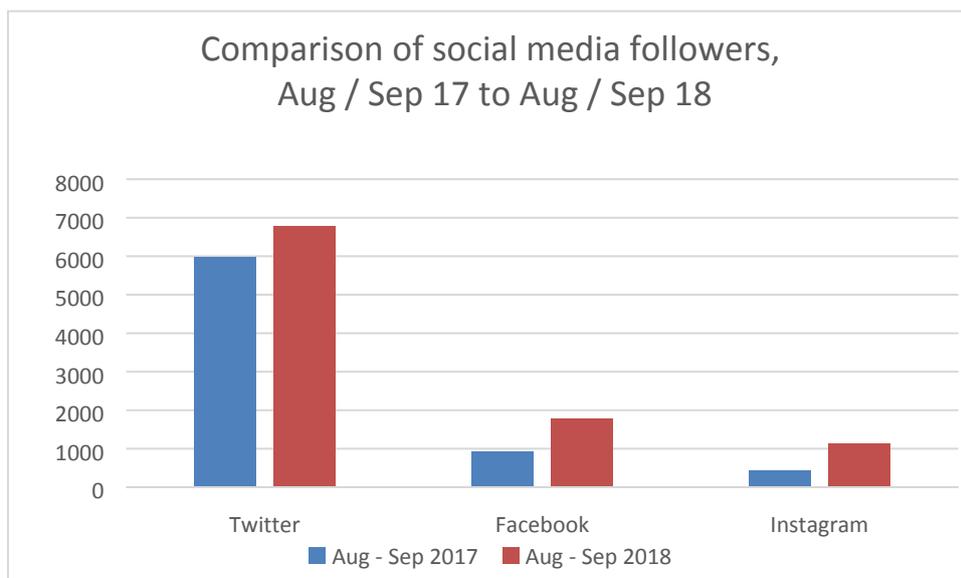
Communication and Information

59. As of 30 October 2018 our social media following is:

- Twitter followers: 6,785 (13.8% year on increase)
- Facebook followers: 1,773 (90.4% increase)
- Instagram followers: 1,133 (164.1% increase)

- The top tweet for August received 9,365 engagements.
- The top tweet for September with 5,552 impressions promoted The Centenary Walk.

60. The chart shows a comparison of our figures at the same point in 2017:



61. The recent autumn edition of Forest Focus featured articles about fungi, natural play, and an interview with local author, Will Ashon. It also promoted the Singing in The Wilderness event celebrating the life and work of local artist, Walter Spradbery. Once again an e-zine version of the magazine was distributed in addition to the printed version.

62. The local 'Life' August publication once again featured an Epping Forest article. Entitled 'Warm and Lazy Days in Epping', the article promoted the Illyria Open Air Theatre event.

Major incidents

63. There were no major Forest incidents.

Appendices

- None

Paul Thomson

Superintendent of Epping Forest

T: 0208 532 1010

E: paul.thomson@cityoflondon.gov.uk