

Committee(s)	Dated:
Epping Forest Consultative – For information Epping Forest and Commons – For information	130219 110319
Subject: Business Plan Development at Epping Forest (SEF 6/19)	Public
Report of: Colin Buttery, Director of Open Spaces	For Information
Report author: Geoff Sinclair, Head of Operations, Epping Forest	

Summary

A Strategy and Management Plan for Epping Forest for the period of 2019-29 is being developed along with a 2019-22 Business Plan. This report outlines the process whereby Forest operations will be reviewed, and the information used as a base line from which to assess future resource use and will also provide the detailed activity programme. Several Forest locations and Forest management activities have been identified for review as part of this process. Each review will involve consultation with key external stakeholders following Committee consideration.

Recommendation(s)

Members are asked to: Note the report

Main Report

Background

1. A Strategy and Management Plan for Epping Forest for the period of 2019-29 is being developed. As part of the development process, existing Forest operational activity in key geographical locations and for key activities is being reviewed.
2. The review process comprises an audit of the City Corporation's (CoL) property management issues alongside other significant management considerations to provide an overview of current practice and an outline of longer term aspirations.
3. An Individual Site Plan (ISP) will be prepared for each geographical area subject to review. The list of Forest locations being assessed is given in Table One. In addition, a number of separate studies have been prepared for areas of the Forest in recent years, particularly those with protected heritage (e.g. Registered

Parks & Gardens; Scheduled Ancient Monuments) and these reports will also form part of the collective resource. Site selection for the current review is centered around areas of Epping Forest that have a high number of competing issues and/or high visitor numbers (as determined by evidence from recent Visitor Surveys, including the most recent conducted by *Footprint Ecology* in 2017). As such these ISPs will be able to feed into the developing SAC Mitigation Strategy.

Table One: ISP Locations: Existing and to be prepared

Proposed ISPs		
Theydon Bois Green		Wanstead Flats & Bush Wood
Highams Park and The Sale		Loughton Greens
Leyton Flats		High Beach
Chingford Lanes: Organ and Mays Lane		Chingford Hub
Existing or in production Area Plans		
Wanstead Park: Parkland Plan		Loughton Camp
Ambresbury Banks		Copped Hall
Swaine's Green		

- Planning and Development Notes (PDN) are being prepared for the main Forest management activities. These would build on management developed over many years (e.g. grassland mowing programme), will be cross-referenced to existing management strategies (e.g. Keystone Trees Strategy) and others in preparation or under review (e.g. Wood Pasture Management Strategy). The activities subject to review are listed in Table Two.

Table Two: Proposed PDN's

Forest Furniture Management		Highway Verge Management
Grassland Management		Path Management
Wood Pasture Management		Ancient Tree Management
Vegetation Against Property Management		Invasive Weed Management
Ponds and Wetland Management		Tree Pest and Disease Management

- Cumulatively the Forest operations works reported through the review will comprise the greater part of the annual Forest management activity. As part of the 2019-22 Business Plan, this information will provide a base line from which to assess future resource use and will also provide the detailed activity programme.

Current Position

6. Each ISP and PDN adopts a standard structure that is common to both review processes. The intention is to maintain a relatively concise format and to direct people to additional sources of information where they exist rather than repeat the details in the reports. The standard report structure is outlined below:
 - a. Background – a brief description of the extent of the site or activity covered;
 - b. Risk Management Issues – a list of operational and health and safety risk management issues;
 - c. Management Considerations – a list of identified management considerations, with respect to ecology, community, access, heritage, landscape and any other identified management issues;
 - d. Potential Enhancement Projects Requiring External Support – a list of projects that would enhance the quality of one or more aspects of the site or activity, for which additional support would be required;
 - e. Management Strategy – a summary of the key overall objectives for managing the site or activity;
 - f. Outline Management Programme – a summary of the management actions identified for the site or activity, with anticipated timelines for completion;
 - g. External Operational Stakeholders – a list of external stakeholders who have an operational input and who have been consulted as part of the review process;
 - h. Bibliography – a list of existing reports (if available) that have formed part of the review; and
 - i. Appendices – including a detailed activity plan.
7. The reviews are being undertaken in tandem and with full knowledge of the Management Strategy development. In addition to presenting a rationale for the management activity concerned, each review will identify priority activities to be included as either part of the Forest operations programme, undertaken with existing resources, or where they require additional support to be progressed.
8. The individual ISP and PDN reports form part of the policy development process for the Management Strategy and subsequent Business Plan, which will be subject to public consultation and will ensure the Forest's management is considered in a fuller context. Each review will however involve consultation with key external stakeholders, that will be listed in each report, to ensure the range of issues to be considered are captured in the audit process. External consultation will occur following the review consideration by your committee and the Epping Forest Consultative Committee.
9. Accompanying this report are drafts of an ISP covering 'Theydon Bois Green' and and draft PDN on Highway Verge Management which have been developed through the above process.

Proposals

10. It is proposed that each subsequent ISP and PDN report is brought to the Epping Forest and Commons Committee and the Epping Forest Consultative Committee for information.
11. A draft ISP report on Theydon Bois Green and a PDN on Highway Verge Management are presented for information as part of this development process.

Corporate & Strategic Implications

12. City of London Corporate Plan 2018 - 2023: the restoration and maintenance of the internationally and nationally-important habitats of Epping Forest directly underscore the *third pillar* of the Corporate Plan, which is to “*shape outstanding environments*”. The development of ISP’s and PDN form part of the operational planning to achieve this aim of the Corporate Plan.
13. Open Spaces Department Business Plan 2016-19: The Strategic Vision of this plan is to ‘Preserve and protect our world class green spaces for the benefit of our local communities and the environment.’ and one of the Department Objectives is to ‘Protect and conserve the ecology, biodiversity and heritage of our sites.’ The preparation of the Epping Forest Management Strategy and Management Plan for 2019-29 is a key action in the Departmental Business Plan.

Financial Implications

14. Additional staff resource to prepare the ISPs has been achieved through reconfiguring the existing Forest Operations team’s staff resource, following staff retirement.
15. PDN preparation will be undertaken through existing staff resources.

Conclusion

16. A Forest Operations review process is being implemented as part of the development of the 2019-29 Epping Forest Management Strategy and Management Plan and the 2019-2022 Epping Forest Business Plan
17. The review process will include consultation with key internal and external stakeholders and cumulatively the reviews will provide a base line from which to assess future resource use and provide the detailed Forest operations activity programme.
18. A draft ISP reports have been given for information covering Theydon Bois Green and a PDN on Highway Verge Management.

Appendices

- Appendix 1 – Theydon Bois Green: Forest Operations Individual Site Plan
- Appendix 2 –Highway Verge Management

Geoff Sinclair

Head of Operations, Epping Forest, Open Spaces Department

T: 020 8532 5301 E: geoff.sinclair@cityoflondon.gov.uk