

Committee(s)	Dated:
Epping Forest and Commons	11 03 2019
Subject: Epping Forest - Superintendent's Update for December to January 2019 (SEF 10/19)	Public
Report of: Colin Buttery, Director of Open Spaces	For Information
Report author: Paul Thomson – Superintendent of Epping Forest	

Summary

This purpose of this report is to summarise the Epping Forest Division's activities across December to January 2019.

Of particular note was continuing low rainfall levels and an associated soil moisture deficit across the Forest; the receipt of an assessment by consultants regarding future football pitch and pavilion provision at Wanstead Flats; a further significant decline in fly tipping; work on the re-survey of nationally rare Knothole Yoke-Moss; the addition of 41 new born Longhorn calves; improved income performance at the Chingford Golf Course and continued activity regarding the Epping Forest Local Plan and associated Mitigation Strategy.

Recommendation(s)

Members are asked to:

- Note the report.

Main Report

Staff and Volunteers

1. One Grounds/Greenkeeper left during the reporting period and the recruitment for a replacement has been initiated.

Budgets

2. Mid-way through February (88% through financial year) spend against full year budget was at 85% overall, with grant income still to be received. Spending plans are in place to meet budget in the final few weeks of the financial year.

Weather

3. December was slightly above average with a total of 72.2mm of rainfall. December had a total of 19 days rainfall with the wettest day being 15 December with 12.4mm of rain.
4. With just 30.2mm of rainfall, January has been the driest month on record in Epping Forest falling well below the average of 69.6mm. There was a total of 12 days of rainfall with the wettest day being 21 January with 5.6mm of rain. As a consequence, there is a continuing soil moisture deficit across the Forest with the Forest paths appearing comparatively dry and the seasonal brooks holding very little flow.

Epping Forest Projects

Parklife

5. The feasibility report for Artificial Grass Pitch (AGP) provision at both sites, Aldersbrook and Harrow Road, has been received. The report outlines that Harrow Road would be the preferred site in terms of transport access and income generation from secondary spend. However, this does not address the need for improved changing facilities at Aldersbrook Road.
6. A possible way forward would be to proceed with both sites; Harrow Road for AGPs, gym and social offer and Aldersbrook for changing room improvements. Agreement to adopt this approach is being sought from the Parklife programme funding partners the Football Association, Premier League and Sport England.
7. Work is underway to affiliate to the Football Association all Club teams currently playing at Wanstead Flats (Harrow, Aldersbrook and Capel sites). In addition to the benefits of affiliation, good club records will ensure that demand modelling for the potential project is as accurate as possible.

Epping Forest Heritage Trust Duck Champions Project

8. Funding has been secured by the Epping Forest Heritage Trust for interpretation signs to be displayed at ponds where the over-feeding of ducks, geese and swans by the public is apparent.
9. Four duck feeding signs will be installed at Eagle Pond, Alexandra Lake, Hollow Ponds and the Heronry at Wanstead Park.

Forest Services

Fly-tipping

10. There was a total of 25 fly-tips over the period which is a sharp decline of 62% on the period last year when there was a total of 66 fly-tips. In 2017, there were 18 fly-tips in the Centre Road and Capel Road area of Wanstead Flats alone. A downturn in the construction market, alterations to Parking Controlled Zones and car park closures could be associated with this decline. There was a single

asbestos tip recorded at Forest Side, Epping, which is potentially linked to the above average number of asbestos tips in Lower Forest during October and November.

11. Roadside locations again make up most tip locations, representing 75% of all tips. Again builders waste remains the most regular type of tip representing 28% of all tips over the period.
12. There was a change in the predominant waste types that occur over the period, with Builders Waste and Household Waste only representing 10% and 13% respectively. Furniture represented 24% of tips over the period, perhaps a result of households replacing furniture around the Christmas period. There was also an increase in car tyres being tipped, it is not unusual for the occasional tyre to be dumped but over 50+ tyres were dumped on four occasions over the period.
13. Only 5 (15%) of the 29 tips occurred in the Wanstead Flats area over this period, one potential factor could be the resiting of the gate at the entrance of The Belgrave Road, Wayleave, which was being targeted by fly tippers.

Enforcement Activity

14. One prosecution took place during the period under report. The defendant did not appear at the court hearing. A warrant for arrest without bail has been granted.

Rough Sleepers

15. Rough Sleepers: there were eight recorded camps over the period, the majority of which were visited by Forest Keepers in conjunction with St. Mungo's and the Police. Apart from one camp which was occupied by a male and female all incidents involved a single male occupant.

Licences

16. A total of 28 licences for events were issued during the two months being reported, which yielded an income of £ £7,593.00 plus VAT. Licence income has increased by 352% from 18 licences were issued during the same period in 2017/18 yielding income of £2,148.60.

Unauthorised Occupations

17. There were no unauthorised occupations during the reporting period.

Dog Incidents

18. There were no reported dog incidents during the reporting period.

Deer Vehicle Collisions

19. Over the period of December and January, there were 15 recorded incidents of deer vehicle collisions.

Heritage; Landscape and Nature Conservation

Biodiversity

20. Volunteers are being trained to identify and then re-survey the *Zygodon forsteri* moss colonies throughout the Forest. This legally-protected species only grows in 3 locations in the UK. The species was first discovered in Epping Forest and it is closely associated with ancient beech trees making Epping Forest a European stronghold for the species.
21. Funding for the work is being provided by the Natural England and Rethink Nature-funded national *Back from the Brink* programme for an expert to train volunteers and oversee the re-surveying. This new survey follows the detailed surveys of 2004 and 2008 which helped to inform the keystone tree management strategy.

Agri-environment Schemes

22. Detailed work continued on the preparation for the Countryside Stewardship Scheme application. Over 1,000 ancient trees have now been surveyed for this application and work to review and map the areas for maintenance of wood-pasture began in January.

Grazing

23. The Longhorn herd had it's 4-year routine Bovine Tuberculosis (bTB) test at the end of December. A total of 115 animals were tested and passed clear.
24. The Grazing and Landscape Project Officer and Stockman assisted the volunteer hedge-laying group in laying 120 metres of hedge at Great Gregories, alongside the public footpaths across the site .
25. Calving is largely complete with 2 cows left to calve later this winter. To date 41 calves have been born, 20 male and 21 female.

Heritage

26. The Eagle Pond Conservation Management Plan was completed in preparation for further consultation.

Contractors

27. Contractors completed the wood-pasture restoration work in Lords Bushes during this period and moved onto work in Bury Wood and Honey Lane Quarters.

Land Management

Town & Country Planning – Forward Planning – Local Plans

28. The interim Mitigation Strategy was discussed by several London Boroughs with Natural England at meetings in December and January. A further joint meeting was requested by London Boroughs of Waltham Forest and Redbridge with your officers and Natural England and this has been programmed for March 2019. This meeting will consider the interim Strategy but also how to achieve a full Mitigation Strategy involving off-site mitigation and the issue of air pollution.

29. The first representations in response to the Epping Forest District Council (EFDC) Local Plan Inspector's Matters, Issues and Questions (MIQs) were submitted on 24th January ahead of hearings in February. These representations related to legal compliance and the Plan's spatial strategy for housing and industrial developments.
30. However, the key issue of the Plan's legal compliance in relation to the Epping Forest Special Area of Conservation (SAC) was postponed by the Inspector until a hearing on 21st May. This was to allow time for the different parties involved, including your officers, to review the newly published Habitats Regulations Assessment and Transport Assessment reports. Both of these reports have implications for the issue of air pollution and traffic impacts on the Forest.
31. In addition to the EFDC Local Plan, the London Borough of Enfield Local Plan is out for consultation with a deadline of 28th February 2019. A presentation on the Plan, including the proposals for a very large development of around 10,000 new homes at Meridian Water, was given at an evening meeting of members of the Six Authorities Liaison Group which was attended by a Verderer and an officer on 17th January.

Town & Country Planning – Development Control

32. Discussions were held with Natural England about the proposals for housing at Latton Priory, south of Harlow. A further planning application was put in for a housing development adjacent to the Forest at Chingford, which had previously been refused. This will be reviewed in February.

Land Registration

33. The date for the Lands Tribunal hearing is still awaited into the case at Broomhill Road. In the meantime, progress was made in discussions with London Borough of Waltham Forest over the return of registered land from a highway dedication that is no longer required as a highway.

Operations

Habitat Works

34. **Grass cutting** – Another relatively dry mild early winter has meant that not only has the grass continued to grow but we have been able to access land that in 'normal' years we are not able to so. The grassland team were again this year able to undertake several additional tasks on the buffer lands cutting coarse grassy and bramble areas. Short grass 'amenity' areas, such as the bottom of Warren Hill, and along the Woodford Green tree avenues were given an additional cut to remove late growth and to get the sites into a more advanced maintained condition for the Spring.
35. **Wood-pasture** – Final works to bring to a close the 10-year wood-pasture restoration programme, funded by the Environmental Stewardship Scheme, were undertaken by the arborist teams in this period. This work involved opening up areas of Lords Bushes and creating hundreds of new pollards here and in Debden Slade. Apart from a few small parcels work, mainly in Lords Bushes, this

restoration activity is winding down into a maintenance phase, as further long-term plans are being prepared for approval.

36. **Wanstead Park:** The arborist team worked to reveal the islands on the Perch Pond which may form part of a rare water parterre feature. .. For some decades this complex of designed islands has been obscured by the large quantity of windthrown trees criss-crossing between the different islands. Colleagues in chainsaw clothing and waders cut and removed the fallen trees and trimmed island edge vegetation to restore some of the lost character of this part of the Park historic waterscape.
37. After a hiatus work on the Parkland Plan has recommenced with the intention that the consultants, LDA, have a completed report for the end of March 2019 and the cost plan completed for the end of April 2019.
38. **Highams Park Lake:** Arborist teams combined a large package of tree safety works that focused on lake and path edge trees with wider works to improve views linking the formal park with the lake and to remove log jams in the river Ching that increased the risk of flood events impacting on the Lake. Local volunteers from the Highams Park Community Interest Company successfully obtained a City Bridge Trust Award to improve the environment, access and wayfinding in the Forest and lake in the Highams Park area. Staff and volunteers from the Highams Park Snedders will work together on this project later in 2019.

Risk Management Works

39. **Tree Safety:** Tree safety works have a renewed focus as the arborist teams completed this year's wood-pasture restoration work. Arborists are on track to complete the 2018/19 program apart from the Woodford Poplar Avenue works. A public consultation has been pending on this work which given their prominence and previous history of adverse public comments on such work in the area is thought necessary. A comprehensive public information and consultation exercise is to be undertaken in April 2019 in line with the report to the EFCC in July 2018.
40. **Highway Verge management:** The highway verge management program for 2018/19 is now complete. As previously reported the works were late in starting but the eventual result has been very effective.

Visitor Services

Chingford Golf Course

41. The Head Green Keeper and his team continued to clear leaves from fairways and ditches to help improve playability and speed of play. Tees and selected areas on fairways were spiked to help break up compaction and allow air and water into the root zone to promote better growth. More repair work to the damage from the motorbike to the 5th green was carried out. Work to level the 11th tee started and work will resume in early spring to seed it ready for the new season. All machinery has been serviced and cutting units ground and calibrated.

42. Total revenue from online sales this period is £2,373.00, total revenue from reception was £28,715.24 broken down into:

43.

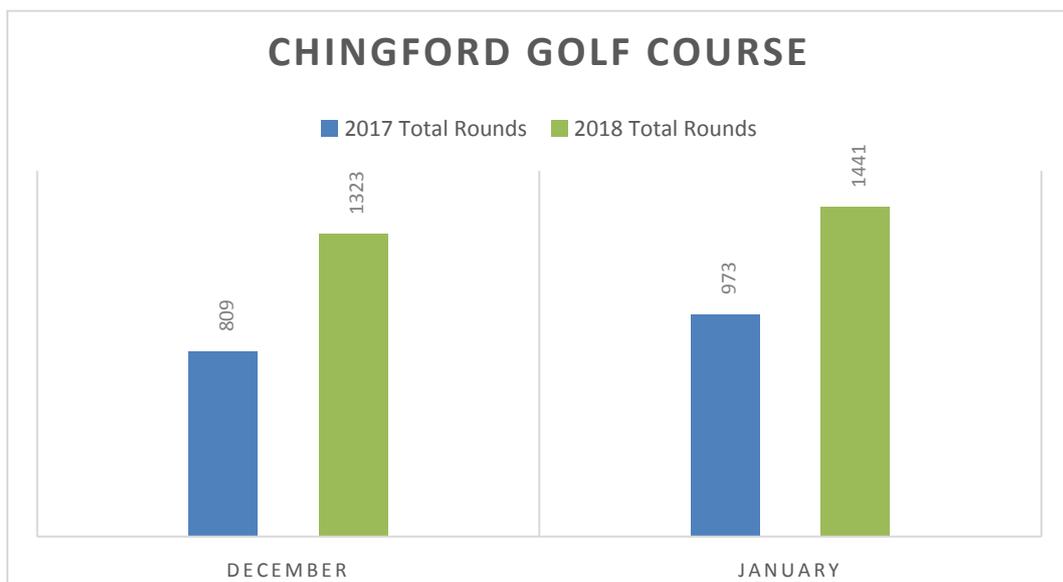
Breakdown of figures from Reception			
	2018/19	2017/18	Difference (+/-)
Green fees:	£20,859.84	£16,204.60	+£4,655.24
Drinks:	£426.00	£349.90	+£76.10
Hire Equipment:	£1,591.50	£1,065.50	+526.00
Shop Sales:	£1,576.30	£1,660.20	-£83.90
Wanstead:	£3,908.40	£1,427.50	+£2,480.90
Horse Riding:	£353.20	NA	+£353.20

44. Compared to last year the total difference in revenue equates to an 34% increase in income of £7,839.53.

45. Online bookings for the same period last year was £1,617.01 compared to £2,373.00 this year, making an increase of 47% or £755.99.

46. Total revenue from reception last year was £21,631.70 compared to £28,715.24 in the current year, an increase amounting to £7,083.54. £353.20 of this year's takings is however from horse riding licences, which was administered from The View in previous years.

47. The number of rounds for December & January last year was 1782. This year number of rounds for December & January was 2764. This represents an 55% increase of 982 rounds at a time of continuing national decline in rounds played.



Wanstead Flats Football

48. The second half of the football season got underway on the 5 January. Over 1,000 individuals participate in football at the flats over a weekend.
49. Parkrun attracted 1,942 runners over December and January, up 166 runners on the same period last year. This includes 208 runners on Christmas Day 2018.

Visitor Numbers

50. Visitors numbers at the centres has begun to revive largely due to the busy holiday period. The much larger than previous attendance at the Christmas event accounts for the increase at the View. The Temple has reopened but only once a month at present. High Beach has also seen an increase in visitors possibly due to better weather than the same period last year.

Visitor Numbers	QEHL 2018	2017	View	2017	Temple	2017	High Beach	2017	Total	Total 2017
December	2473 	2809	5488 	3530	121 	643	1001 	933		
January	1817 	1031	3517 	2718	308 	462	1513 	1311		

Visitor Services Events

51. The Queen Elizabeth's Hunting Lodge installation of seasonal greenery decoration, a 'Midwinter Night's Dream – Tudors with fairy wings' - ran from 7 December into January, to include the Christmas Grotto weekend and Christmas and New Year opening. In the period before Christmas staff offered a glass of spiced juice and a mince pie for a donation. Around 2,500 visitors visited the Hunting Lodge during this period.
52. A Midwinter Night's Dream was created with the assistance of London Borough of Waltham Forest Adult Learning Team through their Taster Session programme. LBWF organised two florists who worked with the Museum and Heritage Manager to run two floristry workshops on 5 December, each full to capacity with 25 adult learners including the Mayor of Waltham Forest, Sally Littlejohn.
53. The Epping Forest Festive Fair, which took place over the weekend of 8 / 9 December, was the most successful to date, with the Grotto sold out well in advance of the event and with at least 4,000 people in attendance throughout the weekend. This year visitors were entertained with a local community farm, the animals from Suntrap Forest Centre, music from local parish choirs as well as local craft stalls. The CoL education team also worked with us to provide some festive, natural craft activities and the Field Studies Centre at High Beach attended, promoting their activities and offering free, guided walks.

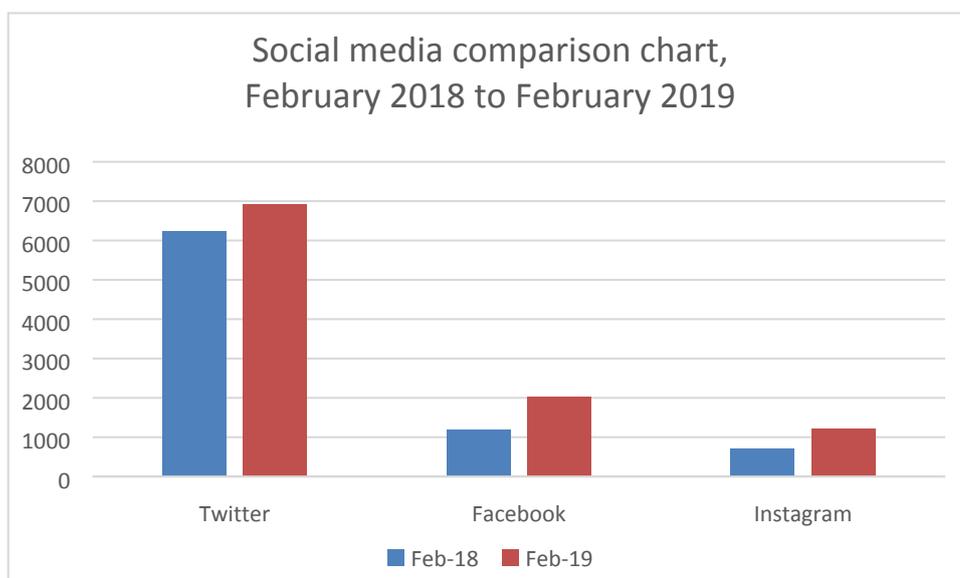
54. London Borough of Waltham Forest Adult Learning Sessions continued with a full room of participants for Magical Forest Boxes on 11 January. This event was picked up for promotion within their London Borough of Culture coverage in The Londonist.
55. Singing for the Brain Sessions delivered by the Alzheimer's Society re-opened on 8 January at The View. These very popular and worthwhile sessions fill The View Community Room to capacity with early stage dementia visitors and their carers. This is one of the twelve projects awarded funding from the City of London's Enjoying Green Space and the Natural Environment central grants program funded by City Bridge Trust.
56. Vision: Your View of the Forest event on 17 January arose from liaison with sight impaired group Waltham Forest Vision, in line with the Diversity Matters framework (a museum grant project funding: £1,000). The Museum and Heritage Manager delivered a friendly session with museum object handling and discussion about how The View and Hunting Lodge could be made more accessible to sight impaired visitors. One participant reported that the opportunity and experience of holding a stuffed green woodpecker, and touching the Fallow Deer specimen, were life time highlights for him.

Communication and Information

57. As of 13 February 2019 our social media following is:

- Twitter followers: 6,924 (11.2% increase)
- Facebook followers: 2,016 (68.4% increase)
- Instagram followers: 1,225 (71.3% increase)

58. The chart shows a comparison of our figures at the same point in 2018:



59. Winter Forest Focus was a successfully received and widely distributed throughout the Forest area. This edition looked at a Tudor account of a trip to Fairmead, presented the results from the 'Epping Forest Top Ten' awards, and

updated on progress re. prevention of fly tipping and the #TreesNotTrash campaign. In addition the Epping Forest Festive Fair was promoted.

60. Promotion of the Epping Forest Festive Fair was particularly successful this year on social media and highlighted how the growth and success particularly of the Epping Forest profile on Facebook is important for promotion of events and messages. Without any paid for advertising, the event reached 131,000 people and resulted in 5,700 responses and 1,600 ticket clicks.

Major incidents

61. There were no major Forest incidents.

Appendices

- None

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