

Committees: Corporate Projects Board Projects Sub Epping Forest and Commons Committee	Dates: 30 May 2019 19 July 2019 09 September 2019
Subject: Branching Out Project – Car Parking & Access Unique Project Identifier: 9794	Gateway 6: Outcome Report Regular
Report of: Director of Open Spaces Report Author: Laura Lawson	For Decision
PUBLIC	

Summary

1. Status update	<p>Project Description: <i>Epping Forest Branching Out Project</i></p> <p><i>Vision: ‘Innovative Open Spaces Management achieved through social inclusion, education and enjoyment’</i></p> <p>Project 4 of 4: Branching Out Project – Car Parks and Access – Make the Forest more accessible and improve the visitor experience by;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • improving car park surfaces and layout to provide optimum capacity, • installing two accessible trails, • installing ‘gateway’ signage to welcome visitors and • Improving orientation and interpretation signage <p>RAG Status: Green</p> <p>Risk Status: Low</p> <p>Costed Risk Provision Utilised: N/A pre-gateway process</p> <p>Final Outturn Cost: £2,367,761</p>
2. Next steps and requested decisions	<p>Requested Decisions:</p> <p>It is recommended that the Car Park and Access project be closed.</p> <p>Next steps:</p>

	<p>Submission of report - Gateway 6: Summary outcome report Branching Out Project.</p> <p>Project consisted of four separate project workstreams;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • QEHL Interpretation Centre (Out turn May 2014) • Butler's Retreat (Out turn May 2014) • Car Parks & Access • Grazing & Trees (March 2016) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Great Gregories
3. Key conclusions	<p><i>The overall objective of the project was; 'Improving access for all and working towards a more sustainable future'.</i></p> <p><i>Specifically, the proposals were to promote visitor access to the Forest, doing more to improve the visitor experience and appreciation of the Forest by creating 30 gateways across the Forest (to create a sense of arrival in the Forest), improving several car parks, creating access trails and providing waysigns and interpretation panels.</i></p> <p><i>This objective was achieved, and Epping Forest's visitors increased during the project period.</i></p> <p><u>Key lessons learned</u></p> <p>Car parking is in high demand at the Forest's most popular sites, the increased capacity of improved car parks was quickly occupied. Demand was underestimated due to the lack of accurate visitor data available during the project planning phase and the impact of new catering facilities (Branching Out – Butlers Retreat - 2 of 4) on visitor dwell time.</p> <p>More effective horizon scanning & project planning across the Department – this may have reduced the impact of the Open Spaces Identity (OSID) project on the gateways and interpretation workstream. It would also have allowed for all regulatory processes to be carried out at the appropriate time.</p> <p>At High Beach the required stopping up order to remove the highway status of land now forming part of the car park could not be undertaken retrospectively due to statutory restrictions. This means part of the car park is still technically highway and its obstruction is therefore unlawful. Trying to regularise this after the event has already taken significant resource in legal time including Counsel's fees and is no nearer being resolved.</p> <p>Allow significant additional time in project programme for planning permission when seeking non-standard consent from multiple local authorities.</p>

Main Report

Design & Delivery Review

4. Design into delivery	<p>This project consisted of two workstreams;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Car Park, Access Trails and Landscaping• Gateways, orientation, interpretation & waymarking signage <p>The design of the project adequately prepared for the delivery although the ‘front-loaded’ programming for delivery of the project was optimistic.</p> <p>The project plan did not make allowance for the important dependency of the gateway/signage on the Open Spaces Identity project, the influence of which had significant impact on delivery. However, the OSID project was conceived only once the project delivery had commenced.</p> <p>The project plan was to employ staff to fabricate the gateways and signage in-house. This was not realised in delivery. The design and fabrication was undertaken by specialist contractors to guarantee the quality and safety of this work.</p>
5. Options appraisal	<p>An options appraisal recognised the importance of these key car parking locations. The appraisal indicated that improving and bonding the surfacing would eliminate annual maintenance of previously gravelled surfaces, eliminating summer dust generation, while improving parking discipline on marked bays and improving overall appearance.</p>
6. Procurement route	<p>Services were procured for the construction work* (tender), gateway design and fabrication (tender extension from interpretation display Branching Out – QEHL Visitor Centre), signage design (tender extension from OSID) and signage fabrication (RFQ).</p> <p>On reflection, a tender exercise for signage fabrication would have been preferable due to the Branching Out Project informing future signage replacement where funding allows across the Forest.</p> <p><i>*Procurement 48100008 – Tender report 7 June 2011</i></p>
7. Skills base	<p>The City of London project team had most of the required skills and experience to deliver the project. External consultants were engaged for the hard-surfaced car parks and access trails elements of the work.</p>
8. Stakeholders	<p>Stakeholders were engaged throughout the project at all stages. Several visitor forums were established, and existing local community groups consulted.</p>

	There was some opposition to the gateway design at the planning stage from the Epping Forest District Council community. Objections centred around the design, material selection and size of the signs but work with Essex Highways to guarantee safety and provided justification for the reasonable objections made.
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Variation Review

9. Assessment of project against key milestones	Delivery of improved hard landscaping was on schedule but the gateway/signage project was not completed within the agreed programme.				
	Car Park, Access Trails and Landscaping				
		Complete design	Tender Report	Works Start	Works Complete
	Evaluation Report (May 2008)	Oct, 2008	May, 2009	Oct 2009	Oct 2013
	Branching Out Project Update report Number 6 (September 2011)	Complete	June, 2011	July, 2011	Oct, 2013
	Branching Out Project Update report Number 9 (July 2013)	Complete	Complete	No revision stated	November, 2014
	Branching Out Project Update report Number 10 (Jan 2014)	Complete	Complete	Complete	Complete
	Gateways, orientation, interpretation & waymarking signage				
		Complete design	Tender Report	Works Start	Works Complete
	Evaluation Report (May 2008)	Oct, 2008	May, 2009	Oct, 2009	Oct, 2013
	Branching Out Project Update report	Decision made to contract out rather than employ specialist staff as originally planned.			

	Number 7 (May 2012)				
	Branching Out Project Update report Number 9 (July 2013)	To be informed by OSID*	July, 2013	Jan, 2014	Nov, 2014
	Open Spaces identity report* (November 2013)	Approval of the new visual identity for City of London Open Spaces, on which the Epping Forest Branching Out project signage was dependant. 'Tool Kits' available for use from April 2014.			
	Branching Out Project Update report Number 10 (Jan 2014)	Nov 2013	Complete	Spring, 2014	Nov, 2014
	June 2014 July 2014	Project Manager resignation New PM appointed			
	EFCC (July 2015)	Revised design approved and planning submitted to LBN, LBWF, LBR and EFDC	The significance of compliance with highways safety was identified by the new PM and concept design process restarted. New design incorporating OSID, approved highways specification and HLF funding legacy requirements of 20 years.		
	HLF grant extension request 1	Design delay			Oct 2015
	HLF grant extension request 2	Planning consent delay* (granted Nov 2015)			Dec 2016
	Out turn	Complete	Complete	Nov 2015	Nov 2016
	*Planning consent was required from four local planning authorities; Epping Forest District Council (EFDC), London Borough of Waltham Forest London (LBWF), London Borough of Redbridge (LBR) and London Borough of Newham (LBN). LBWF considered the pre-planning document for five months and, upon submission of full planning, EFDC escalated to district planning Committee delaying the decision by a further two months.				
10. Assessment of project against Scope	Four visitor hubs created at Jubilee Pond, Connaught Water, High Beach and Chingford (including The View, Queen Elizabeth's Hunting Lodge and Butler's Retreat) with an improved visitor welcome and first impression of the Forest.				

	<p>Hard surfaced car parks reduce damage to Forest land (gradual encroachment) and allow savings of approximately £10k per annum in annual maintenance. Cycle storage installed to encourage access via bicycle and accessible parking included at each hub.</p> <p>Installed the following; Two Accessible trails (Jubilee Pond and Connaught Water) totalling over 1.5 miles/2km, nine waymarked trails and informative visitor signage including; Seven site identification signs, seven orientation panels, four interpretation panels, nine waymark trail signs and eleven directional fingerposts.</p> <p>Installed twenty gateways to the Forest, marking the most prominent Forest entrances/egresses by highway. Design of gateways includes 'Thank you for driving carefully' message encouraging responsible driving in the more rural environment.</p> <p>Forest Transport Strategy delivered road closures, traffic calming, speed reductions and improved public transport links in partnership with Essex Highways.</p>
11. Risks and issues	<p>The significant risk for this project was the funding body (HLF) not approving work carried out or granting a deadline extension to the project and withholding funding.</p> <p>Several delays were caused by; the gateway and signage design became dependent on the Open Spaces Identity Project (OSID) and the wider Branching Out Project. The design of the gateway and interpretation signage was pushed back to enable influence by this departmental project.</p> <p>In May 2014, the Branching Out Project Manager resigned with 4 weeks' notice. The appointment of a new Project Manager and the adjustment period caused a whole project delay of around two months.</p> <p>Essex County Council (ECC) imposed a higher level of highways safety compliance during the project. In earlier conversations, the need for shear bolts and suitable positioning of the gateways identified. Later the requirement was altered and the concept designs altered to comply with weight limits, material use and limited component parts. Visual disparity between concept design and detailed design as a result of highways imposed required further work to gain your Committees approval.</p> <p>The gateways required planning permission consent from four local planning authorities; Epping Forest District Council (EFDC), London Borough of Waltham Forest London (LBWF), London Borough of Redbridge (LBR) and London Borough of Newham (LBN). LBWF considered the pre-planning document for five months and, upon</p>

	<p>submission of full planning, EFDC escalated a decision to district planning Committee delaying the decision by two months. Finally, a supplier's factory flooded which delayed the supply of the vitreous enamel panel parts to the signage fabrication company.</p> <p>The funders were consulted heavily throughout, and Officers secured agreement for work proposed and extension to the original project/funding deadline.</p>
12. Transition to BAU	There was not a clear plan for transfer to BAU. Not considered fully at inception, probably due to the number of EF Officers involved in the project, from the outset, responsible for existing operations in most improvement areas.

Value Review

13. Budget		Evaluation (£000)	Outturn (£000)	Variance (£000)
	Works	1,887	1,668	-219
	Purchases	0	249	249
	Fees	198	127	-71
	Staff costs	127	167	40
	Sundry (bid prep.)	45	45	0
	Development	112	112	0
	Total	2,369	2,368	-1
	Please confirm whether or not the Final Account for this project has been verified.*			
	Verified			
14. Investment	This project intended to deliver several visitor improvements to the Forest which were aspirational but at the time inhibited due to funding constraints. The City received HLF grant aid totalling £1,761,000 (74%) for this Car Parks and Access element.			
15. Assessment of project against SMART objectives	Objective NB: SMART objectives were not set at planning phase		Delivered	
	Creation of four visitor hubs (car park remodelling and resurfacing works and visitor arrival enhancement)		Created visitor hubs at The View (including Chingford Plain & Barn Hoppit), High Beach,	

		Connaught Water and Jubilee Pond
	Re-connect the whole Forest with 20 gateways to the Forest.	Installed 20 distinct entrance gateways to the Forest
	Provide over 1.5km of accessible paths	Created nearly 2km of accessible paths
	Install six way-marked trails	Created and installed 9 way-marked trails including 'start point' route identification panels and downloadable maps. Installed way-markers and fingerpost signage to link visitor hubs
	Install 12 interpretative panels	Installed 7 orientation panels Installed 5 interpretation panels Applied site specific Open Space identity to all interpretation
	Install signage to the Forest from transport links.	Worked with TFL to include the Forest as a destination at Forest transport hubs
	N/A	Installed low impact natural play areas at Connaught Water and Jubilee Pond hubs
16. Key benefits realised	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maximised capacity for parking at 4 visitor hubs • Improved the CoL image at Forest parking facilities • Reduced annual maintenance costs for car park repairs • Improved sustainability by installing cycle parking, encouraging visitors to travel by bike to Forest hubs • Provided specific disabled access parking to comply with statute and to meet the needs of all visitors. • Improved the Forest's identity and visitor's sense of arrival by applying the OSID which follows the visitor journey from start to finish. • Reinforced Epping Forest as part of CoL Open Spaces and highlighting the charity status on all permanent signage. 	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Highlighted the transition between urban and rural environment • Improved access to areas of Epping Forest, particularly for visitors with access needs who can now enjoy the easy access trails at 2 additional sites. • Encouraged visitors to explore the wider Forest with confidence. • Installed natural play at hub sites to encourage play in the wider Forest and give parents confidence to encourage play exploration and adventure in the Forest. • Encourage visitors to travel from hub to hub within the Forest, rather than driving. • Provide detailed site information to educate visitors and influence behaviour. • Facilitate visitors arriving by sustainable transport options thereby encourage health and wellbeing of our visitors. • Positive promotion of Epping Forest as a visitor destination at local TFL stations.
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Lessons Learned and Recommendations

17. Positive reflections	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regular meetings with the major funders (HLF) and the Project Board were helpful in ensuring the project remained on track. • Rationalised car parking, with marked parking bays, increases feasibility to apply parking charges in the future to fund car park maintenance • Speed reductions on Forest roads via the successful Forest Transport Strategy • Addition of two low impact natural play areas at Connaught Water and Jubilee Pond to add value to the project and further improve the visitor experience. • Reduction of future costs by selecting quality 'off the shelf' rather than bespoke interpretation signage. • Developing working partnerships with Essex County Council, Epping Forest District Council, Epping Forest District Museum & London Transport Museum • Development of an Access Forum to guide access improvements for those with access needs
18. Improvement reflections	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Control of bird feeding or the installation of a sacrificial / hard standing area for feeding birds could have been incorporated into the path design, something which was not considered during project planning. • Demand modelling based on historic visitor data and existing usage lacked evidence base. We could improve understanding of visitor numbers, dwell time and behaviour.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The factors which led to the gateway/signage delay could not have been mitigated without a greater impact on cost/quality of the project or ongoing operations. Had the gateway design been approved outside of the OSID, then the newly fabricated and installed signs would have been inconsistent with the new OSID and would not meet the objective to improve the customer experience. Furthermore, the life expectancy of the gateway signs is 25 years and the orientation/interpretation signs 15 years. Had the OSID superseded the installation, the signs would have been 'out of date' significantly before the life expectancy expired. • Securing planning permission for roadside signage. • Staff retention
19. Sharing best practice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Experience of signage and design work has been shared with colleagues across Open Spaces at the Interpretation Improvement Group. • Project management experience shared via the Heritage Lottery Fund for similar projects.
20. AOB	N/A

Appendices

Appendix 1	Project Coversheet
Appendix 2	Before and after images of works undertaken

Contact

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Appendix 1

Project Coversheet

[1] Ownership

Unique Project Identifier: 9794

Core Project Name: Branching Out Project – Car Parking & Access 4/4

Programme Affiliation (if applicable): Branching Out Project

Project Manager: Laura Lawson

Next Gateway to be passed: 6

[2] Project Brief

Project Description: Improve car park surfaces and layout; install two accessible trails; installing 'gateway' signage and to improve orientation and interpretation signage.

Definition of need: Make the Forest more accessible and improve the visitor experience

Key measures of success: Completion and visitor satisfaction.

[3] Progress Status

Expected timeframe for the project delivery: Completed

Key Milestones: Achieved

Are we on track for completing the project against the expected timeframe for project delivery? N/A

Has this project generated public or media impact and response which the City of London has needed to manage or is managing?

N/A

[4] Finance and Costed Risk

Headline Financial, Scope and Design Changes:

Project planning and start date were pre-gateway process. Various changes were made throughout the duration of the project and approved/documentated via nine 'update' reports submitted to EFCC between 2008 and 2014. Additional Committee approvals were sought via delegated approval, particularly in relation to the gateway design.

[5] Member Decisions and Delegated Authority

As per previous EFCC reports;

November 2008, May 2009, Jan 2010, July 2010, March 2011, Sept 2011, May 2012, Nov 2012, July 2013, Jan 2014 & July 2015.

Appendix 2

Before and after images of works undertaken.

Jubilee Pond Car Park

Before



After



Connaught Water Car Park

Before



After



V5 April 2019

High Beach Car Park

Before



V5 April 2019

After



V5 April 2019



V5 April 2019

Chingford (Bury Road)

Before



After



V5 April 2019

The View/Barn Hoppit Car Park

Before



After



V5 April 2019

Jubilee Pond Easy Access trail

Before



After



V5 April 2019

Connaught Water - Car Park and Easy Access Trail

Before



After



V5 April 2019

Gateways/Site Welcome signage



Large Gateway example



Site welcome sign examples

Orientation Boards/ Interpretation Boards

Existing*



New



Waymarked trails & Fingerposts

