

Committee(s)	Dated:
Epping Forest and Commons	09 09 2019
Subject: Epping Forest - Superintendent's Update for June to July 2019 (SEF 30/19)	Public
Report of: Director of Open Spaces	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 2019.

Of particular note was higher than average summer rainfall which has restricted the Fire Severity Risk and a number of reported fires, a fall in the fly tipping across the Forest; the removal of 390 Oak Processionary Moth Nests; review and assessment of the Forest's invisible fencing system by DEFRA and APHA specialists; the launch of a new Veteran Tree Trial and the conclusion of the Woodford Green land claim dispute.

Recommendation(s)

Members are asked to:

- Note the report.

Main Report

Staff and Volunteers

1. A part-time Sports Booking Assistant, Casual Booking Assistant, Casual Football assistant and 4 x Casual Information Assistants have been recruited over the reporting period.
2. Recruitment is also underway for a Visitor Experience Manager, a Forest Keeper and two litter pickers.

Budgets

3. At end of July, Epping Forest Local Risk is on profile at 34% of budget, with HLS grant income for 2018/19 remitted in line with Rural Payments Agency commitments on farming debt. Countryside Stewardship grant income is approximately £100,000 lower in this financial year due to the more complex

application process, which has taken over 12 months to complete. In addition, a number of large in-year demands have been identified including building investment, legal and consultancy fees. Plans are being implemented to address these additional costs within the year.

Weather

4. June 2019 saw high amounts of rainfall in the first half of the month, with a total was 77.6mm of rainfall which is above the average of 49.4mm of rainfall for this time of year. There was a total of 10 days of rainfall with the wettest day being 9 June where 17.2mm of rain fell.
5. Overall, July had a good mix of wet and dry days scattered throughout the month, with a total of 59.6mm of rain fall slightly above the average of 49.5mm. There was a total of 11 days of rainfall with the wettest day being 26 July where 20.6mm of rain fell. A heatwave event in late July resulted in Very High Fire Severity Index and Heat-Health Watch level 3. Regular rainfall has reduced the risk of fires across the Forest.

Forest Services

Fly tipping

6. There was a total of 86 fly-tips recorded over the period of June-July 2019, this is a 22% decrease over the same period in 2018. Two of the fly-tips within this period required the assistance of an outside contractor due to the size (a large volume of roofing tiles) and tip contents (a 1000 litre container of motor oil).
7. Roadside locations represented 81% of the tip locations over the period, with furniture represented the largest category of items tipped over the period at 24 (28%), while builders waste represented 20 tips (23%). There was a decline the volume of household waste with only 8 tips containing this type of waste as the majority of the tip. Horticultural material associated with cannabis production was again high and represented 16% of all tips collected.
8. There were 21 fly-tips over the period. The Wanstead Flats area represents 24% of all tips. 8 of these tips were on Capel Road.

Fires

9. 11 fires have been recorded over the reporting period in a range of locations including Wanstead Flats, Fairmead, Wake Valley, Walthamstow Forest and Debden Slade.

Enforcement Activity

10. There were no prosecutions during the period under report. There were 3 verbal warnings, 3 written warnings and 1 conditional caution.

Rough Sleepers

11. A total of ten Rough Sleeper Camps were recorded over the period. These camps represented a 43% rise on 2017 where 7 camps were recorded (no camps were recorded in 2018). Seven camps were located in areas strongly associated with previous rough sleeping. Three camps were recorded further north at Chingford Golf Course, Pole Hill and Debden Slade, which are not areas typically associated with rough sleeping.

Licences

12. A total of 58 licences for events were issued during the two months being reported, which yielded an income of £32,891.54 plus VAT. 44 licences were issued during the same period in 2018 (income of £35,393.60).

Unauthorised Occupations

13. There were two unauthorised occupations by Travellers over the period.

14. On the 13 July 2019, Travellers, with 8 caravans and 9 vehicles, attempted to access Forest land off Oak Hill, then Mill Plain and then George Green. At the first location they were moved off by the Metropolitan Police, at the other two locations the Police worked in conjunction with Epping Forest Staff to apply the byelaws.

15. On the 22 July 2019, Travellers, with 3 caravans and 4 vehicles, attempted to access Bury Rd, Chingford, but left the site and occupied land on Buckhurst Hill Cricket Ground (EFDC).

Dog Incidents

16. During the period there were four reports of serious-dog related nuisance over the period. Three of these incidents occurred in Wanstead Park.

- After an altercation between two dogs, a member of the public was assaulted with a dog chain by the other dog owner.
- A lady felt threatened by a group of 13 dogs, but no physical attack occurred.
- A man was bitten by a dog whilst taking photos in Wanstead Park.
- At Connaught Water a dog attacked another dog.

Deer Vehicle Collisions

17. Epping Forest staff dealt with a total of 6 deer vehicle collisions (DVC) during this reporting period with three occurring on the 22 July.

Heritage; Landscape and Nature Conservation

Biodiversity

18. June and July saw very good numbers of butterflies in the Forest with numbers higher than for the last few years for most species, apart from Common Blue, which seemed to be a little reduced in abundance. In fact, 2019 seems to be have been a good butterfly summer across southern England and the Forest trends reflect this.

19. Amongst the highlights the Forest breeding population of the impressive **Purple Emperor** still seems to be expanding, with new localities being recorded this year. Another large butterfly, **Silver-Washed Fritillary** was also in its highest numbers for many years and it was seen in more locations than in any year to date. However, this butterfly's populations seem to be transitory, with adults often moving through the Forest from further afield, and its breeding population is still small. A further exceptional record was of a **Dark-Green Fritillary**, a much rarer species for Essex, in the Buckhurst Hill areas of the Forest around North Farm.
20. Another transitory but very welcome addition to the butterfly species this year was **Marbled White**, a species of grassland habitats. Like the Silver-Washed Fritillary, this species does not seem to have a firm foothold in the Forest yet but the frequency of sightings from Leyton Flats to Fairmead were again the highest ever for the Forest for this species.
21. Of the more established species of butterfly, the populations of **Small Heath** and **Brown Argus** were very high with up to 25 individuals of the latter being recorded on one day by the Wren Group at the exchange Land at Wanstead. At Chingford Plain Small Heaths were recorded in double figures over several days amongst the grazing cattle.
22. In relation to other wildlife, **Red Kites** bred successfully for a second year in the NE of the Forest. This bird of prey now seems well-established as a Forest bird, as well as one in the surrounding countryside.
23. The ancient pollards of the Forest were also the focus for the launch of a national initiative by the Ancient Tree Forum (ATF), under its *VetTree* project. On 4th July the Forest Conservation and Operations teams co-led a walk with the ATF providing professional arborists with an opportunity to view our keystone tree and pollarding management work along a new Veteran Tree Trail. The trail's maps, web-site and information provision have all been funded by a City Bridges Trust grant. Epping Forest is one of three Open Spaces locations where such trails have been set up, and these City Corporation sites are able to continue their role as national exemplars of ancient tree conservation.

Agri-environment Schemes

24. The preparation of the Countryside Stewardship application has been the focus of the work of the Environmental Stewardship and Biodiversity Officers. This has required a considerable investment in time to meet all the requirements of the scheme's application process. The deadline is at the end of August 2019.
25. The long-delayed final payments for the last 18 months of the completed Higher Level Stewardship Scheme have now been received.

Grazing

26. Grazing has continued across Chingford Plain through to Fairmead and Bury Wood. Five animals were removed to the Buffer Lands in June due to the low growth rates from the sustained dry period.
27. The Head of Conservation and Grazing and Landscape Project Officer hosted a visit involving two DEFRA (Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs) officials and a senior vet from the APHA (Animal Plant Health Agency). The visit was to demonstrate how Invisible fencing works on cattle and the benefits it offers when grazing SSSI and public open spaces. Recorded data from Epping Forest grazing records as well as other sites were made available to help inform DEFRA on the technology's efficiency.
28. Miriam Parker MBE and Epping Forest appointed vet have also visited to consult, provide independent verification and record animal welfare data on cattle grazing on the Invisible Fencing.
29. Volunteer Wardens have been regularly assisting the Grazing Team on several hands-on cattle activities, including moving cattle between locations.

Heritage

30. A meeting was held on 5th June with Historic England officers to discuss the draft Copped Hall Parkland Management Plan. It was a constructive meeting during which some key issues were highlighted and possible options for the future conservation management of this protected area were prioritised. In the light of the discussions further amendments will be made to the draft, which will be brought to Committee soon.

Contractors

31. The new three-year haylage contract with a local contractor has begun and haylage was taken during this period from Great Gregories amongst other sites.

Land Management

Town & Country Planning – Forward Planning – Local Plans

32. Following the very eventful hearings in May into the Epping Forest District Council Local Plan, this period was relatively quiet while awaiting the Inspector's preliminary findings. However, a further document was submitted to the Inspector on behalf of the Conservators, detailing a chronological record of the many years of dialogue with the Council about the need to protect the Forest and promote it as a vital part of the Local Plan. This further submission also sought to answer some of the extra questions that the Inspector had raised with us during the Habitats Regulations Assessment hearing.
33. Towards the end of July, the London Borough of Waltham Forest published its new consolidated Local Plan document for a period of consultation ending on 22 September. This Local Plan will also require a detailed response to ensure that

the Forest's and the Special Area of Conservation's protection and enhancement are factored into the final policies.

34. In addition to the direct responses on the Local Plans, your officers were also involved with work to promote green infrastructure planning more widely. On 12th July the Head of Conservation took part in a new steering group meeting for the Green Arc project.

Town & Country Planning – Development Control

35. Objections for planning applications were registered with Epping Forest District Council for proposals at:

- Netherhouse Farm – Construction proposals for further buildings
- Cobbins End Farm – Construction of a 12 bay stable
- Lord Padgets Wood – Telecomms Mast

Land Registration

36. The Broomhill Road case was brought to a conclusion with a two-party agreement between the City of London Corporation and the other party over the registration of the land as Forest Land. As a result, the planned hearing at the Lands Tribunal was cancelled and the costs of this process avoided. The notice to allow registration of the land is now awaited from the Land Registry.
37. Further land at Mott Street has been registered with the Land Registry, while two verge claims have been abandoned based on further research.

Operations

Habitat Works

38. At Wanstead Park annual Floating Pennywort Control works were undertaken spraying and removing regrowth from the banks of Perch Pond. Work has also started in this period on clearing the proposed site for the play area. For some years the proposed area has been used as a receptor site for unsaleable logs and wood chip. New areas were found for this material to provide continued habitat benefits. The cleared site will be maintained in an open condition. Work has also been undertaken to remove vegetation surrounding park ditches to facilitate digger access to clear clogged ditches to encourage more surface drainage water to enter the lake system.

Subsidence/insurance works

39. Three new claims for subsidence were raised and staff provided reports for our insurers. One claim is for a residence where the City Corporation's Insurers have settled in the past for root nuisance and will serve as a test of our revised claims management process.
40. During the period we have had seven new public liability claims submitted. Four are linked to tree failures and reported below and two are linked to car tyre damage when crossing the alligator teeth at car parks in the Forest. A third claim

is a second attempt to claim for damages arising from a fall when riding in the Forest. Staff at Epping Forest are working closely with our insurance team colleagues to defend these claims.

Risk Management Works

41. Tree Safety – The main focus of arborist activity has been progressing the list of tree safety tasks which will be ongoing for the year. Over 600 tasks have been identified by our surveyors. Following tree failure incidents three investigations have been undertaken by staff and passed to the insurance team, one location had two incidents. In each case it was reported that the standard visual tree inspection undertaken on trees was unlikely to have identified the problems that led to the tree failures. More in-depth investigations given the scale of the annual survey task is not considered reasonable.
42. Fire Safety - Fire belts on Leyton and Wanstead Flats have been cut as in previous years. It is however expected that following the current review of fire safety protection this activity may be modified and extended.

Oak Processionary Moth (OPM)

43. Contractor-led OPM control works have ended for 2019 with a total of 390 nests identified and removed from 137 trees compared to a total of 68 last year. 11 nests in one tree was the highest number collected. Ongoing low level nest removal will be undertaken by Epping Forest Arborists with specialist equipment obtained to progress this.

Access Works

44. Staff commenced ride verge cutting during the period with more extensive works planned for August. Our contractor has started work on the road verge cutting with initial activity focused on the South of the Forest.
45. Living Symphonies: Arborist staff supported the London Borough of Waltham Forest's London Borough of Culture artistic team who undertook the successful music installation in Bury Wood. This involved site preparations and installation of speakers for the installation.

Visitor Services

Centenary celebration of King Carp, Monday, 8 July 2019

46. Special Monday opening to celebrate exactly On This Day 100 years since King Carp, 19 lbs 8 oz, was fished from Warren Pond by J. T. Fisher of the Lychnobite Angling Society (still operating) and stuffed by W.F. Homer, a notable Victorian fish taxidermist of Forest Gate. Attended by 27 visitors: about one third keen anglers who made the pilgrimage: one third drop-ins who happened to be anglers; one third families with children very happy to be impressed by 'big fish'. One keeper and volunteer fishing bailiff talked to anglers about what to fish where.

London Borough of Culture

47. **The Dark Outside** was a 24-hour broadcast hosted from QEHL on 20 June to midsummers day playing recordings of all types from local people and could be tuned in to on a special radio frequency.

48. **Living Symphonies** was a sound installation based in Bury Wood for one week using sound to interpret all the ecology of a square footprint of Forest flora and fauna.

The Wainwright Prize

49. Two books (from a shortlist of seven were set in Epping Forest) Robert Macfarlane's *Underland* and Luke Turner's *Out of the woods* (launched in January 2019 from the QEHL). Robert Macfarlane was the overall winner.

Learning and Education

50. The Learning Officer visited 37 schools reaching 1,000 students and 200 adults. The Learning Officer also worked with Forest School Preparation on a community project creating an online historic orienteering map of Wanstead Park. The year 7 and 8 students researched the local history getting stories/ memories, historical facts and used ArcGIS to create a map with QR codes at points within the park linking back to the online map.

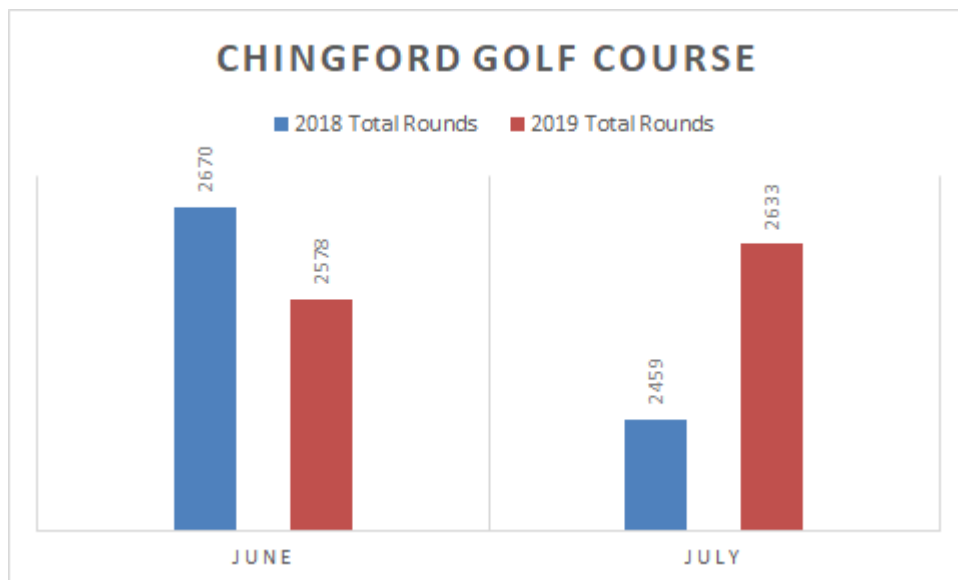
Chingford Golf Course

51. Greens have been sprayed 5 times in June and July following the soil biology programme to help with speed and trueness for visitors when playing. The green keepers were out watering daily to help keep greens alive and in a good standard. The irrigation system pump failed during this period. There was a two-week waiting time for the engineer to repair the pump resulting in greens damage. To help improve the pace of play the green keepers have been out strimming under trees. Greens were cut daily at 4.5mm to also help improve the pace.

52. Total revenue from online sales this period was £8977.50, total revenue from reception was £69,560.47 broken down into:

Breakdown of figures from Reception			
	2019/20	2018/19	Difference (+/-)
Green fees:	£55,833.06	£56,126.40	-£293.34
Drinks:	£2,026.10	£1714.40	£311.70
Hire Equipment:	£7,139.00	£7,399.50	-£260.50
Shop Sales:	£3,813.90	£3,799.24	£34.65
Wanstead:	£0.00	£120.00	-£120.00
Horse Riding:	£748.41	£1,041.38	-£292.97

53. Online bookings for the same period last year was £8539.50 compared to £8977.50 this year, an increase of £438 (5%). Total revenue from reception last year was £70,180.93 compared to £69,560.47 in the current year, a decrease amounting to £1,620.46. (-2%). Compared to last year the total difference in revenue equates to a decrease in income of £182.46 (<1%). The number of rounds for June & July last year was 5129. This year number of rounds for June & July was 5211. An increase of 82. (1.5%).



Wanstead Flats

54. Two large football tournaments were held in the summer off-season, one adult and one youth. Both were very successful with some 1,400 visits over the 4 days.

Parkrun

55. Parkrun had 2,057 runners attending during June and July 2019. One Parkrun was cancelled to allow adequate set up time for one of the previously mentioned football tournaments. The Parkrun organisers were understanding and despite the cancellation, the number of runners is still up by 182 on the previous period last year.

Visitor Numbers

56. Overall visitors increased 15% in June from 6395 in 2018 to 7361 for 2019 and decreased 10% in July from 7408 in 2018 and 6673 in 2019.

Visitor Numbers	QEHL 2018	2018	View	2018	Temple	2018	High Beach	2018	Total	Total 2018
June	↑ 1864	1526	↑ 3569	3079	↑ 110	0	↑ 1818	1790	↑ 7361	6395

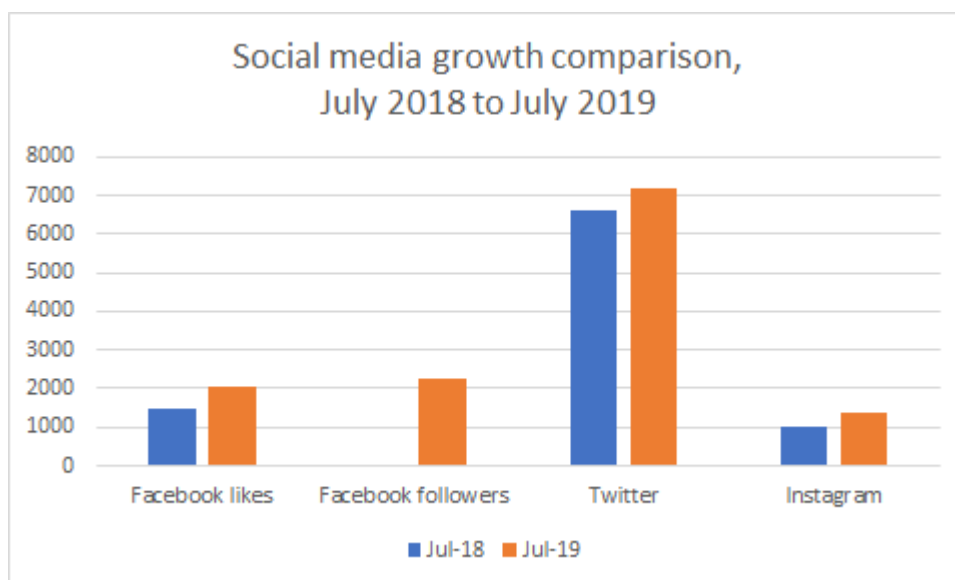
July	↓ 1334	2006	↑ 3710	3299	↑ 243	0	↓ 1386	2103	↓ 6673	7408
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Communication and Information

57. As of 1 August 2019 our social media following is:

- Twitter followers: 7208 (9% increase on year)
- Facebook likes: 2064 (37% increase on year)
- Instagram followers: 1386 (33% increase on year)

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



59. The summer edition of Forest Focus was very well received with the usual wide distribution across the Epping Forest area. We are currently working on the autumn edition of Forest Focus.

Major incidents

60. None

Appendices

- None

Paul Thomson

Superintendent of Epping Forest

T: 0208 532 1010

E: paul.thomson@cityoflondon.gov.uk