

Committee(s)	Dated:
Epping Forest and Commons	08 07 2019
Subject: Epping Forest - Superintendent's Update for April to May 2019	Public
Report of: Superintendent of Epping Forest (SEF 27/19)	For Information
Report author: Paul Thomson – Epping Forest	

Summary

The purpose of this report is to summarise the Epping Forest Division's activities across April to May 2019.

Of particular note was a 47% in year increase in fly tipping; five fly tipping successful prosecutions totalling £5,626 in fines and costs; evidence provided to the House of Commons, Environmental Audit Committee on the impact of Invasive Non-Native Species; the annual turnout of cattle on the Forest; further detailed contributions to the Epping Forest District Council Local Plan Examination-in-Public; the settlement of the Broomhill Road land claim; increases in subsidence and public liability claims; further successful London Borough of Culture Events and the receipt of a Trip Advisor Award of Excellence.

Recommendation(s)

Members are asked to:

- Note the report.

Main Report

Staff and Volunteers

1. Two Litter Pickers retired on 3 and 31 May. Recruitment is underway for both posts. The vacant post for the golf course for a full-time greens/ground's person was filled in April bringing the staffing levels back to a full team.

Budgets

2. At end of May Epping Forest Local Risk was at 20% of total spend, 17% through the year. This is as expected as still awaiting grant income from 2018/19.

Weather

3. Soil moisture content depletion levels continue to be below average for the time of year. April 2019 was relatively dry with 13.6mm of rainfall, which was well below the average of 35mm for this time of year. There was 11 days of rainfall in total with the wettest day being the 3rd of April where 3.2mm of rain fell.
4. May 2019 saw 46.8mm of rainfall which matched the 10 year average of 49.67mm for this month. There was 14 days of rainfall in total with the wettest day being the 8th of May where 10.8mm of rain fell.

Sustainability

5. The introduction of the Ultra Low Emission Zone (ULEZ) in central London has raised public awareness of power generation by red diesel generators at the Spring Fairs. Similar concerns have also been raised concerning idling ice cream vans at High Beach and Connaught Water. Discussions are underway with the Showman's Guild on emission control measures and a feasibility study is considering power connections for ice cream vans.

Epping Forest Projects

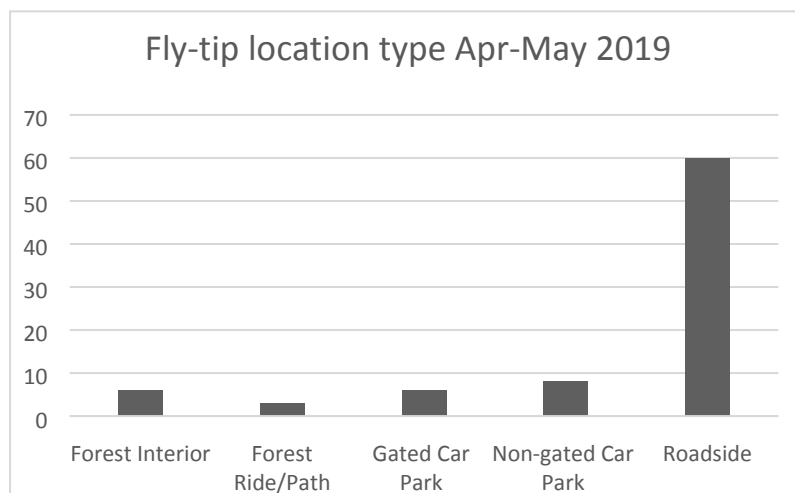
Parklife

6. The Gateway 2 'Spend to Save' Parklife Artificial Grass Pitch and Pavilion improvement Project at Wanstead Flats is now on hold subject to further scrutiny of capital projects through the Fundamental Review process.

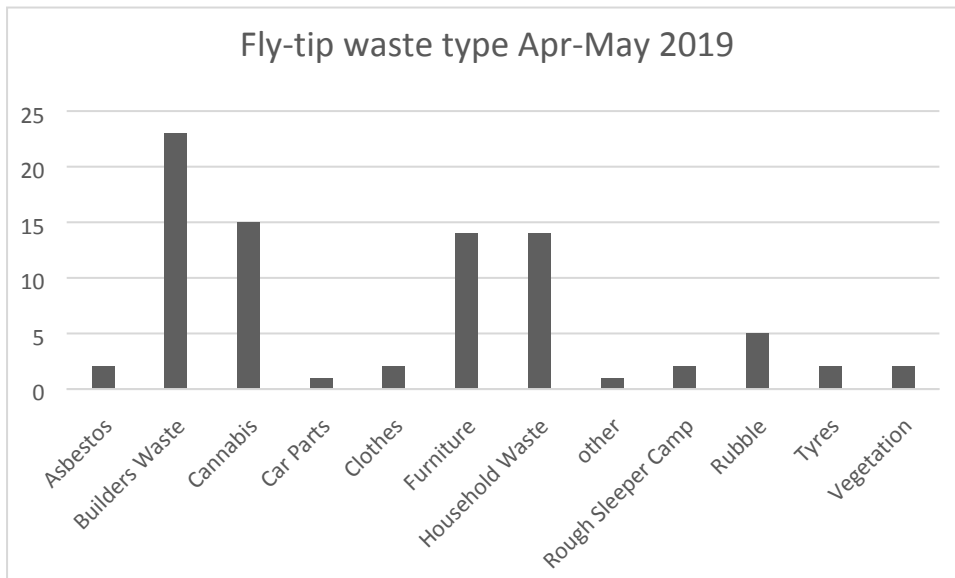
Forest Services

Flytipping

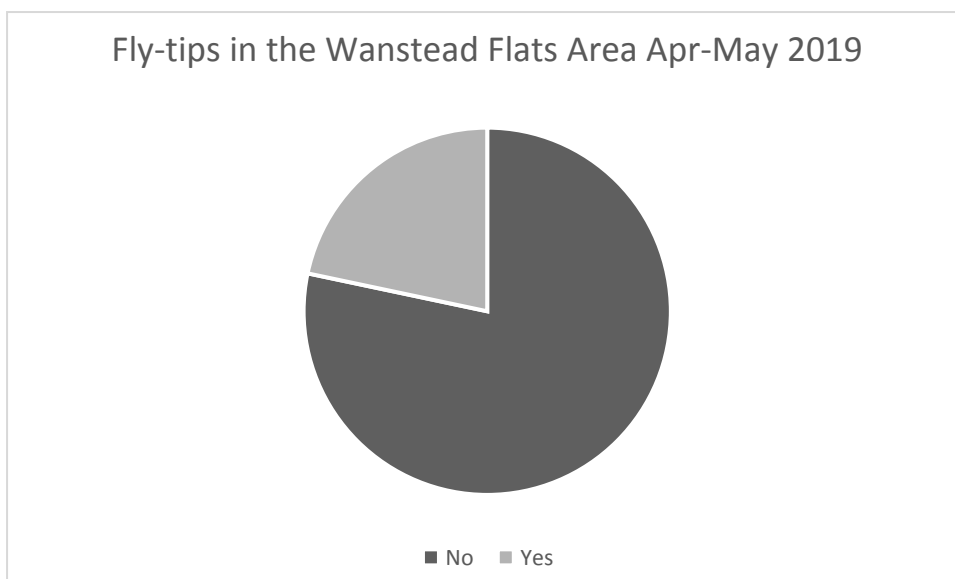
7. There was total of 83 tips over the period in comparison to 96 over the same period in 2018, representing a fall of 13.5%. The cumulative total for the first five months of 2019 is 175 fly tips compared to 167 fly tips for the previous year, representing a 4.7% in year increase.



8. Roadside locations remain the most vulnerable part of the Forest to fly-tipping, which represent 72% of all tips. A number of these locations have been highlighted for logging to try and reduce repeat deposits.



9. Builders waste remains the most prominent waste type representing 28%. However, in common with the February-March period of 2019, there has been a sharp increase the number of cannabis production-related waste deposited upon the Forest, with 15 tips representing 18% of all tips.



10. 18 fly-tips occurred within the Wanstead Flats area of the Forest during April-May representing 21% of all tips.

Enforcement Activity

11. Eight prosecutions were heard during the period under report, with five cases pleading guilty with fines, costs and victim surcharge amounting to £5,626. Two cases pleaded not guilty electing for trial and a warrant was issued for a failure to appear at court.

Date	Defendant Name	Offence Accepted 33: Deposit 34: Duty of Care	Court Name	Outcome	Costs Recovered
02.05.2019	Rafi HASSAN	Prosecution: EPA 33	Chelmsford Magistrates	GUILTY	Costs: £712 Fine: £600 V/S:£60
02.05.2019	Adeel AHMED	Prosecution EPA 33	Chelmsford Magistrates	GUILTY	Costs: £712 Fine: £1300 V/S:£120
02.05.2019	James DUNN (Case 1)	Prosecution EPA 33	Chelmsford Magistrates	GUILTY	Costs: £500 Fine: £200 V/S:£30
02.05.2019	James DUNN (Case 2)	Prosecution EPA 33	Chelmsford Magistrates	GUILTY	Costs: £500 Fine: £200 V/S:£0
28.05.2019	Keiron LAKNER	Prosecution EPA 33	Thames Magistrates	GUILTY	Costs: £542 Fine: £120 V/S £30
02.05.2019	PE133	Prosecution EPA 33	Chelmsford Magistrates	NOT GUILTY PLEA TRIAL DATE: 21.10.2019	
02.05.2019	PE 213	Prosecution EPA 33	Chelmsford Magistrates	NOT GUILTY PLEA TRIAL DATE: 24.10.2019	
02.05.2019	PE 236	Prosecution EPA 33 & 34	Chelmsford Magistrates	DID NOT ATTEND: WARRANT ISSUED	

Total Costs Awarded to Epping Forest	£2966
Total Fine	£2420
Total Victim/Surcharge	£240
Total	£5,626

Unexplained Deaths

12. There was an unexplained death at Lower Forest on the 30th May 2019 that was not considered suspicious. Forest Keeper staff assisted the Police and private ambulance with access. This represents the third unexplained death within the Forest in 2019.

Rough Sleepers

13. Four camps were identified and cleared over the period of April-May 2019. Despite engagement with local outreach organisations using the guidelines set by the City of London Rough Sleeper Steering Group and those of each of the four local authorities, the Police assisted in the clearance of two camps at James Lane. Due to the violent nature of some of the camp occupants and a potential disturbance of the peace caused by some of the homeless people present within the area. During April Senior Forest Keeper met with St Mungos to meet the area representatives following a reorganisation of their areas.

Licences

14. A total of 44 licences for events were issued during the two months being reported, which yielded an income of £46,224.01 plus VAT. 44 licences were issued during the same period in 2018/19 yielding income of £75,647.96 (inclusive of a compound of £19,180)

Unauthorised Occupations

15. There have not been any unauthorised occupations over this reporting period.

Dog Incidents

16. There have been 5 incidents between April and May 19 relating to Dogs. These range from Dogs attacking Dogs, to a potential attack on a Swan. Showmen associated with one of the Fairs have been accused ill-treating their dogs and abandoning a dog which savagely attacked and killed a dog while injuring another outside Davis Lane Primary School.

Deer Vehicle Collisions

17. Epping Forest staff dealt with a total of 19 deer vehicle collisions (DVC) during this reporting period.

Opening of the Forest

18. On Monday 15 April the Forest re-opened to open horse riding.

Heritage; Landscape and Nature Conservation

Biodiversity

19. Epping Forest officers made a significant contribution to the City of London Corporation's (CoL) evidence to the House of Commons Environmental Audit Committee's (EAC) examination of invasive non-native species (INNS). At the 21st May hearing, the EAC's Chairman cited the CoL evidence of the costs of managing oak processionary moth on the open spaces as an example of the financial implications of INNS to the UK. The fact that the evidence was cited from amongst over 50 other submissions demonstrates that the evidence had an impact with EAC.
20. At Warren Plantation, a preliminary assessment was made by the Biodiversity Officer of the impact of the Larch removal (over 600 trees felled and removed), which was carried out as a ramorum disease control measure over the winter period. The transect walk through the plantation revealed 5 territories of Firecrest, a rare Schedule 1 bird that has been known at this site for many years and uses conifers and other evergreens (like Holly) for its feeding and nesting areas. This is an exceptional density of this rare bird and another Schedule 1 species was also recorded at the plantation and may also be breeding within or close by.

Agri-environment Schemes

21. The annual Basic Payment Scheme application for the whole Open Spaces Department was coordinated by Epping Forest's Environmental Stewardship Officer (ESO). This application also required many hours of work throughout April by the ESO and the GIS Officer, checking data and maps respectively, as again the Rural Payments Agency made many changes to the maps including a significant number of errors.
22. With your Committee's approval, an application for entry into the Countryside Stewardship Scheme was submitted for part of the Forest in May 2019. This application will cover part of the Forest, with the rest of the Forest being subject to a second application in 2020. Epping Forest Officers met with Natural England in late May to discuss the development of the application, which will be finalised in August 2019 and is the subject of a separate report to your Committee

Grazing

23. Cattle moved onto the Forest on 8th May as scheduled, after the Bank Holiday and London Borough of Culture celebrations. This first group comprised 12 Longhorns grazing Chingford Plain within the invisible fenced area. A second group of 25 cattle went out on Fairmead / Bury Wood on 16th May. Grass growth on the Forest has been subdued due to the lack of rain this spring and the dry winter period. Animals numbers may be reduced if the lack of growth continues.

Heritage

24. A condition assessment was carried out by City Surveyor's on the eastern ha-ha at Copped Hall. This assessment identifies work that needs carrying out to protect and enhance this locally-important heritage feature, which is integral to the Copped Hall landscape immediately around the Hall itself. The City Surveyor's Dept will now be obtaining estimates for restoration works. Depending on the extent of the work required, works may be carried out in phases as funding becomes available.

25. An archaeological 'walk over survey' was carried out on Copped Hall by independent consultants to provide further information to inform the Parkland conservation management proposals that are being developed. The survey completed the work identifying the remaining historical features within the wider landscape of the Park and historic estate. Paths, banks, pits and remains of a minor to low significance, comprising post-Medieval to modern structures, were found.

Contractors

26. A three-year contract was concluded for the cutting of haylage across the Forest and Buffer Lands following a competitive procurement tender process. This ensures that the best value employment of specialist harvesting machinery which makes the most of the grassland as a crop and ensures that the cattle herd fodder is provided from Forest and Buffer Land sources rather than buying in external supplies at greater expense.

Land Management

Town & Country Planning – Forward Planning – Local Plans

27. Following Committee approval on 20th May, a Queen's Counsel (QC), alongside two consultants and the Head of Conservation put the case for the better protection of the Forest Special Area of Conservation and its enhancement under the Epping Forest District Council Local Plan at the examination in public hearing of 21st May. Detailed technical written representations had been made ahead of the hearing on the topics of recreation pressure, transport and air pollution. Criticisms of the Plan's legal compliance centred around the quality and scope of the Habitats Regulations Assessment and the lack of a full Mitigation Strategy. A further detailed legal paper on the impact of delay in reducing pollution impacts was tabled by CoL's QC and accepted by the Inspector on the day of the hearing.

28. Later in the week, at two further hearings the Head of Conservation made further interventions on the lack of a green infrastructure strategy for the Plan and CoL's concerns about the transport infrastructure and the pressure on roads through the Forest.

29. Subsequent to the hearings in May at the request of the Inspector, a Joint letter from Natural England and CoL was agreed and sent to Epping Forest District Council to outline the changes required to the Epping Forest-specific development management policy, 'without prejudice' to the case that had been made against the current Local Plan at the hearings. (see letter at Appendix 1 of this report).

Town & Country Planning – Development Control

30. As part of the Saturday visit on 11th May your Committee was taken through the detailed proposals for the re-development of the Suntrap Field Centre by the Suntrap Centre staff. These proposals have been submitted for planning approval by the owners, London Borough of Waltham Forest, to the planning authority Epping Forest District Council (EFDC). It has been agreed, because of the nature of the proposals and the importance of field education in the Forest, that the impacts of traffic and other matters would be dealt with through the Mitigation Strategy that remains under development by EFDC and other authorities.

Land Registration

31. The Broomhill Road casework was brought to a conclusion during May and the caution affecting Forest land was withdrawn. Formal confirmation is awaited from the Lands Tribunal after which the land in question will be permanently registered as Forest Land.

Operations

Subsidence/insurance works

32. Two subsidence claims have been processed and passed through to the insurance team during the period. Each claim requires a site assessment and report of the value of the tree(s) concerned and an audit of our management actions for the last 10-15 years. Since January we have had a total of five new claims to process.
33. Following a review of the actions identified in previous subsidence claims we are currently actively managing 14 different claim locations to mitigate future risks.
34. Two public liability claims were also processed during the period and passed to the insurance team. Since January we have processed seven claims against the City of London Corporation. The two most recent claims concerned damage to car tyres by the dragon's teeth on car parks and an incident involving a cyclist.

Tree Safety

35. Public consultation has commenced on the future management of the Churchill/Poplar avenue on Woodford Green. An information walk was hosted on the Green with around 45 attendees and further information events will be held. The local MP and councillors have also been contracted with details of the works being proposed and an explanatory video prepared for the Epping Forest Website.
36. Following the annual Tree inspection survey works to address the issues have been started with arborist teams largely focused on this work for the spring months. A long-standing project progressed in this period was the work to address safety issues on trees along Forest Glade, by Highams Park. This work has highlighted a number of neighbour issues that will be the focus of future works.

Oak Processionary Moth (OPM)

37. Two pesticide applications were undertaken by contractors at 10 locations in the Forest as part of OPM control measures. Monitoring inspections have also been tendered and ordered for 2019 and work will commence in June. Staff and wider anecdotal reports indicate that the forecast exponential increase in nest sites are proving accurate.

Access Works

38. The arborist teams have started the annual cut of the sightlines at all main entrances to the Forest. This work is usually undertaken along with the tree safety work with sightlines cut *en route* to different tree safety tasks.

39. Grass cutting has begun in earnest on the short grass areas in the Forest. The Forest greens across Loughton and Woodford have had a least a single cut of the short grass areas.

Visitor Services

Visitor Services events

40. Partnership continues with London Borough of Waltham Forest adult learning service to offer free craft taster sessions in the Community Room, The View: Prints of the Forest on 4 April; A Riot of Green in watercolour on 3 May and Nature fashioned in a greetings card on 20 May. These sessions attract a full room of 15-20 adults, usually local but attracting some participants from further afield, at no cost to City of London.
41. The Temple was open over two weekends including the Easter weekend and Easter Monday Bank holiday (20-22 April and 18-19 May). The Friends of Wanstead Park and Fields Studies Centre staff enhanced the public offer in Wanstead Park with Easter crafts, bluebell walks and Bug hunts funded by the City of London Corporation's 'Enjoying Green Spaces and the Natural Environment' strand of the Central Grants Programme

London Borough of Culture

42. The May Day Fayre held on Chingford Plain was a success and ran smoothly without complaint. Between 4,000 and 5,000 were engaged throughout the day, including the cycle route, cycle performances and on the Plain. 950 meals from sustainable borough sources were served and 1 ton of surplus food destined for landfill was repurposed for the table
43. The Women's walk was a dusk to nightfall walk in the Forest exploring women's experiences of walking alone. Led by a female ranger the walkers enjoyed learning about the wildlife of the Forest at night. The walk ended with a round table discussion led by three female authors who all talk about walking alone both in wilderness and in cities. Feedback was very positive and this may be an event that could be repeated at Epping Forest in future.
44. Ways of Seeing is a programme of art works across the borough in non-conventional settings featuring paintings from the Government Art Collection. The View is hosting two works; *Epping Forest* by Sir Jacob Epstein and *Grim's Ditch* by Clare Woods and will be on show until the end of August.

Learning and Education

45. There were 15 school sessions held in Epping Forest in April /May. This is slightly less than usual due to Easter holiday and May half term. 450 students experienced a learning session.
46. As part of the London Borough of Culture Learning Officers hosted an open day at QEHL showcasing the education offer for Epping Forest. 20 teachers attended along with 8 local education partners showcasing the local offer.

Chingford Golf Course

47. The Green Keeping Team carried out essential renovation work to the greens; all greens were solid tined, over-seeded and top dressed. This will help improve plant growth, reduce compaction and improve drainage. All of this is carried out to help produce a quality putting surface for our visitors. Due to the lack of rain staff were out watering daily to help keep the greens & tees playable. Daily/ weekly cutting requirements were carried out making use of the new AR3 machine which has allowed staff to get in and out of smaller areas which in the past were not able to be cut.
48. Total revenue from online sales this period is £10,867.50, total revenue from reception was £122,358.22 broken down into:

Breakdown of figures from Reception			
	2019/20	2018/19	Difference (+/-)
Green fees:	£113,608.44	£106,178.36	+£7430.08
Drinks:	£1284.60	£1353.60	-£69.00
Hire Equipment:	£5275.00	£4738.50	+536.50
Shop Sales:	£3473.60	£3131.50	+342.10
Wanstead:	£87.00	£487.00	-£400.00
Horse Riding:	£9497.08	£10,025.87	-£528.79

49. Compared to last year the total difference in revenue equates to an increase in income of £977.39 (1%)
50. Online bookings for the same period last year was £6283.50 compared to £10,867.50 this year, making an increase of £4584.00 (73%).
51. Total revenue from reception last year was £125,964.83 compared to £122,358.22 in the current year, a decrease amounting to £3606.61. (-3%)
52. The number of rounds for April & May last year was 4948. This year number of rounds for April & May was 5276. An increase of 328. (7%)

Wanstead Flats

53. Two large football tournaments have been secured in May for the summer off-season, one adult and one youth. Income has also been secured for the continued use of the flats for soccer school/club training sessions desired by several hirers. The total generated from these off-season bookings is £6,500.
54. Parkrun. Parkrun had 1,955 runners attending during April – May 2019. This is up by 233 or 13.5% up on the previous period last year.

Visitor Numbers

55. Visitor numbers are generally up across the visitor centres. Internal changes and improved retail in the View may be making a difference and the reopening of the Temple saw high footfall over the Easter bank holiday.

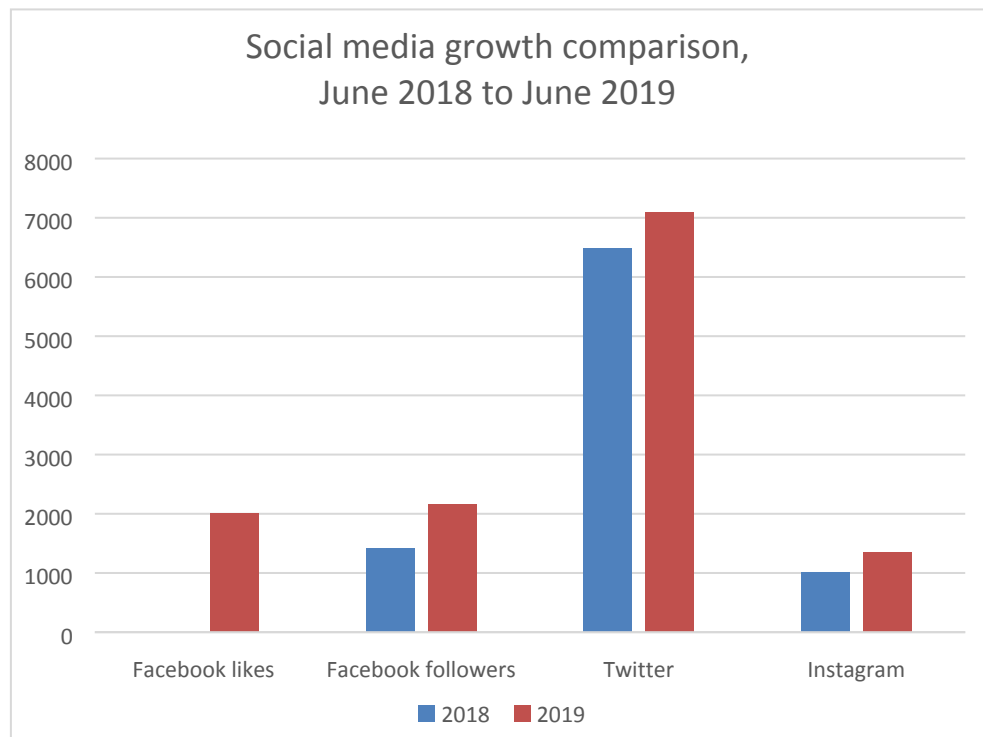
Visitor Numbers	QEHL 2018	2018	View	2018	Temple	2018	High Beach	2018	Total	Total 2018
April	2418 ↑	2142	4135 ↑	3870	1031 ↑	0	2221 ↓	2729	9805 ↑	8741
May	2597 ↓	2683	4045 ↑	3717	227 ↑	0	2260 ↑	2074	9129 ↑	8474

Communication and Information

56. As of 11 June 2019 our social media following is:

- Twitter followers: 7097 (9.4% increase on year)
- Facebook followers: 2167 (53% increase on year)
- Instagram followers: 1346 (33% increase on year)

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



58. The spring edition of Forest Focus was very well received with the usual wide distribution across the Epping Forest area. We are currently awaiting delivery of the summer edition of Forest Focus.

59. New Wanstead Flats signage is being finalised and will soon be installed.

60. Epping Forest has achieved a Trip Advisor Certificate of Excellence via our online profile with Trip Advisor.



You've Earned a Certificate of Excellence

We're pleased to announce that Epping Forest has been recognised with a 2019 Certificate of Excellence, based on the consistently great reviews you've earned on the world's largest travel site.

Only a small percentage of businesses achieve this accolade! [Request your free customised Certificate of Excellence certificate and sticker now](#) – and start telling the world you're highly rated on TripAdvisor.

Appendices

- Appendix 1 – Joint letter from Natural England and CoL **Epping Forest District Local Plan Examination Matter 16 – Policies DM 2 and DM 22**

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