

Committee(s): Public Relations and Economic Development Sub (Policy and Resources) Committee	Date: 19 February 2020
Subject: Epping Forest Events Tender	Public
Report of: Director of Open Spaces	For Information
Report author: Jacqueline Eggleston	

Summary

This report brings to your attention a proposal to invite major event organisers (Local Authorities, organisations and commercial promoters) to tender for up to a three-year commercial contract for the use of land within Epping Forest for the purpose of holding a large-scale event.

Following the consultation and adoption of the overarching Open Spaces Events Policy and site-specific Events Policy for Epping Forest in 2018, Wanstead Flats, Warlies Park and Chingford Plain were identified as locations suitable for large events. It is proposed that a tendering exercise is undertaken to identify potential partner organisations. The potential tenderers will be supplied with an environmental appraisal for each site and draft heads of terms which will indicate the constraints each event venue is subject to.

Under the Open Spaces Events Policy a maximum of three large events per year are permitted across the Forest.

This report seeks to appraise your committee of the potential reputational risks associated with a public tender to invite large scale event proposals for venues in Epping Forest and on the Buffer Land and seek your guidance on how to proceed.

Recommendations

Members are asked to:

Provide observations and guidance to the Epping Forest & Commons Committee on how an open tender process for events may be assessed in the light of reputational risk of and what further measures to assist good public relations may be considered as plans are developed

Main Report

Background

1. A previous report on inviting proposals for one or more major events at Epping Forest was brought to your Committee on 3 December 2019 and Members were asked to comment on the reputational aspects.

2. That report contained information on the powers and duties of the Conservators, Environmental Appraisals for the three proposed sites and details of a previously planned event. This report does not seek to duplicate any of that information which can be referenced via the original report.
3. At your previous meeting your Committee expressed concerns that the information in the report was not sufficient to assess the reputational risks of the tendering or the event itself. Your Committee therefore resolved that a further short report should be brought back providing background information on matters that may pose a reputational risk in inviting event organising companies to tender for a contract for the use of land within Epping Forest for a large-scale event.
4. The Open Spaces Events Policy was adopted in May 2018 after a consultation period. The Events Policy (Part 2) is the detailed divisional policy for Epping Forest which allows for up to three large events per year across the Forest with no more than one large event per year in any one location. A large event is defined as one having an audience greater than 5000 or a greater impact through infrastructure, footprint or duration. In effect this will tend to be events with audiences over 10,000-20,000 over the full event period.
5. During the House of Lords Committee stage of the City of London (Open Spaces) Act 2018 the scale of events was discussed. Your committee may wish to be mindful of the responses made by the City Remembrancer during this discussion. The relevant passages are attached as Appendix A to this report.
6. Subsequent to the approval of the Open Spaces Events Policy an unsolicited proposal was received in the summer of 2018, from a commercial event company, to hold a three-day music concert event, in September 2020, at Wanstead Flats.
7. This proposal was consulted upon at a total of three meetings of the Epping Forest and Commons Committee (EF&CC) and twice at the Epping Forest Consultative Committee. Your committee received a report on the matter at your meeting of 2 July 2019. In addition, the then EF&CC Chairman and officers held two public engagement meetings to discuss the proposals. At the EF&CC meeting of 8 July 2019, it was agreed to licence the use of the land for the event, pending local authority approval of the Premises licence which governs the operation of the event.
8. Following detailed planning the operator made the decision to discontinue with the proposals for the three-day concert.
9. The opportunity remains to invite proposals for alternative events on Wanstead Flats and elsewhere in Epping Forest in accordance with the Events Policy.

Current Position

10. The proposal for a three-day concert was an unsolicited proposal from a commercial operator. This meant that the process for agreeing the proposals was reactive and allowed for public speculation around what the proposals might entail before they had been concluded by the operator.

11. It is proposed that inviting proposals for events as a competitive process would allow greater control of the type and scale of events proposed by sharing the constraints with potential operators at the earliest stage and by making clear the parameters around what may be accepted, prior to inviting proposals.
12. During 2019 two meetings with around 20 representatives of local stakeholders groups were held to engage and inform local residents and interest groups about the proposal for a three-day concert. Along with feedback from the Epping Forest Consultative Committee the main concerns raised during the process were operational regarding sound, egress, litter, antisocial behaviour and damage to the Forest. These concerns have been documented and can be sought to be addressed up front in the tender process.
13. Large events and concerts can be controversial, but experience so far shows that there was a mixture of strong support as well as opposition and that having a full description of an event at an earlier stage would help to minimise inaccurate speculation.
14. In 2019 the London Borough of Waltham Forest was Borough of Culture and in partnership with CoL it undertook a range of events across the Forest venues some of which were in the large event category such as 3000 audience music concert and 5000 audience community event and fireworks. There was no significant adverse comment on these events successfully held on Forest land.

Options

15. To invite proposals for a range of events through a public tender process. This option will allow an early assessment of what events are proposed and to select only those proposals which fit within the criteria, for further negotiation. **This option is recommended.**
16. To invite proposals for a range of events through a public tender process as above. In this option the selection process would limit the events to one in the first year, two in second year and three in third year. This would allow time for events to build incrementally and allow time for testing events gradually. However, it would limit the market and it is likely that event organisers will need to build up their events over a number of years anyway and so the full financial benefit would be delayed by several years. **This option is not recommended.**
17. To continue to react to speculative enquiries from event organisers. This is a reactive process entailing additional public reports which raise speculation and public comment before any detailed planning has taken place. **This option is not recommended.**

Proposals

18. A tender process would invite a range of options for events. No particular type of event will be specified but suggestions could include:
 - Music concert or festival
 - Exhibition / Expo
 - Other festival – e.g. Food Festival

- Arena/display events
- Sporting event

19. The proposals for events will be considered with due regard for best value and can be judged on criteria such as appropriateness to the site, scale and impact on the site and surroundings, and type of the event in accordance with the Open Spaces Events Policy.
20. Events can be categorised according to scale of reputational risk. Whilst large scale concerts will be a higher risk due to noise, traffic and potential impact on the environment causing complaints, a daytime community event or sporting event could cause similar impacts if insufficient safeguards are put in place. Therefore a matrix to assess the reputational risk of event proposals will be used as part of the selection process. Any contentious or non-compliant proposals would be filtered out at the assessment stage.
21. Any firm proposals passing this stage would be subject to scrutiny via the Epping Forest Consultative Committee and your committee with the opportunity to evaluate and influence any partnerships before final decisions are made.
22. During the process of decision making on the event proposal made in 2019 for a large concert, one of the most vocal concerns from environmental groups and the public was the potential impact on the wildlife. Although expert officers had already assessed the environmental risk an external appraisal was commissioned to reassure the public that potential impacts could be mitigated against.
23. In advance of this tender process, environmental appraisals have already been conducted on each of the proposed sites so that event organisers are aware at the outset of constraints and the public can be reassured that these matters have been properly considered.
24. It is proposed that the tender will be for proposals of up to a three-year contract; governed by suitable break clauses. This will allow event organisers sufficient security, time to build the audience for their event and to attract the right level of interest. The duration of each event will not be more than 3.5 days maximum plus set up and break down periods, not expected to be more than 28 days in total.
25. The Open Spaces Events Policy (Parts 1 and 2) and licensing legislation provides a clear requirement for event managers to engage with the appropriate legislative and licensing regimes to ensure events are being run safely and professionally. This includes a statutory notification period and an opportunity to make representations.
26. All events requiring a premises licence will need to apply to the local licensing authority for this licence after permission to use the land has been granted by EF&CC. At this stage full scrutiny will be given to noise, transport and other operational issues. It will be a condition of the licence from City of London that event organisers would undertake public engagement to a more extensive degree than is the statutory requirement.

27. It is envisaged that community concerns can mainly be addressed at the tender stage, however CoL Epping Forest would also undertake community engagement prior to presenting to your committee and final approval by the Epping Forest and Commons Committee.

Corporate & Strategic Implications

28. This proposal supports the Corporate Plan aims to:

- Support a thriving economy
- Shape outstanding environments

29. The proposal supports the Department objective. It will also deliver the Open Spaces Departmental Business Plan top line objectives:

- A. Open spaces and historic sites are thriving and accessible.
- B. Spaces enrich people's lives.
- C. Business practices are responsible and sustainable.

Reputational Implications

30. Members should be aware that any large-scale events are likely to attract significant negative local media coverage, given residents and users are more than likely to be worried about the impact of large crowds on their environment.

31. Members should note that this could lead to high-profile campaigns involving local and national figures, such as we saw with the proposed change of ownership of Hampstead Heath's cafes, and the scheme allowing a private company to manage deer populations in Epping Forest buffer lands.

32. However, negative media coverage and campaigns should not act as a veto, and the Communications Team would have communications plans in place to mitigate risks.

33. Events can also generate positive coverage and bring the work of Open Spaces to new audiences.

Conclusion

34. The City of London's Epping Forest has an agreed events policy allowing for large scale events to take place. A tender process to invite event proposals will help to control the type of the events, provides an equitable process for tenderers and will ensure best value is achieved for the charity.

Appendices

Appendix A – Epping Forest Events Tender Part 2. Parliamentary Considerations (non-public)

Appendix B - Evaluation Criteria

Background Papers:

Application for use of Epping Forest Land at Wanstead Flats for a music concert. SEF 29/19 Epping Forest and Commons Committee 08 07 2019

Open Spaces Events Policy Part 1 – Open Spaces & City Gardens Committee, 16 April 2018.

Epping Forest Events Policy – Part 2 – Epping Forest and Commons Committee, 14 May 2018

Application for major event on Wanstead Flats: consideration of pre-application options -Epping Forest and Commons Committee 10 Sept 2018

Application for major event on Wanstead Flats: further detail for approval – Epping Forest Consultative Committee 10 October 2018

Major Event Wanstead Flats Update – Epping Forest Consultative Committee 13 February 2019

Major Event Wanstead Flats Update Epping Forest and Commons Committee 11 March 2019

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