

Inspiring environmental understanding through first-hand experience



Epping Forest Field Centre Head of Centre's report on activity in 2012



The Centre is managed by FSC for, and on behalf of, the City of London

Purpose of report: To inform the Joint Committee; I recommend that this report be RECEIVED

With **22,140** learner experiences (target exceeded), it was only the ending of the Discovering Epping Forest (DEF) project and the changed location for the 'Santa' event that made 2012 the second best year in the Centre's history and not quite in line with the 2011 record.



Learning for Biodiversity

A project for Londoners and London's biodiversity

This **City Bridge Trust** (CBT) funded project was successfully extended from schools to include informal learning (families and adults). All participants indicated that their experiences had led to a significant increase in understanding of issues affecting London's biodiversity as well as learning in relation to taxonomic and identification skills.

The **HLF** funded 'Discovering Epping Forest' (DEF) project came to an end with the production of the final project report and DVD. The EFFC team had led the three year project, and together with our partner organisations (City of London, EF Centenary Trust and Suntrap) delivered 12,150 learning experiences for KS2 students and training and support for 90 teachers, who would have not otherwise visited Epping Forest.

Activities relating to the pan European project 'Lessons from Nature' were trialled in advance of a planned rollout to 30 schools in 2013.

"It has helped me to realise the potential of using nature to solve future problems"
KS3 Learner



The Centre team currently uses 44 learning sites within and outside of Epping Forest. Providing learning at 'outreach' sites away from the Centre itself continues to take learning closer to the learners offers the potential of reduced travel costs to schools and families. We continue to maintain good links with London Biodiversity Officers and Open Spaces/ Community officers, and are collaborating with them on the potential for the utilization of other sites and other funding sources.



James Bromhead and Tania Oram spent two days in the heart of Epping Forest improving their bush craft survival skills so that they can make improvements to our provision to children, families and adults.



Service user feedback:

>98% of all learners reported a significant increase in understanding of the environment and that their expectations had been met or exceeded.

'An excellent learning experience. Great mixture of kinaesthetic, auditory and visual learning.'

'A totally engaging and inspiring learning experience.'

'Really excellent, Matched the AS specification perfectly and sparked the student's interest in Biodiversity.'

(Visiting teachers)



'Brilliant. Learnt loads and really enjoyed it.'

'Brilliant, far more complexity and comprehensiveness than expected. Lovely people, well timed and organised. Well related to the real world.'

'Friendly and professional instructors. Learnt a lot and would recommend the course.'

(Adult Natural History and Local Interest learners)

'Superb experience for kids.'

'We all have had a great morning. Today has encouraged the children to want to explore the outdoors'

'The kids haven't stopped talking about it. I think they would have stayed!'

(Family learners)



This year we were able to introduce the third formal education module in our **City Bridge Trust (CBT)** funded 'Learning for Biodiversity' project where staff visited the six partner London borough primary schools to work with two classes of Year 5 pupils (aged 10-11 years old) in their school and grounds. The aim was to build on the previous modules and to discover biodiversity present. Pupils took part in a variety of re-cap classroom activities in the morning with a selection of outdoor practical tasks in the afternoon aimed to enhance the biodiversity of their school grounds.

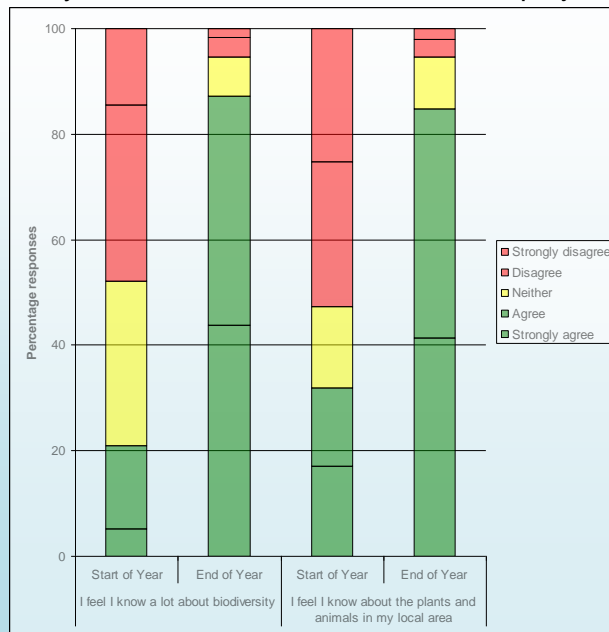
"This was a phenomenal, once in a life time experience."

"I love biodiversity!"

KS2 Learners

"I just had to write and thank you for the amazing work done to our wildlife area, it is absolutely superb, and the children will be so excited. We will make sure we stay on top of it now." Head teacher

This graph shows percentage of pupils responding, on a 5-point scale, how much they feel they know about biodiversity, at both start and end of the CBT project year.



A team from Epping Forest Country Care and their volunteers spent a day in February at the Centre removing plant overgrowth from the two centre ponds and from the reptile mound.

In addition to teachers reacting well to 'Mind the Gap' online resources, we were pleased to have the opportunity to collaborate with EU partner organisations in the Netherlands, Hungary, Bulgaria and Slovakia on this EU funded project. We are exploring possible future collaborations with these partners and our other EU partners from other EU projects including Spain, Latvia and Romania. In May Sarah Etherington and Michelle Savage joined Jonathan Oldham in Astana, Kazakhstan to work with Nazarbayev University.



We are continuing to develop a wide range of UK partners including John Muir, BSA (Crest awards), BES, Country Care and Archimedes (the leading commercial Forest Schools organisation in the UK).

The Associates 2013 Action Plan approved at Associates of Epping Forest Field Centre AGM on 28 November reveals the transformation of the Associates into an active community based organisation and a focal point for volunteering. Special thanks go to former Epping Forest Superintendent, John Besent, who retired as the Associates President. There are currently 723 members of the Associates. In 2012 the Associates transferred £770 to fund activities at the Centre. The Associates of Epping Forest held a plant sale in May to raise money for resources and secured a donation of 54 pairs of wellingtons from Shoezone and Stead and Simpson. Wellingtons are vital for students visiting the centre who cannot afford to buy boots for a one day fieldtrip.

Tutor Dr Laurence Jarvis delivered a talk on his PhD research (ecology of juvenile Great Crested Newts) to the British Herpetological Society in December following on from his participation at 'Aquatics Live' in Brighton in November.

Income and expenditure:

The 2012 Plan had made reference to the need to respond to a potential operating deficit that could have occurred with rising basic costs and reduced DEF and City of London income. As indicated previously to the JCC, the initial response included the making the administrator post of redundant, not replacing a Trainee Tutor and not reverting a 0.4 FTE Tutor post to full time. A further cut to staffing costs (with an eye on the 2014 salary budget) was then made in the summer of 2012 when tutor, Christian Kiel, left and was not replaced. (This had been possible with the reduction of 25 DEF group/days in the Autumn compared to previous years and because, after a good period of staff retention) the remainder of the teaching team were sufficiently capable of covering some additional teaching across all levels and subjects.

Grant income for 2012 was better than had been forecast in October 2011 with some EU project work coming in 2012 rather than 2011 as previously anticipated together with some additional FSC Kids Fund bursary income.

The combination of the significant reduction in salary costs in 2012 (compared to 2011) and better than forecast grant income produced a significantly healthier financial out turn than had been anticipated at the time of budgeting.

Account Heading	Code	2012 Budget	2012 Actual
Teaching	173	£288,800	£280,651
Grants, sponsors / restricted funds	192 / 194	£30,303	£43,645
Other (sales, hire, rent, professional services / internal sales, grant aid)	180/ 181 / 185/ 186 / 191 / 171 / 193/ 197 / 184	£23,000	£22,178
Investment fund	212	£2,340	£2,534
Sub total		£344,443	£349,008
City of London Corporation Funding		£54,217	£54,217
TOTAL EFFC Income		£398,660	£403,225
Salaries	270	£302,595	£278,989
Training	281	£1,000	£490
Heat & light	280	£13,750	£12,869
Insurance	285	£8,000	£8,414
Transport	290-297	£4,500	£2,974
Library & equipment	311 / 312	£3,400	£3,165
Food	321	£3,100	£3,252
Cleaning	322	£950	£1,657
Uniform	384	£250	£231
Premises / furniture/ estate	331 / 332 / 325	£2,550	£2,333
Admin	340 - 355	£10,800	£9,267
Rates/water	372-5	£7,460	£7,116
Depreciation	394 / 410 / 411	£50	£953
Gross EFFC Operating Expenditure		£358,405	£331,710
FSC Central Costs at 14% of budget (includes auditing, HR, H&S, marketing and promotion)		£50,177	£50,177
Total Operating Expenditure		£408,582	£381,887
Operating Surplus / Deficit		£-9,922	£21,338

2012 data with past year comparisons	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Total income	310,679	334,950	380,843	421,165	403,225
CoL contribution	59,655	60,113	60,113	58,988	54,217
Salaries costs	217,835	235,881	252,295	295,092	278,989
FSC HO costs (agreed at 14% of budgeted expenditure)	40,324	43,242	43,074	49,762	50,177
Total operating expenditure	314,691	332,689	350,745	394,892	381,887
Visitor numbers	18,871	19,694	22,204	23,241	22,140
Surplus	-4,012	2,261	30,098	26,273	21,338
FSC HO costs as % total expenditure	13%	13%	12%	13%	13%
CoL contribution per visitor #	3.16	3.05	2.71	2.54	2.45
CoL contribution # as % of total income	19%	18%	16%	14%	13%
Total income per visitor	16.46	17.01	17.15	18.12	18.21
Salaries costs per visitor	11.54	11.98	11.36	12.70	12.60
Total expenditure per visitor	16.68	16.89	15.80	16.99	17.25

The City of London contribution excludes maintenance costs and/or figure in respect of the valuation of the provision of buildings. The figure shown represents the actual payment for the calendar year of 2012.



Publicity

Improvements have been made to existing publicity material, newsletters and the use of social media. Facebook now has 77 more 'likes' than 2011, and twitter has 240 more followers.

Facebook photo galleries have proved popular including October's 'Fungi of the day' feature, so we have recently set up a flickr group to enable more people to share their photos with us.

Volunteers remain extremely important to us in supporting our work and we are most grateful to them

"It's great working in an outdoor environment as part of a friendly team that always make me feel valued."
Michele Gannon, volunteer



In 2012 EFFC was one of the sample learning locations for the successful re-accreditation of FSC for the Investors In People award.



Past and present staff, volunteers and Associates celebrated **Steve's 20th Anniversary** as Head of EFFC with a surprise party in April and marked the occasion with the planting of a commemorative Yew tree.

Steve Bunce, Head of Centre

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