

Committee(s):	Date(s):	Item no.
Epping Forest and Commons	14 May 2012	
Subject: Update on Volunteering in Epping Forest 2011		Public
Report of: Superintendent of Epping Forest SEF 14/12		For Information
<u>Summary</u>		
<p>There were 214 people volunteering in 234 roles for Epping Forest at the end of December 2011. Sixteen of our volunteers fulfil more than one of the 30 available roles. A further 145 people have participated in the mass volunteering days.</p> <p>For the City of London volunteers, there has been a 4.7% increase in hours from 8,157 in 2010 to 8,543 in 2011.</p> <p>This report informs your Committee with regard to progress with the implementation of the Epping Forest Volunteer Policy adopted by your Committee on 8 March 2010.</p> <p>A total of 19,536 hours of volunteer activity were donated during 2011, including 8,543 hours from volunteers managed by the City of London; 6,415 hours by the Epping Forest Centenary Trust and 4,578 hours by the Epping Forest Conservation Volunteers. A further 720 hours of work was provided by the Youth Reparation Service.</p> <p>The volunteer recruitment target for 2011 was to fill 27 roles. The total number of volunteers actually recruited was 36 exceeding the target by 9 volunteers, which is a 15% increase on 2010.</p> <p>.The Volunteer Party in January 2012 was a great success and was held in the newly refurbished Butlers Retreat. Five Gold, 19 Silver and six Bronze medals were awarded.</p> <p>For the first time, a long serving volunteer, Alan Sibley became a Freeman of the City of London. Last year he was awarded a gold medal for completing 489 hours during 2011.</p> <p>Epping Forest has worked co-operatively with external volunteer providers Orange RockCorps and 'The Challenge Network' for the first time on a joint project where young people have been involved in vegetation clearance work.</p> <p>Recommendations</p> <p>I recommend that Members note the content of this report and in particular the wide ranging activities undertaken by volunteers over the last year.</p>		

Main Report

Background

1. Many volunteers seek to support the work of the Conservators as a way of caring for a public Open Space, which plays an important role in their lives. Others volunteer to support specific activities that the Forest promotes; the natural and heritage conservation value of the Forest or as a way of contributing to the community in which they live. Volunteering can also provide new experiences, the opportunity to gain new skills; meet new people or secure experience to facilitate change.
2. Epping Forest has a long tradition of volunteer involvement which stretches all the way back to campaigns to secure the Forest for public benefit.
3. Volunteering contributes significantly to the sustainable management of Epping Forest.
4. At present, there are 214 volunteers in 234 roles at Epping Forest, such as Fishing Bailiff, Information Assistant, Litter Picker, Tree Warden, Visitor Surveyor and Lakes and Ponds Volunteer.
5. The expansion of volunteering is a key element of your Committee's Volunteer Policy and the five year **Branching Out** project, which acts as a catalyst for increasing the number of volunteers engaged across Epping Forest, and integrating them in a more coordinated way.
6. Through better coordination of our voluntary activities and working relationships with partners, **our volunteer programme aims to:**
 - 6.1 inspire people to volunteer for Epping Forest by creating new roles for, and actively recruiting, volunteers, in accordance with the division's objectives;
 - 6.2 use volunteering as an opportunity to reach out to hard-to-reach communities and promote access to the Forest;
 - 6.3 pursue partnership and funding opportunities to ensure the sustainability of our work; and
 - 6.4 ensure that volunteers across the organisation have an excellent volunteering experience.

Current Position

7. The following are some of the volunteering highlights of the year. Unless otherwise stated, figures in this report are based on data collected for the calendar year 2011 (January to December).
8. The Epping Forest division recruited people to **36 new volunteer roles**, which is an increase of 19.5% on 2010.

9. The volunteers directly managed by the City of London (at Epping Forest and the London Metropolitan Archives) have completed **8,543 volunteer hours**, which is an increase of 4.7% on 2010.
10. The Epping Forest Centenary Trust (EFCT) completed 6,415 volunteer hours in 2011 and the Epping Forest Conservation Volunteers (EFCV) 4,578 hours. The Trust's hours were down on last year, due to an Officer injury and cancellation of tasks during the unseasonably bad weather in the early part of 2011.
11. In 2011, Epping Forest ran an event with **Orange RockCorps** for the first time. Orange RockCorps is a charity that encourages young people to give their time to others and in return they can earn themselves a ticket to a concert organised by Orange RockCorps. Over 30 teenagers cut back burnt gorse on Leyton Flats, with the assistance of arborist staff who chipped and removed the Gorse.
12. The Community Liaison Officer and Volunteer Development (VDO) set up Epping Forest's first project with The Challenge Network, a charity that empowers young people to work within their community. Last year they helped clear hawthorn and blackthorn as part of Project Nightingale. The task was run over two days where 80 young people aged 15 to 16 came and helped.
13. The VDO continues working with the **Youth Reparation Service** around Hollow Ponds. This year the group have expanded their work programme to include other areas of the Forest and working with the community. 24 work days were completed in 2011, with an average of 12 young offenders attending each work day for two and a half hours, completing 720 hours. These figures are not included in the volunteer hours, as it is compulsory for them to participate.
14. In 2011 the annual Scout Project was organised by the VDO in conjunction with the EFCT. The Scouts undertook a total of four projects consisting of two conservation tasks, clearing Silver Birch and Gorse. One pond task, clearing Phragmites from Bulrush Pond and a construction task. The construction task was to weave Willow Spilling in front of previously installed geotextile revetments at the Eagle Pond to naturalise and stabilise the revetment. The events were a great success and enjoyed by all involved.
15. The Lakes and Ponds Task Force continue with the improvements to Hollow Pond, Eagle Pond and Connaught Water, creating new disabled angling swims and planting marginal and aquatic plants.
16. The **Volunteer Awards Party** in January 2011 in the newly refurbished Butler's Retreat was a great success. Five gold (for 600 hours), 19 silver (300 hours) and six bronze medals (150 hours) were awarded. The event was photographed by Volunteer Photographer, Bob Good.

17. Volunteer, Alan Sibley, has been a Volunteer Fishing Bailiff on the Forest for more than 10 years. Last year he became a **Freeman of the City** in recognition of over 10,000 hours of service.
18. The training of Volunteers and staff has continued, with both staff and volunteers receiving joint training in First Aid, Visitor Surveys, Leading Health Walks and the Safe Use of Brush Cutters.

Plans for 2012

19. The recruitment target for Branching Out for 2012 rises from 27 to 35 volunteer roles.
20. Additional training for volunteers in 2012 will include Working with Willow, Chainsaw Operation and Sustainable Woodland Management.
21. The VDO plans to continue working with Orange RockCorps and the Scouts to involve young people in further tasks in the Forest.
22. The VDO will be working closely with Visitor Services in 2012 to help organise a recruitment campaign for volunteers to assist in the operation of all three Visitor Centres including the new Visitor Centre at the Coach House, Chingford.
23. Volunteers will be constructing fishing platforms and planting marginal and aquatic plants at Connaught Water. A full risk assessment is being made of plans to construct a major boardwalk across one corner of the reservoir.
24. Six Community events have been planned between March and July 2012, which will include the **Youth Reparation Service**.
25. The VDO will be expanding activity in the south of the Forest by working more closely with groups such as the Wanstead Parklands Community Group and The Lake House Lake Project.

Corporate & Strategic Implications

26. Volunteering and community involvement are included in the Open Spaces Business Plan 2010 – 2013 Strategic Aims to Celebrate a sense of place by involving local communities in the care and management of our sites, With objectives of encouraging use of the Opens Spaces by underrepresented groups and developing volunteering opportunities at all sites. The City of London Corporation as Conservators of Epping Forest hold the land in trust for the recreation and enjoyment of the public.
27. The proposals meet *The City Together Strategy: the Heart of a World Class City 2008-14* vision of a *World Class City* and, specifically, theme 1 of its 5 themes ‘a World Class City which is competitive and promotes opportunity; theme 2 ‘a World Class City which supports our communities’; theme 3 ‘‘a World Class City which protects, promotes and

enhances our environment'; and theme 4 'a World Class City which is vibrant and culturally rich'.

28. By promoting volunteering to a more diverse audience and reaching out to specific communities, we are increasing access to our activities in the Forest. This helps meet the Epping Forest Management Plan 2004-2010 objective to improve accessibility to education and enjoyment. Volunteering contributes to two more Management Plan objectives - to enhance the diversity of wildlife habitats and improve recreational activities.

Financial Implications

29. Training will be required for new and existing volunteers, together with induction courses for approximately 35% of the volunteers.
30. The costs for 2011/12 have been and will be met in 2012/13 from the Branching Out budget.

Table 1: Volunteer cash flow

2011/12	2011/12 Projected spend (£)	2011/12Actual spend (£)	2012/13 Projected spend (£)
Design, print & postage	2,000	1,880	2,000
Tools & Equip + PPE	3,500	6,997	6,500
Induction	1,500	1,000	1,000
Travel and Expenses	3,000	1,705	2,000
Awards event	0	1000	1,200
Uniform + ID badges	2,000	0	1,500
Training	3,000	1,665	2,300
Total	15,000	14,247	16,500

31. The budget is under spent by £753, in main due to only four volunteers claiming travel and expenses. Spend on additional equipment is balanced by savings elsewhere such as uniform.
32. The total budget for 2012/13 is £16,500, as anticipated in the Volunteering in Epping Forest report approved by Committee in January 2010. Due to the success in recruiting volunteers to date, volunteer numbers are likely to

rise considerably over the next year so a decrease in the volunteer budget would not be wise.

Table 2: Match funding calculated from volunteer hours.

33. The match funding provided by calculating volunteer hours as the equivalent of cash (£50-£350 per day depending on experience) is exceeding targets.

Quarter	Volunteer hours
January to March 2011	£11,271.88
April to June 2011	£11,021.88
July to September 2011	£21,707.50
October to December 2011	£18,420.00
Total	£62,421.26

Legal Implications

34. All Volunteers at Epping Forest are fully covered by the City of London's Employers Liability Policy which exceeds the requirements of the Employers Liability (Compulsory Insurance) Act 1969.

Conclusion

35. A total of 36 volunteers roles were recruited to in the period January to December 2011. This is an increase of 19.5% on 2010 and there has been a 4.7% increase in volunteer hours from 8,157 in 2010 to 8,543 in 2011.
36. For a relatively small budget, the volunteers have contributed time equivalent to approximately five full time staff.

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