

Inspiring environmental understanding through first-hand experience



Epping Forest Field Centre

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



Head of Centre’s report on progress in 2013

Purpose of report:


The purpose of this report is to inform the Joint Committee on progress at the Epping Forest Field Centre in 2013 in advance of the more detailed report on 2013 that will come to the Committee in the spring of 2014.




I recommend that the report be RECEIVED.

Overview:

The Committee was informed in April that staff turnover arising from the departures of our Team Leaders and one of our tutors had created an opportunity to make further cuts to staff costs. By appointing at the bottom of the teaching scale we had addressed the projected budget deficit that had been shown in the estimates presented to the Committee in October 2012.

However the Committee may also recall that I referred to significant challenges in delivering KPIs alongside ambitious project work that would arise from these changes. In the summer term staff made huge (unsustainable) efforts to try and address these challenges. Things linked to securing future income streams and things linked to the pursuit of excellence are inevitably behind where we would like them to be. The delivery of the Lessons from Nature Project was adversely affected (but hopefully not seriously) with the loss of both members of the Project team. The impacts of these things will not be known for some time and can be mitigated with what should now be a more manageable workload in the short and medium term. However I think the Committee will be very pleased to note that we have managed to avoid any significant service issues and that we are broadly on track to deliver the 2013 Plan.

2013 KPIs: Criteria	Targets	Performance at end of August
Learner experiences	22,000	On target at end of August .
Volunteer days	500	The number of volunteer days will be below this target, reflecting reduced staff time to advertise, recruit, train and manage. We are working with fewer volunteers but ensuring that their efforts are of highest quality and well targeted to maintain or exceed the overall level of effectiveness that we anticipated.
	Maintain standards for IIP. [Externally assessed in 2012].	Standards are being maintained with continuous improvement where feasible and appropriate. EFFC procedures adjusted for changes in relation to Disclosure &

		Barring arrangements in accordance with FSC guidance.
	Exceed the standard for the Quality Badge in external assessment	 Assessed on 22 & 23 April by Heads of other FSC Centres under new FSC arrangements agreed with the Council for Learning Outside of the Classroom. Re-accredited having exceeded the standard.
	Achieve Safety Shield Gold	 Externally assessed by Northgate Arinso on 7 August 2013 achieving a score of 100%.
Meet or exceed service user expectations	> 90% of service users to record 'yes' on feedback forms	On target
Increase environmental understanding of service users	> 90% of customers to record 'yes' on feedback forms	On target

Events

Since the Committee's last meeting we have delivered a range of well-received 'Forest Families' activities, eco-activities for children and leisure learning and professional courses for adults alongside our normal schools provision.

Our most notable events included an informal Open Day for families on 25 July and a walk for FSC Life Members on 7 September that was linked to plans to recognise the FSC's 70th anniversary.

Facilities

The Facilities remain well-maintained with the benefit of very much appreciated bathroom and toilet refurbishment and some redecoration linked to the 20 year maintenance plan. Welcome things arising from this investment are:

- Full refurbishment of the boys and girls toilets to a very high standard that should please our learners
- Improvements to bathrooms of residents that are very much appreciated by me and other residents
- Installation of light tubes in the staff toilets providing very welcome natural lighting and contributing to and energy/CO2/cost reductions and to positive perceptions of CoL/FSC/EFFC commitments to continuous improvement of environmental impacts.



In relation to the recommended actions arising from the Fire Risk Assessment that took place in 2012 (as previously reported to the JCC in October 2012 and April 2013) I understand that the recommended works are currently out for quotations under the City's new procurement procedures. The City Officer now responsible for procuring this work confirmed this to me on a site visit to EFFC on 25 September indicating that he would endeavour to expedite the completion of the works.

Projects

At the time of preparing this report we are coming to the end of the work associated with the EU funded Lessons from Nature Project and will soon be building on its legacy. It is my intention to report more fully on this Project to the Committee in the spring of 2014 in relation to the aspiration in the 2011-2014 EFFC Plan to make Lessons from Nature a major part of the learning provision of the Centre. In the interim I would invite the Committee to look at the Lessons from Nature Project Brochure that is attached as an appendix to this report.

The City Bridge Trust funded Learning for Biodiversity project was delivered in the academic years 2011 to 2013. A total of 1,080 pupils (3,240 learning experiences) from 6 London schools undertook three learning modules to develop their knowledge and understanding of biodiversity in Epping Forest, local parks and school grounds. Delivery of informal Family drop in sessions and Adult courses also took place in learning sites in London. The Learning for Biodiversity project was an innovative programme involving development and delivery of unique learning resources. In addition to the inspiration and learning provided, the project leaves a legacy of biodiversity resources, enhanced capacity for the delivery of learning experiences in Epping Forest and outreach sites and improved networking and collaboration.

