

Committee(s): <b>Epping Forest and Commons</b>	Date(s): <b>May 2014</b>
Subject: <b>Epping Forest Gateway Design</b>	<b>Public</b>
Report of: <b>Superintendent of Epping Forest</b>	<b>For Decision</b>
<b><u>Summary</u></b>	
<p>The design and build of Epping Forest Gateways and associated standardisation of furniture such as signage and benches is part of the Branching Out project. It has been informed by the new graphic designs for Open Spaces.</p> <p>Design options are appended for consideration. We are seeking approval of a design concept and materials, which would then be worked up with detailed drawings for the gateways, signage and Forest furniture.</p> <p>The budget for design and build of a series of Gateways and furniture is £250,000. The exact allocation will depend on the chosen design and materials. The intention is to install signage within the Branching Out contract by the end of November 2014.</p>	
<b>Recommendation</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I recommend that the design approach be approved in order for officers to request the contractor to prepare detailed designs.</li> <li>• That the decision on the final design be delegated to the Chairman and Deputy Chairman of the Epping Forest and Commons Committee</li> </ul>	

## **Main Report**

### **Background**

1. Threshold or gateway signage provides a strong sense of passing into a special place and will reinforce recent reductions in traffic speeds realised through the Epping Forest Transport Strategy.
2. One objective of the Branching Out project is the creation of 20 gateways to the Forest and 12 interpretive panels. The exact number of gateways and signs will be modified according to the final design, location requirements and budgets, subject to agreement with Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF).
3. Codsteaks Limited, the company which designed the exhibition at The View visitor centre, has been commissioned to design and build gateways and signage. This includes extending the concept to existing and future items of Forest furniture, such as benches and posts.
4. The schedule for the Gateway project was amended so that it could be informed by the Open Spaces identity exercise, which has provided a standard series of title stacks with the name of each Open Space next to the City of London crest. This has placed additional constraints on the detailed design brief that CodSteaks are already working to.

## Options

5. A series of options have been considered for the Gateway design; a hierarchy of roadside gateways, car park entrances, orientation panels and finger posts is illustrated in Appendix 1 of this report.
6. **Option 1 (rejected):** Initially, a cattle brand symbol was chosen to signify the long history of grazing on the Forest and the part it plays in conserving the landscape. The composite construction was necessary to allow gateways along the highway to crumple if hit by a vehicle. The approach was considered unsatisfactory with some opposition to the design concept as well as the planked effect of the timber panels.
7. **Option 2 (rejected):** The timber boarded design was redesigned with a window onto the Forest framing the outline of various creatures. However, the window was considered to waste the most visible space on the panel, where the name Epping Forest should sit, and be unnecessary given views of the Forest all around. The combination of materials required to manufacture it would be relatively expensive.
8. **Option 3:** this design approach is for a simple, powder-coated steel sign in any colour with either a flat or pediment top. The latter may fit better with the existing black 'Palladian' signage, as it will take time to replace all existing signage with the new design. The bright green signage illustrated fits well with the bright colours of the Open Spaces graphic design. The text and images would either be applied as direct print or a vitreous enamel finish. Interpretive signage could be treated in the same way and/or with traditional paper poster inserts.
9. **Option 4:** is the same as Option 3 with the addition of a creature motif on the side of the sign or printed onto it. The stylised woodpecker was drawn by Evolve as part of the Open Spaces identity commission and has been used in the Epping Forest events diary. While the woodpecker uses a variety of habitats and fits well with the wood pasture landscape, another symbol or a range of symbols could be used. At the initial briefing stage, plant and animal motifs were avoided as they are widely used by other Open Spaces. However, the metal sign and stylised approach make the Epping Forest proposal distinct from designs used elsewhere.
10. **Option 5:** is more three dimensional, enhancing the idea of a gateway, window or doorway to Epping Forest and Open Spaces. This would have either a border in another plane or a partially cut out panel bent away from the frame.
11. For Options 4 and 5, the Registered Charity text has been removed as it is too small to be read from a passing vehicle.
12. The CodSteaks brief includes a series of conditions and constraints, such as the need for the installations to conform to highways guidance and be suitably weather proof.

## Proposals

13. Options 3-5 have the advantage of being simple and striking. They would also be relatively cost effective to manufacture and install,

meaning that we could produce more signage for the budget. Option 4 with the creature motif fits well with the Open Spaces identity project and is a memorable feature symbolising the natural environment with charm. The choice would then be whether to have a framed, multi-plane approach as per Option 5. We would therefore advise the committee to express a preference for either Option 4 or 5 to indicate the future design direction.

14. Following the Committee decision on 12 May 2014, the aim is for final designs to be agreed by 13 June, with construction drawings by mid July. Manufacture and installation would be completed by the end of September. The intention is for CodSteaks to oversee installation by our own staff/contractors. If we wanted to build and evaluate a prototype, the schedule would need a further eight weeks, with any resulting modifications.
15. It is recommended that the authority for the final decision be delegated to the Chairman and Deputy of the Epping Forest and Commons Committee to prevent further delay and potential failure to complete the gateways elements of the Branching Out project by October 2014.
16. Applications for required consents with local authority highways and planning departments and Natural England would be made in May.
17. The setting of the gateways will be kept clear of scrub to enhance their impact, as part of the cyclical maintenance programme.

### **Corporate & Strategic Implications**

18. Volunteering and community involvement are included in the *Open Spaces Business Plan 2013-2016*. The proposals address *The City Together Strategy: The Heart of a World Class City 2008-2014*.
19. A communications campaign preparing Forest users for the new signage would commence following initial consultation with local authorities and statutory bodies.
20. The public relations office will be consulted on the Gateway designs as they are updated.
21. The new gateways will replace the principal black Palladian signs. Further signage in the form of temporary signage, waymarkers, interpretation panels and notices is the responsibility of the Epping Forest division of the Open Spaces department.
22. The gateway and signage project meets the City Together vision of a World Class City and, specifically, its themes for 'A world class City that protects, promotes and enhances our environment and is vibrant and culturally rich'.

### **Implications**

23. **Financial:** The Gateways signage is part of the Branching Out project, which receives funding from HLF of 74.37% of total spend at Stage 3. The remaining 25.63% of the total Stage 3 budget of £6,395,314 has been met by grants from our partners and the Local Risk budget.

24. The CodSteaks Limited contract for £250,000 encompasses the design, manufacture and supply of Gateways and Forest furniture. The procurement process was approved by your committee as part of the *Progress Report – Branching Out (Heritage Lottery Project) update Number 9* on 8 July 2013.
25. The gateways and signage will require clearance of vegetation around them, cleaning and repair of damage/vandalism as part of the cyclical maintenance programme. This would be covered by the Local Risk budget.
26. **Property:** There are various signs being proposed and aimed at longevity with minimal maintenance. Those replacing the principal 'Palladian' signs, which are the permanent corporate entrance signs and map boards will be maintained from the City Surveyors budget. The further signs contemplated will be maintained locally by the Open Spaces Department - Epping Forest division.

### **Conclusion**

27. We are seeking approval of an outline design option, in order for us to request more detailed designs and develop the design across Forest furniture. We will then be in a position to seek planning, highways and conservation consent, inform the public and start manufacture and installation.
28. Option 4 or 5 is preferred. Should one of these be chosen, CodSteaks and officers will agree further iterations of the design to determine whether to have single/multiple motif(s) inside or outside the panel, the colour and height of the panels, whether the top should be a pediment or horizontal and improved solutions for Forest furniture and signage.
29. It is proposed that the final designs be approved by the Chairman and Deputy of the Epping Forest and Commons Committee; they may differ from the options in Appendix 1 to some extent.

### **Appendix 1**                      Gateway Design proposals

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# Appendix 1

# Gateway Design proposals

## Option 1 – cattle brand on timber backing



## Option 2 – window to the Forest with silhouetted/outlined creature

