

Committee(s):	Date(s):
Epping Forest & Commons	9 November 2015
Subject: Superintendent's Update for August and September 2015	Public
Report of: Superintendent of Epping Forest SEF 46/15	For Information
Summary	
<p>This purpose of this report is to summarise the Epping Forest Division's activities across August and September 2015.</p> <p>Of particular note was the formal opening of the successfully planted Gifford's Wood by the former Lord Mayor Sir Roger Gifford; the completion of the Management Plan Pre-consultation activity; re-notification of Wayleave charges throughout the Department and significant planning engagement around the development control and strategic planning.</p>	
Recommendation	
Members are asked to note this report.	

Staff

1. The revised post of **Grazing & Landscape Projects Officer**, replacing the previous Estates Management Officer role, commenced work on 1st September 2015.
2. The **Senior Conservation Officer** – Grasslands, replacing the previous role of Grasslands Team Leader, started work on 21st September.

Volunteering

3. August and September 2015 saw 1311 and 1410 volunteer hours recorded across the Forest – this is down by about 17% on the same time last year, but as many volunteers provide their data in long arrears the numbers are likely to be more similar than this indicates.

Major Projects

Baldwins and Birch Hall Park Ponds.

4. Scoping Reports are now complete for both ponds and a further Gateway 3 Report will be brought before Committee in the New Year. This work will cross reference with the completion of the Conservation Statement for Birch Hall Park (see item 26).

EG Land Registration Project

5. Chambers have been instructed regarding further advice on the specific examples included within the original Queen's Counsel's brief.

Grazing Expansion Scheme.

6. Dr. Peter Dennis completed two further days of Grazing audit site visits on 19th and 20th October.
7. GPS collar locators on selected cattle are generating "heat maps" covering the Grazing Programme sites grazed during September and October.
8. 12th September saw a successful "Meet the Cattle" walk.
9. The Head of Conservation has been interviewed for a Best Practice document to be published by the Landscape Institute on Conservation Grazing.

Wanstead Park – Conceptual Options and Cost Plan.

10. Work is continuing on the development of costings for the existing management of the Park and the likely additional costs of maintaining any restored heritage features.

Heronry Pond Concrete Repairs

11. Pond levels have not been sufficiently reduced to enable repairs to damaged concrete lining slabs.

Consultations

Iron Age Hill Fort survey

12. This survey asked our visitors what they knew and felt to be important about the Scheduled Ancient Monuments (SAMs) of Loughton Camp and Ambresbury Banks. The survey was completed both in online form using the Forest's Inovem Inclusionware™ format and with the help of volunteers surveying visitors in the Forest with a total of 298 responses being received.
13. The results tell us that visitors are drawn to these the SAMs because they were both quiet and tranquil places, as well as being particularly characteristic of the Forest. The vast majority of respondents (73%) said that management of the historic environment across the whole Forest was important. Visitors rated the earthworks, habitat and wildlife, and potential buried archaeology as the most important features on these Iron Age hill fort sites.
14. The majority of respondents told us that the management of the historic environment and ecological habitats are equally important (62% for Ambresbury and 64% for Loughton). Conversely, nearly a fifth that the management of heritage features should take precedence, and the final fifth said management of the natural habitats should take precedence.
15. The survey also explored possible future management if objectives of the clearance of trees covering the hill forts were to be followed. The majority of respondents (45%) chose to gradually reveal the heritage features over a period of 50-100 years, compared to 25% who chose a period of 10-20

years. Some 10% chose the option to quickly reveal the site, while 21% who said heritage features should not take precedence.

16. This consultation has provided valuable information about what matters to our visitors about these two sites and gives us an indication of how they would like us to manage them. The next step is to present the proposed Conservation Management Plans for these two sites to your Committee, and then seek formal consent from Natural England and Historic England accordingly.

Epping Forest – The next 10 years

17. The three month Management Plan pre-consultation exercise initially between 25th June and 4th October was completed on 20th October, with distribution to over 1,600 data subjects, together with public promotion at 12 local events. Requests were received to extend the duration of the consultation, to permit more time for major stakeholders, such as London Borough of Redbridge to consult internally with colleagues across their differing departments. An extension of 2 weeks was agreed extending the consultation to the 20th October 2015.
18. 1,302 users are registered on the Inclusionware system and 432 have provided electronic responses to the consultation. Four submissions were received in hard copy and we received seven responses from stakeholder groups including Natural England; Historic England; the Friends of Epping Forest and neighbouring local authorities or councils.

Forest Services

Licences

19. A total of 36 licences were issued during the two months being reported, which yielded an income of £26,488 plus VAT. 28 licences were issued during the same period in 2014. £17,388 of income came from just one licence for compounds and storage for Thames Water.

Fly tipping

20. Fly tips for the first seven months of the year totalled 532 (1.95/day), compared to 363 (1.3/day) for the equivalent period in 2014. This represents a 46.5% increase on the number of fly tips for the previous year. Fly tips of builders rubbish make up the majority of the waste fly tipped which is heavy in weight and requires more trips to the tip for disposal.

Rough Sleepers

21. Enforcement action on illegal camps has now dropped compared to last year. To date this year there have been 29 camps cleared with 42 in the same period last year, a drop of 31%.

Enforcement Activity

22. Three court cases were heard during the period under report, Roosters Piri Piri restaurant were convicted under Section 33 (a) of the Environmental

Protection Act (EPA) at Thames Magistrates Court. They were fined £2000, with costs of £405 and a victim surcharge of £120.

23. Mr Shakeel Ahmed was summoned to appear before Chelmsford Magistrates for a breach of the EPA section 33 (a) but failed to appear, a warrant was issued for his arrest without bail.
24. Mr Shiraz Liaqat was summoned to appear before Chelmsford Magistrates for a breach of the EPA section 33 (a), he was fined £180, with £405 costs, New court fees of £180 and victim surcharge £20.

Heritage; Landscape and Nature Conservation

Basic Payment Scheme (BPS)

25. The Rural Payments Agency (RPA) have reported that the Euro:Pound exchange rate that will be used to calculate sterling payments for the Basic Payment Scheme (BPS) will be €1 = £0.731. This is 6% down from €1 = £0.777 in 2014, and is the lowest exchange rate since 2007. The expected income cannot be estimated at this point as the BPS entitlement payment rate has yet to be released by the UK government, and from the income a portion is deducted to fund the Rural Development Programme for England which includes HLS. However, Farmers Weekly (2nd October 2015) are reporting incomes could be around 12% down in total.

Birch Hall Park Conservation Statement

26. The Heritage Estate team in City Surveyor's tendered for the preparation of a conservation statement for this site (also known as the Deer Sanctuary). Only one tender was returned, and was awarded to Place Services, a consultancy arm of Essex County Council. The Conservation Statement is due to be produced in late January 2016.

SAC Conservation Status and SSSI Favourable condition – liaison with Natural England

27. Epping Forest Staff attended a very valuable Special Area of Conservation (SAC) workshop organised by staff at Burnham Beeches and Chaired by Deputy Michael Wellbank.

Town and Country Planning

28. The Head of Conservation attended five meetings with Epping Forest District Council Officers and colleagues from neighbouring authorities- on 15th September, 18th September, 13th October (glasshouse expansion), 15th October (Local Plan consultation meeting), and 16th October (Duty-to-Co-operate meeting).
29. LBWF – An objection was lodged for the 'Rising Sun Lounge' bar and nightclub, at 20 Woodford New Road London E17 regarding proposals for ground and first floor extensions.
30. EFDC - An objection was lodged for a replacement dwelling at 26 Piercing Hill, Theydon Bois.
31. EFDC – The former Sixteen String Jack P.H, Theydon Bois – saw an application for 11 flats refused at Sub-Committee level but was passed to

District Development Management Committee on 4th November for decision. Meanwhile, a Planning Appeal for the earlier rejected appeal for 13 flats will have an informal hearing on 5th November.

32. LBWF - An objection was lodged for the conversion of St Margaret's Woodford Green to four separate dwellings, which relies on the same crossover access as 8 dwellings, Haven House and Woodford Rugby Club.
33. EFDC – 89 High Road, Loughton. The demolition of one house and replacement with ten 1 bedroom flats was granted on appeal.
34. EFDC – Knolly's Nursery. The Area Planning Sub-Committee approval for 79 residential units and children's day nursery was passed to the District Development Management Committee on 4th November for decision.

Land Management

35. The Wayleave support officer has now completed checks on 277 Motorgates checked for correct data and council tax information.
36. A letter to all 811 Handgates & 277 Motorgates account holders detailing proposed changes was sent at the end of August.
37. Research has also revealed a total of 30 commercial wayleave accounts for valuation advice.

Operations

38. The arborist teams have been carrying out Wood pasture creation work at:
 - Gilberts Slade, Walthamstow Forest, Barn Hoppit, Ambresbury, Deershelter Plain and the Pillow Mounds.
 - Timber extraction of last year's wood pasture felled timber is ongoing with all of the southern wood pasture areas cleared.
 - Flailing of each team responsible areas of previously created wood pasture is ongoing.
 - A trial of fire break cutting and wood pasture clearance using a tracked mulcher at Leyton Flats and Gilberts Slade was undertaken in August for one week and proved to be very effective and efficient and caused no damage to the ground due to it only having 4 psi ground pressure. Consideration is being given to hiring the mulcher again at the end of January / February 2016.
 - Hazardous Tree safety work in areas A and B and Loughton Golf Course is ongoing and being alternated between the reactive teams.
 - Road side vegetation surveying of the southern areas of the forest has been completed. The next step is to put the information onto the Roadside vegetation data base with maps for areas that will need work.

Visitor Services

Events

39. Giffords Wood was officially opened by the late Lord Mayor, Sir Roger Gifford, at a well-attended event on the 24th September 2015.
40. Summer holiday family-orientated events at Queen Elizabeth's Hunting Lodge included a two day event, entitled '1589 and All That', attended by about 500 people, over 20th and 21st August, with a British Sign Language (BSL) signer on the Friday. An invitation to the public to add their drawings of Tudor food and costume to our displays had a good response with about 200 pictures and stories added to boards over the summer.
41. Open House London was marked on 20th September by:
 - A heritage walk in Wanstead which attracted over 50 people.
 - The Temple opening with a craft activity.
 - Four talks on the Queen Elizabeth's Hunting Lodge in The View Community Room. Visitor numbers of around 200 were up by about a third compared to previous Sundays. About half came specifically for Open House. There were noticeably more visitors coming from more distant parts of London as well as visitors from over 100 miles away who were staying for the weekend because of Open House.

Communication and Information

42. The winter edition of Forest Focus (December, January & February) is distributed in November. The new format of Forest Focus will also include event promotion for the period and this will replace the need for the annual events diary. In this edition requests to readers will be made to either subscribe and pay for postage for future editions or sign up to receive the newsletter content online via Mailchimp. This will enable the Forest to reduce postage costs and print a higher quantity to circulate to wider and new audiences.
43. A 'soft launch' of new Epping Forest Facebook and Instagram account was completed in October.
44. The Epping Forest Twitter account (@CoLEppingForest) now has over 4030 followers (as at end of September 2015) and continues to be a highly effective, free tool for communication.
45. Epping Forest website is performing very well, with the Epping Forest map download being one of the top ten CoL downloads consistently.

Visitor Centres

46. A 2016 Epping Forest calendar is now on sale at £4.95.
47. Epping Forest venison was launched for sale at the View in October. The venison is being sold in a range of sausages, burgers and other cuts from a display freezer in the shop where it has been quick to establish as a bestseller.

Wanstead Flats Sports

48. Summer income increased by £7k from the previous year (£10k compared to £3k in 2014). Seasonal football bookings have a projected increase of £10k from previous year (£63k projected as compared to £53k last season).
49. Archery continues to grow supported by another successful £2k funding bid.
50. Cross country continues to expand; Parkrun on Saturday mornings achieved a new high of 151 runners in August and now frequently exceeds 100 runners a week. Newham Secondary Schools will host their Cross Country Championship with over 400 runners.
51. We have taken our first ever booking for a season of Men's Lacrosse

Major incidents

52. None.

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