

Committee(s)	Dated:
Epping Forest and Commons	04 07 2016
Subject: Superintendent's Update for April and May 2016	Public
Report of: Superintendent of Epping Forest (SEF 33/16)	For Information
Report author: Paul Thomson – Epping Forest	

Summary

This purpose of this report is to summarise the Epping Forest Division's activities across April and May 2016.

Of particular note was the restoration of Open Riding on 7 May; falls in the number of reported fly tipping and rough sleeper incidents; the submission of the annual Basic Payment Scheme application; the close of the 2015/16 football season with 3,260 games played an increase of 12 and the Period for Representation meeting with the Environment Agency regarding the provisional high risk designation for three Large Raised Reservoirs at Wanstead Park.

Recommendation(s)

Members are asked to:

- Note the report.

Main Report

Staff and Volunteers

1. Two new posts within the existing Manpower Statement – the Chingford Golf Course Manager and the Visitor Centre Retail Supervisor - have commenced work.

Epping Forest Projects

Open Spaces Bill 2016

2. The Bill was taken formally through the stages it completed in the last session on 25 May 2016. The next stage will be an Opposed Bill Committee to hear the sole petition against the Bill by the Kennel Club.

Forest Services

Open Riding

3. Open Riding arrangements were restored from 00:01 on Saturday 7 May 2016 later than usual reflecting the impact on the rides of a very wet winter and spring.

Fly tipping

4. Fly-tips for the current period being reported in 2016 were 96 compared to 111 in the same period in 2015, a decrease of 13.5%. This may reflect the increased night time closure of car parks.

Rough Sleepers

5. Most of the camps found were in the Southern area of the Forest mainly Wanstead Flats and Leyton Flats. So far this year there have been up to 20 camps compared to 23 for the previous year, a fall of 13%. We continue to work closely with street rescue, local authorities and the police services to resolve this problem. As the weather improves new camps are being located by regular patrols in the key areas.

Enforcement Activity

6. Two prosecutions were heard during the period under report. Miss Sonata Sluizaitė was prosecuted for Fungi picking under Bye Law 3 Paragraph 4 at Chelmsford Magistrates Court, which attracted national media coverage. Miss Sluizaitė was found guilty and fined £80, Costs of £264 and Victim Surcharge of £20. Daniel Cane was prosecuted for Carrying, Firing or otherwise discharging a firearm on Forest Land under Bye-Law 3 Paragraph 17a at Chelmsford Magistrates Court and was found guilty and fined £120, Cost of £264 and Victim Surcharge of £20.

Psychoactive Substances Act 2016

7. The Psychoactive Substances Act 2016 came into force on 26 May, following the postponement of the original introduction date of 6 April. The Act will make it an offence to produce, supply or offer to supply any psychoactive substance if the substance is likely to be used for its psychoactive effects, regardless of its potential for harm. The Act should help address issues around 'legal highs' such as Nitrous Oxide which is a major source of anti-social behaviour and littering in Epping Forest.

Licences

8. A total of 44 licences were issued during the two months being reported, which yielded an income of £26,039.00 plus VAT. 31 licences were issued during the same period in 2015 with an income of £12,678.83, representing a rise of 42% in licensing numbers and 105% in licence value.

Heritage; Landscape and Nature Conservation

Basic Payment Scheme (BPS)

9. The Basic Payment Scheme 2016 application was submitted. The application involved extra work as claims for each area were required to 4 decimal places instead of 2 in previous years. The application is worth approximately £100,000, the precise amount is dependent on the Euro:Pound exchange rate, the number of hectares claimed in the UK and the EU budget. With the EU Referendum in June there are various exchange rate predictions spanning a significantly strengthening or weakening for either outcome. If the exchange rate does not stabilise back to current levels by September the claim will be notably reduced or increased.

Visit by the London Wildlife Trust

10. A group of around 20 staff from the London Wildlife Trust came to hear about the work we do. The Biodiversity Officer lead a tour starting off with a talk by the Forest Centres Officer (Heritage) in the Queen Elizabeth Hunting Lodge, and then walking through the Forest across Chingford Plain, Bury Wood and Barn Hoppitt. Valuable connections were made between this organisation and City of London staff.

Land Management

11. Woodredon Estate – The contract for the demolition of the disused poultry sheds and removal and disposal of asbestos has been awarded, with work awaiting results of an additional survey and ecological impact assessment.
12. Bradley's Tea Hut, Hill Wood – The anticipated delivery date to site of the new tea hut is Monday 20th June. Once fitted into position the Tea Hut will close for an extensive stainless steel fit-out. Improved car parks works are scheduled to coincide with the fit-out together with new entrance signage to complete the site.
13. Access audit – Following our successful land registration work Land Agency and Forest Keeper staff are conducting an authoritative audit of all the accesses crossing Forest Land between the public highway and private land. Staff are creating a comprehensive accurate database that will establish the uses and potential abuses of Forest Land by landowners and property occupiers.
14. The welcome return of the Waltham Forest Scouts to Highams Park Lake is imminent as lease papers have been signed and returned to our solicitors.
15. Jubilee Retreat – The membership of Orion Harriers, a community running club, has expanded since relocating to Jubilee Retreat in 2010 to the extent that the facilities are no longer of sufficient size. A planning application has been submitted for a ground floor extension to form additional communal area

and changing facilities. The scheme also includes a small mess facility for our golf course maintenance staff.

16. Land Registry – There have been two applications by third parties to register Forest Land that had been previously dedicated to highway schemes. The City has submitted evidence to the Land Registry and the Comptroller & City Solicitor is now dealing with the issues.
17. The London Borough of Waltham Forest has taken a decision to remove a cattle grid on the Woodford new Road next to the A406 following the failure of one of its longitudinal supports. The location of failure would necessitate the complete rebuilding of the grid and therefore the road section has been infilled.

Town and Country Planning

18. Officers commented on 3 Planning Applications during the period in question. Key points included:
 - a. EFDC - Land at Woodside, North Weald – Gypsy site - Additional static caravan, one additional touring caravan, security gate and camera, and associated brick pillars and walls.
 - b. EFDC - Land at Mill House Farm, Bell Common, Epping – 10 x residential dwellings for the over 55's – WITHDRAWN.
 - c. LBoR – 323 Chigwell Road – Application for vehicle crossover. There are numerous grass verge areas along Chigwell Road, all documented with a Care & Maintenance agreement with Redbridge. The application was REFUSED.
19. Essex County Council Highways have opened a consultation on its proposals for a new Motorway junction at Harlow on the M11 to be called Junction 7A. The development of the proposals has been regularly reported at 'Duty to Cooperate' meetings with Local Planning Authorities and the Local Plan traffic modelling for future new developments up to 2033 will incorporate the junctions potential impacts on traffic flows. Officers intend to respond on behalf of your Committee with regard to the potential impacts of growth on the Epping/North Weald transport corridor.

Operations

20. **Oak Team** The team has completed work on trees affected by Massaria Disease of London Plane; tree safety work arising from surveys, together with erosion prevention work on Jubilee Pond Island and subsidence claim works.
21. **Beech Team** The team has also been involved with tree safety work and wood pasture restoration at Three Plank Ride and Warren Hill, while also undertaking landscape work at Wakes Arms Lodge and demonstrating a range of work to the Worshipful Company of Builders Merchants.
22. **Hornbeam Team** The team has been mainly involved with tree safety work. together with a demonstration of aerial rescue for the Worshipful Company of Builders Merchants at the Grimston's Oak.

23. All three teams have covered forest defects for two weeks at a time over this period.
24. **Large Raised Reservoirs:** Officers from Epping Forest and Department of Built Environment met with the City's Panel Engineer and Officers from the Environment Agency at Wanstead Park on 31 May, under the Period for Representation to discuss the Provisional designation of High Risk (danger to human life) for the three City-owned Large Raised Reservoirs in the five lake cascade.. Currently the lakes are Category B (could endanger lives not in a community) status under the Reservoirs Act arrangements and there is a possibility it could be increased to High Risk, under the Flood and Water Management Act 2010 Regulations. Based on discussions on site that day, it is possible the lakes final designation will be altered to 'not high-risk'.

Grass Cutting

25. The warmer weather experienced in mid to late April accelerated grass growth, bring forward the second amenity cut of short areas of grass around Loughton, Buckhurst hill and through Woodford. May also saw the start of the cut and collect program, with all the areas scheduled for May completed within the month. Warren Smith Farms are once again being used as the contractor for some cut and collect areas; the same contractor has also been successful in tendering for the haylage contract, building on an existing working relationship. Some extra areas of Copped Hall grassland have been included in the cut and collect programme this year. This will control scrub invasion, allowing for the grass to be continued to be grazed or taken as Haylage in future years.

Visitor Services

Communication and Information

26. As of 26 May 2016 our social media following is:
 - Twitter followers: 4,721
 - Facebook likes: 366
 - Instagram followers: 74
27. Press releases were circulated to promote the new temporary art exhibitions at The View.
28. Summer edition of Forest Focus was well received; continue to enjoy working with the new appointed designers on this Epping Forest magazine. Work going well on distribution across all Epping Forest localities. Online subscription to the magazine is steadily increasing.
29. 2,000 copies of the Epping Forest Official map are being re-printed, without update while work continues on revising the map in negotiation with Ordnance Survey.

30. Work is also underway with the developing design and content of new Epping Forest leaflet. In addition, Harper Collins Publishers have approached the Forest to consider a dedicated publication in their 'I-Spy'® series.

Chingford Golf Course

31. Staff have now been trained to operate the online BRS Golf™ golf tee time booking reservation system which is expected to go live on 27th June.
32. A tender for a mobile catering unit took place in May and this should be in place by July operating from the Golf Course car park..

Visitor Services Events

Museum collection

33. A full Museum Accreditation submission for our collection, known formally as The View (Epping Forest Collection) was made to Arts Council England on 25 May. We now await their clarification enquiries ahead of the Council's assessment visit later in the year.

Museums at Night Sunset Walk: A Magic Lantern Walk Revisited, 12 May

34. Museums at Night is a national festival celebrating museums. This event, a ticketed talk, walk and a glass of Prosecco on Pole Hill centred around Edwardian photographs of the Forest in our collection. The event was promoted through the Museums at Night website. It was highlighted by Time Out: all 25 tickets at £15 per head were sold. This was the first event for which we used Eventbrite™ an online ticketing service. This was a positive administration experience and drew in new Forest users from a wider age range and geographical area.

Museums at Night Daytime Discovery, 11 -1 4 May

35. During the week we offered a drop in table display of museum objects and trained volunteers and staff to use these as a starting point for discussion about the Forest. Objects from our store, not usually on display, included a prize Carp, branding irons, stuffed birds and other items.

30 May to 3 June Ducks and Ponds Activity Bags and event, The View

36. Over the summer half term, we offered a drop in table of drawing activities related to ducks to encourage family visitors both to walk to Connaught Water and to enjoy a simple trail activity around the View displays to find our museum collection stuffed ducks and swan. This offer also promoted the £2.50 Ducks and Ponds Activities Bag which includes identification sheets, games and things to do in the Forest, and a bag of approved duck and swan food to promote the healthier feeding of Forest wildfowl.
37. Small bags of this duck food are now available for sale at The View for 50p and have been both a popular purchase and an opportunity for staff and volunteers to engage with the public about how to best help our wildfowl.

Wanstead Flats Football

38. The Football Season ended on 15th May having seen 3,260 football + 11 Lacrosse matches for the season, which represents an increase of 12% from 2,913 on the last season.
39. Parkrun celebrated its 5th birthday on 21st May with a record 209 runners, March 26th saw a 12 year old become the 20,000th finisher meaning that well over 100,000kms have now been run on Epping Forest Land

Major incidents

40. None.

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