

Committee(s)	Dated:
Epping Forest and Commons	15 05 2017
Subject: Epping Forest - Superintendent's Update for December 2016 to March 2017 (SEF 5/17)	Public
Report of: Superintendent of Epping Forest	For Information
Report author: Paul Thomson – Epping Forest	

Summary

This purpose of this report is to summarise the Epping Forest Division's activities across December 2016 to March 2017.

Recommendation(s)

Members are asked to:

- Note the report.

Main Report

Staff and Volunteers

1. Six members of staff have left Epping Forest since the last Report. Including the retirement of a Forest Keeper and the Fleet and Asset Manager, both long serving team members. Other leavers include the Temporary Wayleaves Assistant, whose contract ended and three litter pickers, who resigned.
2. A new post of Safety and Assets Assistant has been appointed completing the restructure of the Assets Team, following the retirement of Assets and Fleet Manager.

Budgets

3. Processes to close accounts for the financial year are in progress and final figures are not yet available at time of writing. Property and Supplies and Services areas have overspent due to necessary lodge works and the increased costs of tree survey requirements under the Framework Contract shared with the London Borough of Islington.

Weather

4. Epping Forest has received less than 50% average rainfall over the past 4 months. The lack of rainfall and continuing mild temperatures has resulted in an unseasonably High Fire Severity Index for the south of the Forest.

Sustainability

5. Epping Forest Light Emitting Diode (LED) upgrade program was awarded to Sykes & Son Ltd, with works starting in late March covering the complete installation of the new fittings at the Harrow Road Sports Pavilion and the purchase of the remaining fittings for the other sites. Installation at the High Beach Visitor Centre and Queen Elizabeth Hunting Lodge to be completed by mid- May 2017. The final installation at the High Beach toilets building will be undertaken at the same time as the refurbishment work scheduled for June.
6. The installation of Photovoltaic (PV) panel solar power system on three roofs at The Warren complex will be operated as a larger project combined with the Harrow Road PV panel installation.
7. The installation of the PV panels at Harrow Road is due to start in June pending approval due in the second week of May, from London Borough of Redbridge of our planning application (1037/17) for a certificate of lawfulness application submitted 8 March 2017.
8. The installation of the window films to reduce summer glare and passive solar gain at The Warren and The View Offices, thus reducing cooling costs is expected to commence shortly.

Epping Forest Projects

Open Spaces Bill 2016

9. Following the recommendation made by the Opposed Bill Committee in November 2016, the City of London Corporation will now seek powers to issue Community Protection Notices through the Governing legislation. The Opposed Bill Committee considered and approved these amendments on 22 February. The report and third reading stages are due next in the Commons prior to passage to the House of Lords.

Branching Out Heritage Lottery Funded (HLF) Project

10. The Branching Out Project is complete with the exception of some bespoke visitor hub signage which is in the final stages of production and will be out on the Forest, helping visitors to understand the HLF improved sites this summer.
11. The whole project evaluation report has been completed and this, along with the legacy document and financial evidence, formed the claim submitted to the Lottery Fund for the City's eleventh and final grant drawdown.

12. The HLF assessed the claim and awarded the full requested sum of £352,868. The overall grant contribution for the project totalled £4,746,204.

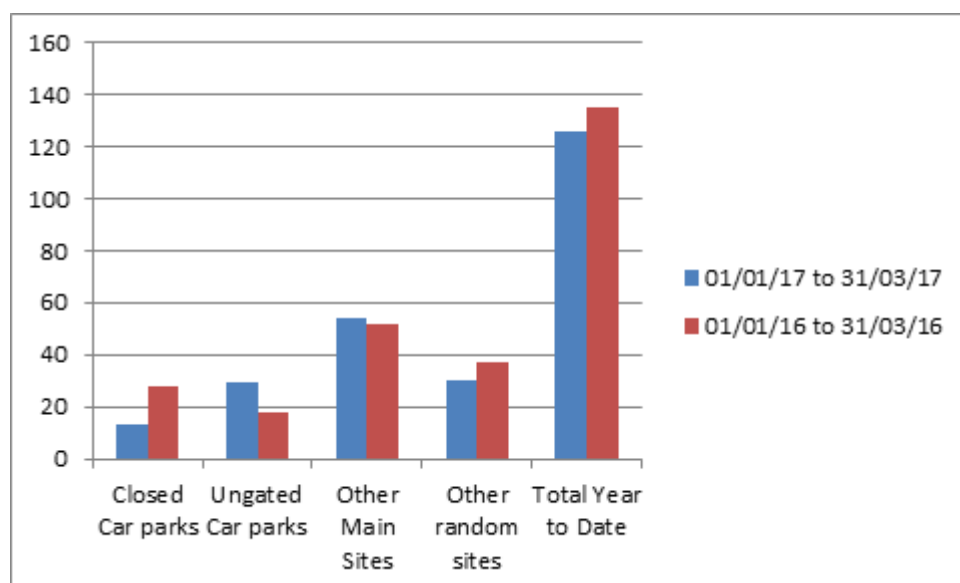
Forest Services

Fly tipping

13. Fly tips totalled 126 to the end of March 2017, a 6.6% fall from 135 fly tips for the same period for 2016. The first figures to offer a same season comparison for gated and ungated car parks, following the installation of further gates in the Theydon Bois area, suggests that gating has reduced fly tips by 15 (53.6%) in gated car parks. It would appear that there may have been a corresponding displacement of fly tipping to ungated car parks, which saw an increase of 11 (61.1%). While this initial comparison appears favourable, given the initial problems with the 2016 gates, a longer time frame is needed to fully assess the impact.
14. Anecdotally, individual fly tips appear to continue to increase in volume and weight, however, given the combined fly tip and litter waste streams, further analysis beyond weight accepted at disposal centres is not possible.
- 15.

	Gated Car parks	Ungated Car parks	Other Main Sites	Other random sites	Total Year to Date
01/01/17 to 31/03/17	13	29	54	30	126
01/01/16 to 31/03/16	28	18	52	37	135

16.



Rough Sleepers

16. Twenty rough sleeper camps mainly in the Wanstead Flats and Leyton Flats areas have been located and cleared across 2017. This includes camps revealed by the Wanstead Flats scrub clearance programme. The City Corporation have been working with agencies such as Redbridge and Waltham Forest Homeless services and also the Visas and Immigration Service Enforcement Team, who can now detain certain rough sleepers for breaching their immigration rights by not having an address or legal employment. The large rough sleeper camp at The Butts, behind the City of London Cemetery was cleared by landowner Redbridge Council with the clearance work lasting four days and involved 25 truck movements to clear the accumulated waste.

Enforcement Activity

17. The following prosecutions were heard during the period under report, with eight of the nine defendants found guilty with fines and costs totalling £34,203.68. A further 6 prosecutions are due to take place on 27 April 2017 – Chelmsford Magistrates Court

18.

Date of Court Hearing	Name of Defendant	Byelaw/EPA	Court Name	Outcome	Amount Awarded
20/10/2016 TRIAL 05/12/2016	Billy MARTIN	EPA 34 1 (a) 2 (a) & 6 Fly tip, Duty of Care	Thames	ACQUITTED	n/a
10/02/2017	Uygar ALTUN	EPA 34 1(a) Fly tip, Duty of Care	Thames	GUILTY	Cost: 0 Fine: £1000 Compensation £250
10/02/2017	Uygar ALTUN	EPA 34 1(a) Fly tip, Duty of Care	Thames	GUILTY	Cost: 0 Fine: £1000 Compensation £250
10/02/2017	ELVAN FOOD LTD	EPA 34 1(a) Fly tip, Duty of Care	Thames	GUILTY	Cost: £1012.34 Fine: £7000 Compensation: £702.80

10/02/2017	ELVAN FOOD LTD	EPA (34 1(a) Fly tip, Duty of Care	Thames	GUILTY	Cost: £1012.34 Fine: £10,000 Compensation: £702.80
22/02/2017	HOME TRADERS/ KHAN	EPA 34 1(a) Fly tip, Duty of Care	Thames	GUILTY	Cost: £1597 Fine: £8000 V/S: £120
06/01/2017	Vasile BILIBOU	EPA 34 1 (a) 2 (a) & 6 Fly tip, Duty of Care	Thames	GUILTY	Cost: £857 Fine: £440
07/01/2017	Juned MIAH	EPA 34 1(a) Fly tip, Duty of Care	Thames	GUILTY	Cost: £897 Fine: £440
28/03/2017	Ciprian NECHITA	EPA 34 1(a) Fly tip, Duty of Care	Thames	GUILTY	Cost: £398 Fine: £550 V/S: £55

Totals of above table

Costs	Fine	Compensation	Victim Surcharge
£5773.68	£28,430	£500	£175

Licences

19. A total of 75 licences for events were issued during the two months being reported, which yielded a 53.9% rise in income to £15,953.95, compared to the 68 licences which were issued during the same period in 2016 (income of £10,365).

Bushcraft and Community Engagement

20. Volunteer Community Groups continued to deliver excellent work across the Forest with Highams Park Snedders and Tidy Tarzy carrying out monthly workdays. The Keeper Service held a celebratory event with the Highams Park Snedders in January thanking them for their work over the past year.

21. Tidy Tarzy (Tarzy Wood on Wanstead High Street) workdays began in conjunction with the Forest Keepers and London Borough of Redbridge, Vision

Redbridge Team in January. Two of the local volunteers attended the Task Leader Training sessions, and they will continue delivering the workdays with minimal input from Epping Forest Staff.

22. Two sold out Venison Workshops were delivered in March, with a third having to be rescheduled due to unseasonable warm weather at the end of the month. Additional workshops of hide tanning and bone and antler working were well received.
23. Forest Keepers supported by volunteers delivered Bushcraft sessions for the Wanstead Parklands Group in Wanstead Park on 12 March. Local children enjoyed fire lighting and shelter building sessions.

Travellers

24. There have not been any traveller incursions for the reporting period.

Dog Incidents

25. Over the last three months there have been similar levels of requests for dog waste bins at various places across the Forest. There has been a noticeable increase in the amount of dog waste bags dropped continuously by dog walkers by posts and other Forest furniture, which is an increasing problem particularly on Leyton Flats. Additional patrols and new signage are planned at this location to seek to improve engagement with visitors.
26. There have also been an increased number of abandoned dogs, especially at the end of January. Three dogs have been seen regularly by staff in the Wake Valley area. Despite attempts to catch the animals. It is believed two of the dogs have died following vehicle collisions on the Epping New Road. The third dog has not been sighted for some time.
27. The 5 April saw a rare dog on person attack near Theydon Bois. The dog's owner attempted to blame the victim for the incident. The victim was asked to report the incident to the Police. Attempts to call the mobile number provided by the dog owner were unsuccessful.

Heritage; Landscape and Nature Conservation

Biodiversity

28. **Pest and Disease** – Following the *Phytophthora ramorum* outbreak in the Warren Plantation the stands of rhododendron at this site, Oak Hill and Conybury Wood have all been successfully removed. Works were undertaken by in-house staff and contractors using different management techniques. Works to remove rhododendron by EFCT have also begun at Pauls Nursery.
29. Another outbreak of ramorum has also been identified within Wanstead Park not only on rhododendron but also holly. The infected holly is the result of this particular bush growing in such close proximity to the infected rhododendron. An APHA statutory notification has been served for the removal of the infected material. An ancient Beech pollard at Copley Plain, one of the selected trees for the *Epping Forest Keystone Trees Strategy*, has been visibly declining in health

in the last two years. It was suspected that the tree was suffering from *Phytophthora* infection. The Forestry Commission officer took samples from the tree bark on 3 March 2017. The tree showed black lesions and bleeds on its stem, typical of a *Phytophthora* infection.

30. The laboratory results from Forestry Research in April have confirmed that this ancient Beech has been colonised by ***Phytophthora cambivora***, which causes Ink Disease in selected hardwood trees, a non-native blight species which, nonetheless, has been endemic in the UK for some time and kills a range of tree species. The impact of dry soil conditions in the Forest could make the trees more vulnerable to these endemic blight species.
31. A single nest outbreak of Oak Processionary Moth (OPM) has been identified by the Forestry Commission on Forest Land at Trueloves (Blind Lane) on the north western edge of the Forest. The discovery is the result of the Forestry Commissions wider survey (pheromone trapping) area in 2016 and subsequent follow up winter survey in early 2017. A statutory notice will be served on the City Corporation by the Forestry Commission for the control of this outbreak, which will instruct the City Corporation to undertake chemical spraying of the nest tree and any oak tree within a 50 metre radius. Planning for routine survey work for OPM is now underway, along with parallel contingency plans for creating exclusion zones when spraying or nest removal is required within other parts of the Forest. (See Appendix 1.)

Agri-environment Schemes

32. Funding of £47,409.60 was obtained from the Forestry Commission for the clearance of rhododendrons at the Warren Plantation through the Countryside Stewardship scheme.
33. Additional funding towards the HLS scheme was claimed from Natural England for grazing infrastructure at Trueloves, tree work to protect the earthworks at Ambresbury Banks, and bracken control. This totalled £7,290.10.
34. A departmental board was set up comprising staff from Epping Forest and The Commons to co-ordinate agri-environment schemes, especially Basic Payment Scheme. This board will be lead and co-ordinated by Epping Forest staff.

Grazing

35. One of the most significant changes during 2016-17 was the termination of the external grazing contract on 31 October 2016 and bringing this operation in-house, following approval at Committee in November 2016. Cattle, therefore, were taken off all Buffer Lands prior to November 2016.
36. Since the last Superintendent's Report the cattle have remained at Great Gregories Yard in order to calve and to be out-wintered off the fields and Forest. The numbers of animals in the herd, however, has been increased by the purchase of a further 37 pedigree Longhorn cattle, including 14 calves. In addition, the original Longhorn herd members produced a further 15 calves delivered between January and March.

37. The herd is now at 91 animals including a pedigree bull, Uther, with an excellent track record of siring good calves. Having been trained with the invisible fencing the first Longhorns are due to be out at Fairmead by mid-May. Other members of the Longhorn herd with young calves will be grazed at Warlies Park, Temple Field.

Heritage

38. A Rhododendron expert was commissioned to survey the rhododendrons in the Warren Plantation prior to their clearance. Plants were dated by tree rings; the majority of the plants were dated to the mid-20th century and appeared to be *R. ponticum* hybrids most probably planted as game cover rather than for ornamental purposes. The rhododendrons on Copped Hall drive were dated to the late 1920s and 1930s, and had already been surveyed by Michael Lear in 2010. No significantly important varieties were present.

Land Management

Town & Country Planning

39. Officers commented on 28 Applications during the period in question. Key points included;

Netherhouse Farm – use as a Woodland Cemetery with meeting hall, associated buildings, car parking and infrastructure – Objection made with decision outstanding

Garden Centre, Crown Hill 19 houses (previous application for 21 houses was refused) - REFUSED

Garden Centre, Crown Hill - 3 dwellings – objection made with decision outstanding

Wellington Hall, High Beach – conversion to 1 dwelling - GRANTED

Land adj. to Wellington Hall, High Beach - 3 dwellings - GRANTED

Carlton House Stables, Lippitts Hill – demolition 2 houses - WITHDRAWN

Clockhouse, Daws Hill conversion into 4 houses - GRANTED

Pre-application land adjacent to Clock House – low density housing (up to 5).

Refreshments

40. New 3 year lease granted 01/01/2017 – 31/12/2019, to Lakeside Diner, Whipps Cross Road.

Golf

41. Loughton Golf Club, Clays Lane – the lease was assigned to a new tenant from 17/02/2017.

Upshire Millennium Trust

42. Successful £8,000 grants application from Tesco PLC. Grant will be used to provide a short easy-access 1.8m wide wheelchair path to existing infrastructure.

Thames Water

43. Epping Forest Land at School Green, Staples Road, Loughton – Conservation Area. Thames Water has installed significant infrastructure on Forest Land without the City Corporation's permission. Land Agency is waiting for advice from the Comptroller & City Solicitor as to what Powers Thames Water has under the Water Industry Act to extend their installations..

Operations

Habitat Works

44. Wood-pasture Restoration and Management - With the dry weather conditions work on woodpasture restoration has progressed through the winter with work in the recent period concentrated on Barn Hoppit and Bury Wood. Extraction of the cordwood arising from 2015-16's work has been completed in this period and we will be selling it to a local firewood merchant shortly. The large stores of woodchip arising from the woodpasture works at Bury road and Claypit Hill Car Parks have also largely been cleared for transportation to a wood-fired power station in this period with the last four loads being removed week beginning 24 April 2017.
45. Highams Park Lake - Volunteers and staff continue to extend the amount of open ground around the lake and in the process have created a number of attractive vistas. The dam contractors have reseeded bare sections of the dam face and the maintenance of this area has been returned to Epping Forest. During 2017-18 there will be some work required to continue the establishment of the grass on the dam face.
46. Wanstead Flats: The Operations Team were fortunate to be able to borrow the tractor-mounted mulcher from The Commons, which was an ideal tool for working gorse and broom scrub on Wanstead Flats. In addition to the annual cutting cycle of scrub on the Flats, the team using the mulcher were able to address a small work backlog bringing the total area cut to 2.5 ha. In the process of this work we identified and were able to clear a number of old and current rough sleeper camps that we had not previously be aware of due to good screening provided by the scrub.

Risk Management Works

47. Tree Safety surveys of all zones to be targeted in 2016-17 have been completed by the two different teams of independent contractors engaged for this work. All three arborist teams have started work on the high risk short response trees identified by the survey. Works identified in the 2015-16 survey have now been completed except for a small number of trees requiring further assessment or where we have complex site issues to resolve, e.g. on the Woodford Green Poplar Avenues.
48. Antisocial Behaviour: An area of Elm scrub alongside Capel Road, which was regularly frequented by prostitutes and drug users has been cleared. A report is preparation on the wider scrub management on the Flats to ensure management

for antisocial behaviour is undertaken in a way that ensures the important biodiversity is not comprised and landscape needs arising from the scrub on the flats.

49. Connaught Waters: Colleagues from DBE have employed a contractor to repair the damaged revetment along the dam face at Connaught Waters and also to improve the overflow, so that turbulent backwash from the exiting water does not undermine the dam.
50. Police Support at Wanstead Park: Staff supported the Metropolitan Police with their search for a missing person at Wanstead Park. This was a comprehensive search by search teams, divers and specialist dogs of the woods and lakes in the park and staff spent over two weeks cutting access paths and supporting the search officers in their task.

Access Works

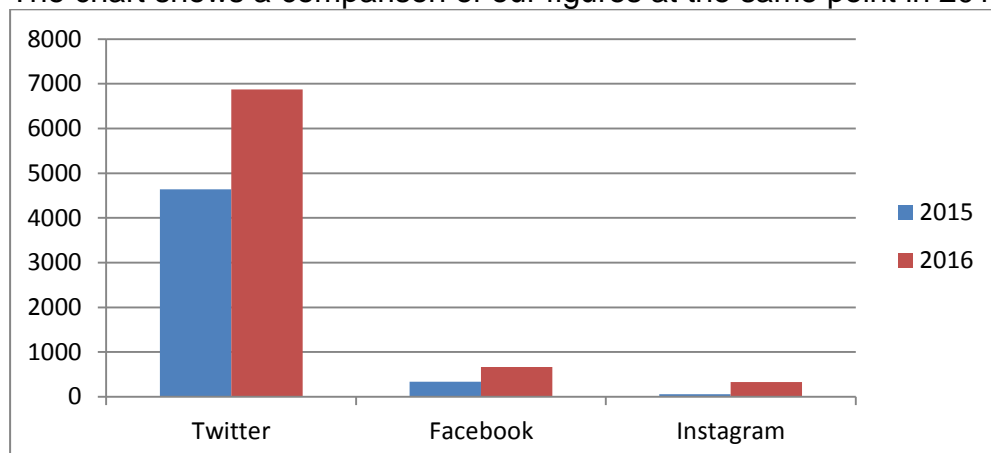
51. Wanstead Park- The Warren Road entrance to Wanstead Park has been improved through the removal of scrub and minor trees to restore its open condition, complete with the vista along the Glade – formally known as The Long Walk, to the Long Canal of Ornamental Water. The profusion of individual signs at the Park entrances has been rationalised to reduce the number and give a crisper feel to the Park. The cleared area will be cut each year to keep in the open condition. Volunteers from the WREN Group have cut the stump regrowth arising from trees cleared around the lakes by the Arborist teams in recent years. This has helped considerably to maintain the open views of the lakes.
52. Grass cutting: Grass cutting of amenity areas started in April.

Visitor Services

Communication and Information

53. As of 12 April 2017 our social media following is:

- Twitter followers: 6,873 (48% year on increase)
- Facebook likes: 667 (99% increase)
- Instagram followers: 329 (488% increase)
- The chart shows a comparison of our figures at the same point in 2016



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54. Forest Focus winter 16/17 and spring 17 editions each had a print run of 6,000 and were circulated to over 260 public locations surrounding the Forest. Advertising space was introduced in the winter edition achieving £350 income and this was increased in the spring edition raising £875, which helps to offset the cost of production. Now that interest is increasing in advertising, the charge will be reviewed.
 55. The City Corporation received extensive national and international coverage of Prince Harry's Commonwealth Canopy visit to Epping Forest, including front page of The Evening Standard, The Telegraph, The Daily Mail, The Daily Express, People, E! News, Grazia and local newspapers, as well as TV coverage on BBC local news, Sky news and Australian TV (reportedly).
 56. Social media coverage was extensive with Epping Forest's Facebook photographic montage viewed 2,100 times, with a reach of almost 5,000.
 57. A total of 5 tweets from @KensingtonRoyal covered the event and our own twitter coverage reached a fantastic 16,186 impressions (potential views) and 768 engagements (retweets, comments, interaction).

Chingford Golf Course

58. The Chingford Golf Course website went live on 22 February 2017 and can be found here: <https://www.chingfordgolfcourse.co.uk>
59. At the end of the financial year 19,169 rounds of golf took place at Chingford Golf Course. Given the level of disruption to the administration and décor at the beginning of the year, as the in-house management was established, it is pleasing that the players have been retained around the average for recent years.
60. Extensive refurbishment of the Caddie House has taken place including a full rewire and an extension to the footprint of the old Café allowing further seating in the former shop area. The new café tenants are completing decorative works and an opening launch is expected early summer.
61. The exterior of the café has been tidied and the Cycle Hire operator is now open for business adding an attraction to this burgeoning activity hub.
62. The winter works programme included the levelling of 3 tees, more drainage has been added to the 5th, 9th and 10th. The 3rd tee is being rebuilt and plans for the 18th new tee, including extending the pond, are in progress.

Wanstead Flats Football

63. Over 2,250 matches were held in 2016/17. This season the pitches will have hosted over 67,000 players compared to 75,000 last season (2015/16). This reduction in play is due to summer games not being generated due to the end of Football Development Officer role. In total over 600 teams (home and away) will have played at WFPF.

Visitor Numbers

64. Annual visitor numbers over the past few years show a drop in the last financial year compared to a peak in 2015/16. The figures for this year do not include education visits, which are now managed centrally in open spaces and the wet summer season will account for a drop off. Evaluation of visits shows that 'passing by' accounts for significant proportion of visits and measures will be introduced to make 'The View' more obvious from the road.

total visitor numbers by financial year	
13/14	89393
14/15	81489
15/16	97613
16/17	89688

65. Visitor numbers for the period December to March:

	The View	QEHL	VC	The Temple	Total No
December	3191	2507	1602	569	
January	2383	1453	1263	759	
February	3289	1952	1266	559	
March	2749	1603	1444	532	
	11612	7515	5575	2419	27121

66. Total Income:

	The View	VC	The Temple
December	8884	775	471
January	4060	571	240
February	4674	435	189
March	5404	768	174
	£23024	£2550	£1076

67. Total spend per head:

	The View	VC	The Temple
December	£2.78	£2.06	£0.44
January	£1.70	£0.45	£0.32
February	£1.42	£0.34	£0.34
March	£1.97	£0.53	£0.33

Visitor Survey

69. The annual 'snapshot' survey undertaken across Open Spaces had the highest level of respondents with 85% citing their satisfaction with Epping Forest as Good or Very Good (our target is 75%).

Visitor Services Events

Saturday 10th & Sunday 11th December: Christmas Grotto Weekend

70. Tickets for the perennially popular Christmas Grotto were sold out by November, half through online booking. Around 2,000 visitors attended over the weekend of which 450 had tickets to visit Father Christmas.
71. This event, appeared bigger and better than last year, with additional activities such as an outdoor roller disco and Frozen characters Elsa & Anna, which proved to be a really popular and even TV host and presenter Katie Piper turned up with her daughter.
72. Estate agent The Stow Brothers sponsored the promotional leaflet, so the City Corporation was able to advertise further afield, with hand distribution in surrounding areas as well as more extensive use of social media for a such as local Chingford Mums, Loughton & Buckhurst Hill Mumsnet, to draw in bigger crowds.
73. The weekend saw over £3,000 in shop sales. Tickets for the grotto achieved 450 totalling £6,277.50.

February Half Term – Discover London Children's Book Swap

74. This event was free to attend and was held in the February half term, the main event taking place on Saturday 11th February. Children were encouraged to visit the QEHL and bring their old reading books to swap with other books that had been donated. Buckhurst Hill library donated a number of used books and over 100 books were exchanged and donations for books generated £160.

High Low Dolly Pepper: Skipping activities Thursday 16 February, View/QEHL

75. This was a drop in family event for February half-term to promote outdoor winter physical activity with a heritage slant through traditional skipping songs and intergenerational oral tradition.
76. The event was attended by about 80 people with parents and grandparents helping turn ropes and share skipping songs. This was a good value event drawing in a mixed generational audience.

Epping Forest UK to USA exhibition, 21 February to 28 February, The View

77. This was a small exhibition of museum objects linking to story about the Epping Forest, Mary Ball/George Washington connection and prompted by the Presidents Day anniversary. The City Corporation liaised with the Mary Ball Museum in Epping Forest, Virginia, to check out facts - and was able, on their behalf, to ask its visitors, which part of the Forest their recently acquired painting of Epping Forest might portray. An article on the subject was published in Forest Focus and also in Essex Life magazine.

Extraordinary Eggs Season: Romanian Eggs and more

78. The View & Queen Elizabeth's Hunting Lodge

79. Exhibition: 25 March to 25 June
80. Evening lecture: 30 March (free)
81. Evening workshop: 30 March (£12-£15 tickets)
82. Arty holiday afternoon: Egg Speckling for Cuckoos (drop in) - 6 April

- 82.1 This season of 4 exhibition/events came about through partnership with the Horniman Museum and Gardens, who run an Arts Council-funded Object in Focus loan scheme. At no cost to Epping Forest, the Horniman provided a temporary exhibition of a case of 62 Romanian eggs, 2,500 promotional postcards and the services of an expert lecturer on the history of decorated eggs. The Romanian egg display was supplemented by two cases of native birds' eggs from the Epping Forest museum collection.
- 82.2 This talk attracted 18 people, the practical workshop led by the Museum and Heritage Manager 12 people. The Easter holiday drop in free art activity was very popular with 60 children participants but attracting an audience of 189 adults and 101 children across the afternoon.
- 82.3 This season was a first in formally managing a loan from another museum and an active outreach to new visitors, including several from Romania. It was also the first time the wild birds' eggs were brought out of the museum store to share with the public.

Appendices

- Appendix 1 – OPM Outbreak Map

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