

Committee(s)	Dated:
Epping Forest and Commons	3 July 2017
Subject: Epping Forest - Superintendent's Update for April – May 2017 SEF 12/17	Public
Report of: Open Spaces Director	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 to May 2017.

Of particular note was the impact of the General Election on the passage of the Open Spaces Bill through the House of Commons; a further decline in figures for the number of fly tips; five successful prosecutions for fly tipping with fines totalling £6,464; the discovery of the wildflower Milkwort on previously grazed land at Big View; the discovery of Oak Processionary Moth caterpillars at Leyton Flats near Hollow Ponds; Harmful Algal Blooms at Perch Pond and the impact of Epping Forest's Special Area of Conservation designation in consideration of Local Plans for Redbridge; Broxbourne and by the four Local Planning Authority signatories to the Memorandum of Understanding on the impacts of growth.

Recommendation(s)

Members are asked to:

- Note the report.

Main Report

Staff and Volunteers

1. The Chingford Golf Manager has resigned following a job offer elsewhere. A colleague will cover these duties while new arrangements are made. Similarly, the post holder for the temporary contract covering the Geographic Information Systems (GIS) Officer role has found permanent employment and will also leave in July.
2. We welcomed two new part-time litter pickers, who will be based at Wanstead Flats and Leyton Flats respectively. Interviews for a Stockperson were also successful with a start date early in July.

3. Interviews have secured 9 potential volunteer wardens, which we be followed by further interviews in July.
4. Four new wardens were inducted on 1st June with the remainder being welcomed on Thursday 29th June. Wardens will begin their training with Forest keepers during June.

Budgets

5. All budgets are currently on target for this very early period of new financial year. Alternative savings are being considered to address the planned shortfall in Lodge Rental income for 2017/18 which is linked to the passage of the Open Spaces Bill. Early preparations are underway for Revised Estimates in September which will consider a further range of efficiencies from 2018/19.

Weather

6. Epping Forest received just four days of rainfall in April following unusually drier months between January and March. In response pond and lake levels have been lower than normal. Similarly, the Fire Severity Index was also at High for much of the month and the Forest saw a number of early fires including a significant burn at Jubilee Ride. In contrast, May has seen higher than average rainfall with 15 days of rainfall in total.

Sustainability

7. The Light Emitting Diode (LED) interior lighting upgrades have been completed in Harrow Road Sports Pavilion, the High Beach Visitor Centre and the Queen Elizabeth Hunting Lodge. The final installation at the High Beach toilets building will be undertaken at the same time as the refurbishment work scheduled for the end of June.
8. The installation of the Photovoltaic (PV) panels at Harrow Road was awarded to the Ecolutions Group. With the assistance of Sykes & Sons Ltd an installation start date of June 19th is planned with completion by June 23rd.
9. The installation of the PV panels on the 3 roofs at the Warren complex is at design stage with a start date planned for July 2017.
10. The installation of the window films to reduce summer glare, passive solar gain and heat loss in the winter at The Warren and The View Offices, thus reducing cooling costs is due to start on June 12th.

Epping Forest Projects

City of London (Open Spaces) Bill 2016

11. Progress through the House of Commons has been slowed due to the General Election. Subject to Parliamentary scheduling it is still hoped to revive the Bill

and complete its passage through the House of Commons prior to the Summer Recess.

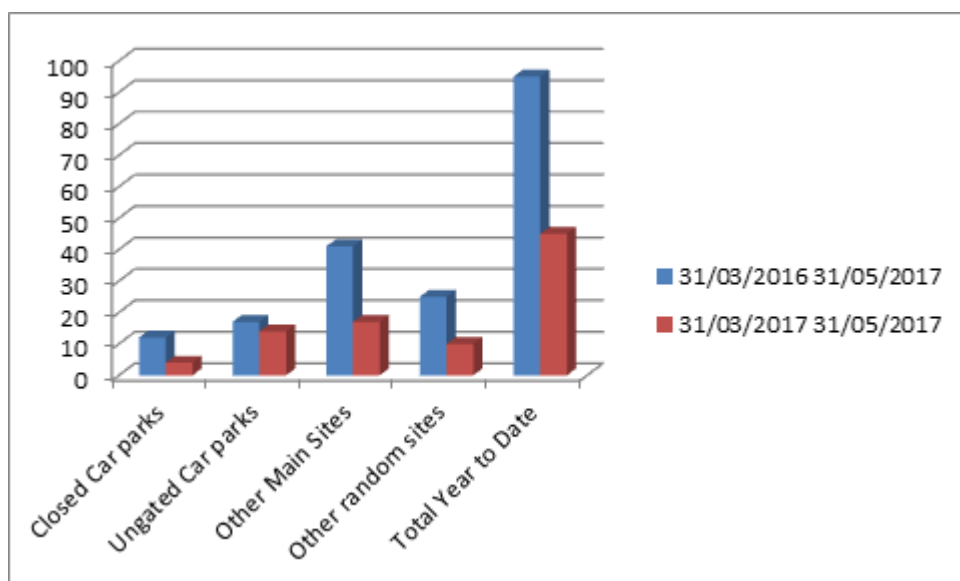
Branching Out HLF Project

12. Production of the final visitor orientations panels is underway. It is planned that the Lord Mayor will unveil the first of the new interpretation panels during his visit in July, for the Chairman's lunch. Volunteers are repainting the 8 waymarked trails waymarks ahead of the busy summer period.
13. **Gateways** - One of threshold signs at the Chingford Gateway has been demolished most probably as the result of a vehicle collision. The sign behaved exactly as the designers had intended and sheered on the uprights and collapsed flat justifying all the hard work and planning that went into the new highways safety design

Forest Services

Fly tipping

14. The number of fly tips recorded in Epping Forest for the 5 months to May fell by 25.6% to 171 based on provisional records for the period. This compares to a 4% rise nationally for the last recorded year. As with the 53.6% reduction figures provided for January-March 2017, there has been a strong 57% fall in fly tipped gated car parks, compared to an 18% rise in possible displacement to ungated car parks, and an overall 18.9% fall across all three classes of uncontrolled site.



		Closed Car parks	Ungated Car parks	Other Main Sites	Other random sites	Total Year to Date
01/01/2016	31/05/2016	40	35	93	62	230
01/01/2017	31/05/2017	17	43	71	40	171

Rough Sleepers

15. During this period we have continued to work with outreach organizations, Local Authority enforcement teams, police and immigration services (IS) to support and find long term solutions to Rough Sleepers. A number of camps have been identified and cleared in Wanstead and Leyton Flats. This decline can be attributed to active level of interventions made by the teams, compared to an average annual increase across London of 23% for the last recorded period.

16. Acting on local intelligence from residents Forest Keepers initiated a joint enforcement operation with the Police and Immigration Service Enforcement Team to remove a Rough Sleeper from a garage adjacent to the Forest who had been dumping waste on the Forest. A man was arrested and removed on an immigration offence while Class A drugs and items associated with scrap metal dealing were recovered.

Enforcement Activity

17. Five prosecutions were heard during the period under report.

Date of Court Hearing	Name of Defendant	Byelaw/EPA	Court Name	Outcome	Amount Awarded
27/04/2017	Petru SARGHI	EPA 34 1(a) Depositing Waste (Fly tip)	Thames	Guilty	Costs: £313 Fine: £512 V/S: £51
27/04/2017	THE CARPET SHOP LTD	EPA 34 1(b) Duty of care (Fly-tip)	Thames	Guilty	Costs: £313 Fine: £1615 V/S £161
27/04/2017	Barry JACOBS	EPA 34 1(b) Duty of care (Fly-tip)	Thames	Guilty	Costs: £313 Fine: £461 V/S: £46
27/04/2017	Dechko ENEV	EPA 34 1(a) Duty of care (Fly-tip)	Thames	Guilty	Costs: £582 Fine: £646 V/S: £64
11/05/2017	Victor DMITRIU t/a V&V Building Services	EPA 34 1(a) Duty of care (Fly-tip)	Thames	Guilty	Costs: £1343 Fine: £3230 V/S: £170

Totals of above table

Costs	Fine	Victim Surcharge
£2,864	£6,464	£492

Licences

18. A total of 33 licences for events were issued during the two months being reported, which yielded an income of £11,813.99 plus VAT. 42 licences were issued during the same period in 2016 (income of £26,409.00)

Bushcraft and Community Engagement

19. Two Bushcraft events took place during April and May. Baby Bushcraft on 21 April for pre-schoolers was the first event of its kind on Epping Forest, it was oversubscribed and very well received with toddlers toasting marshmallows, making shelters and looking for animal tracks and signs on the Forest. On 21 May Forest Keepers took their parachute to the Highams Park Spring Fair with fire lighting and cordage workshops and an information stall, including 'Whose poo is whose?' game.

Travellers

20. Forest Keepers and operations staff successfully attended an attempted Traveller occupation at Mill Plain on 13th May.

Dog Incidents

21. There were no dog related incidents during this reporting period.

Heritage; Landscape and Nature Conservation

Biodiversity

22. The highlight of this period was the discovery of the wildflower Milkwort *Polygala serpyllifolia*, thought to be extinct in the Forest and not recorded since 2005 when only a tiny remnant population remained. The new discovery at Big View in Honey Lane Quarters (Compartment 9) encompassed hundreds of plants spread across the full width of the upper slopes amongst the Heather population which is also recovering following the mowing restoration management. The spread coincides with late summer grazing over the last two years and this combination of late mowing with the aftermath grazing impacts of the cattle seems to have had the same benefits for this species as it had for Lousewort a decade earlier.

23. The other key aspect of this spring, despite more rain in May, was the continuing low rainfall and exceptionally dry soils. This certainly had an impact on the grasses which were late to start growing and all plants are smaller this year than in 2016. As a result some plants requiring damper conditions were less prolific this year. As an example Lousewort, mentioned above, although covering the same areas as usual, had fewer flowers and will produced a much reduced seed-set with likely 'knock-on' impacts for 2018.

24. The three butterfly transects which started again in April and contribute data to the national butterfly survey should also yield interesting results, although it is

too early to say how well or badly species are faring until more generations have bred. However, on the basis on the numbers of males counted in May it seems to be an excellent year for Common Blue, which is benefiting from the spread of its food-plant bird's-foot trefoil which, in turn, is responding to the mowing and grazing regimes on various sites. For example on Warren Wood Slope (Compartment 29), where there has been a mix of grazing and mowing regimes, there were 9 males counted along a 10-minute transect at the end of May – numbers not recorded at this site before.

25. On the negative side of biodiversity was the discovery in late May of a nest of Oak Processionary Moth caterpillars at Hollow Ponds (Compartment 36). Spraying had already taken place in April of oak trees along the Blind Lane green byway at Trueloves (Compartment 17) where an old nest had been discovered in the winter. The new discovery at Hollow Ponds was followed up with a search of nearby oak trees on Leyton Flats and a further two colonised trees were found. The Forestry Commission undertook to pay for the spraying work on Leyton Flats, which was overseen by operations and keeper staff on the 6th June.

Agri-environment Schemes

26. The Basic Payment Scheme application was submitted ahead of the 15th May deadline, with a joint online submission being made for both Epping Forest and The Commons Divisions.
27. At the end of May a meeting was held with Natural England (NE) advisers to discuss the transition between the current Environmental Stewardship (ES) agreement and any successor Countryside Stewardship Scheme (CSS). The NE advisers confirmed that Epping Forest remained a high priority for the new Scheme because of the importance of the site and the recognition of the amount of restoration and maintenance work required to reach and retain Favourable Condition status for the Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). Favourable Condition for SSSIs is a key government and NE target for 2020 under the national biodiversity strategy. Any CSS agreement would be integral and fundamental to the new Forest Management Plan and would start in 2019 after the end of the current ES agreement as no phased overlap between agreements is possible.

Grazing

28. Following some late winter purchases, plus 4 additional heifers bought in April and the births, the Longhorn herd now stands at 101 animals. The first of these cattle were de-pastured onto the Forest at Fairmead on 10th May, with five cows going out that week. Since then the numbers at Fairmead have been increased to 14 animals. By the first week of June an additional 5 cows had begun grazing within the invisible-fenced area at Chingford Plain.
29. In the meantime, on the Buffer Land grazing began in April at Warlies, - Temple Field, with numbers increasing there and at other sites across the Buffer Lands. The numbers have been as follows: 30 at Temple Field (Warlies), 16 at Brookmeadow Wood Field and 15 at Black Barn Field (also both Warlies sites), 13 cattle at Great Gregories (with 10 in the Railway Field) and a further 8 animals at The Conservators' Pound.

Heritage

30. A condition survey of the existing structure of the Grotto at Wanstead Park was commissioned by the Heritage Estate Team in City Surveyors. In addition, the Museum of London was commissioned by the same team to map the fallen stone fragments from the Grotto's façade revealed by current low water levels in The Ornamental Water.
31. A new borehole pump has been installed to abstract water for the maintenance of water levels in the Wanstead Park lakes. The bore hole is currently working for 16 hours each day in two 8 hour sessions. This allows the aquifer to recharge and to help maintain water flow at around 6ltrs/second. The Heronry Lake has responded well and is now visually covered with water but there is still around 50cm of depth to be attained.

Land Management

Town & Country Planning

32. Officers commented on 3 applications during the period in question. The main application of interest is:
33. APPEAL - Land South of Horseshoe Hill, Upshire. The site shares its southern boundary with Gifford Wood. This application is for the development of a live / work unit which includes an artist's studio. The proposed unit is a modern design with three bedrooms, angled panels of steel and glass, wooden pier structure, decked walkways. It is proposed to remove 23 trees, of which 10 have preservation orders on them. The application was refused on Heritage Conservation, Landscape, Design & the Built Environment and Green Belt Policies.
34. **Local Plans** - In addition to the planning application responses described above, further correspondence was undertaken in relation to several Local Plans. For the London Borough of Redbridge (LBR) Local Plan a supplementary submission was made to provide new and additional evidence in response to the Inspector's questions about the Epping Forest Special Area of Conservation (SAC) and potential in-combination effects from increased housing and traffic. The Examination-in-Public (EiP) began on Tuesday 6th June and the SAC issues were considered on the first day. There will be further discussion of the points we have raised at a later a sitting when Issue 10 of the EiP is considered.
35. A response was also made to the Habitats Regulation Assessment (HRA) for the Broxbourne Local Plan following a request from Broxbourne officers. Both our response and that of NE were critical of the HRA which, in our views, did not adequately quantify the potential impacts of traffic generated by the proposed large-scale developments at Junction 25 of the M25.
36. Following these various items of correspondence a meeting was held at The Warren offices with NE planning advisers so that we could raise concerns with them about the protection of the SAC and coordination between London and East Anglian NE advisers. In particular, it was resolved that a joint letter from NE and City of London would be drafted to express our concern, as signatories to

the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on Epping Forest SAC, to the lack of progress made by Epping Forest, East Herts, Harlow and Uttlesford District Councils in taking the required actions prescribed by the MoU.

Operations

Habitat Works

37. Wanstead Park's Perch Pond saw further Floating Pennywort control with eleven small patches of the aquatic plant being treated with herbicide to prevent its further spread. Overall the control work has been very successful with extent of the pennywort being very substantially reduced. Given the high cost and difficulty of getting water to the Ornamental Waters we will review with our contractors the potential for letting water move to the Ornamental Waters from the Perch Pond sooner than originally envisaged.
38. Grass cutting: Short grass cuts have been undertaken on all 'amenity' areas with some areas having undergone second cuts. We have been slightly hindered in grass cutting works so far this year with staff absences and the compact tractor being inoperable for a number of weeks while a specialist part is obtained. Future grass cutting activity will be slightly delayed as a consequence.

Risk Management Works

39. Highways Verge Vegetation: The 2017 Highway Verge management works involving the cutting of 71.7 km of Highway verge has been successfully re-let, as proposed in the work program paper to the EFFCC in May. BWS, who were the cheapest of three tenders, have held their unit prices for the third year running. Tree Safety – Teams continue to work through the annual package of tree safety works. Trees identified for a rapid (3 month) response have all been worked apart from a number needing traffic management to undertake actions which has been scheduled through July. Teams are now undertaking the tasks scheduled to be completed within 12 months
40. Reservoirs – The first of twice yearly inspections was completed in June. Highams Park Large Raised Reservoir dam has a number of problems due to the poor establishment of the grass on the dam bank and the development of a 'wish way' caused by visitors walking up the bank eroding path. Teams have started work of cutting the dams back as per the annual maintenance program of these.
41. Vegetation against Property: We have a pending potentially substantial subsidence claim which is being processed by our insurers. Teams have however started work at Reed Wood to clear the contentious trees in response to the claim on a without prejudice basis. The work is relatively visible on the edge of Whitehall Road (A104) near to Bentley Way.
42. The lower than average Spring rainfall and reduced throughput of pumped water from Heronry Pond following the pump failure have contributed to the appearance of Harmful Algal Blooms (HABS) of Blue-Green Algae which are capable of producing toxins which may be harmful. Precautionary signs have

been posted around the Pond and warnings posted on the City of London website and through the local press.

Access Works

43. New picnic tables and benches have been installed at Wanstead Park with surfacing work to be completed prior to the opening event. In addition a couple of logs have been positioned on site to provide a simple activity space for younger children. The new benches have been funded by The Friends of Wanstead Parklands via a Tesco grant

Visitor Services

Communication and Information

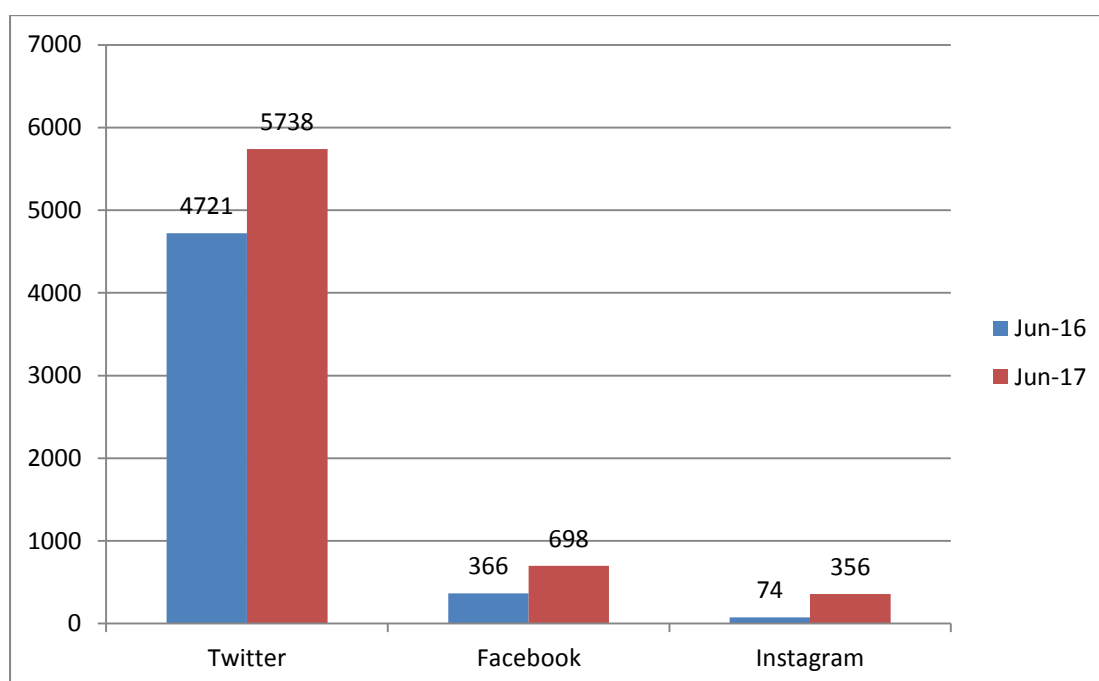
44. As of 8 June 2017 our social media following is:

Twitter followers: 5,738 (21.5% year on increase)

Facebook likes: 698 (90.7% increase)

Instagram followers: 356 (381% increase)

45. The chart shows a comparison of our figures at the same point in 2016



46. The Forest Focus summer edition, featuring a front cover image of Prince Harry meeting Arborists as part of the QCC visit, was distributed in June 2017 to approximately 260 establishments throughout Epping Forest. Once again, a significant income, £900, was generated through advertising. Verderer Morris wrote a comprehensive article on the Forest Charter and the Royal visit was covered in detail. The exciting summer events programme is promoted well in

this edition, with particular promotion given to the Open Air Theatre events and Tarzy Woodfest, taking place in Wanstead on 16 July.

- 47. Good local press coverage was received through the promotion of good news stories and strong images of Epping Forest buzzards, spring blossom, grasslands etc. in a variety of print media.
- 48. Adverts were placed in the Primary Times publications (East London and south west Essex) for Easter and May half term, promoting the Forest as a great family destination at weekends and throughout summer holidays.
- 49. An interview and photo shoot took place with musician and songwriter, Renell Shaw (works with Rudimental and Jess Glynne), who lives local to Epping Forest and trains, takes creative inspiration from the Hollow Pond area. This will be used for the summer 2018 Forest Focus edition.
- 50. A good relationship has been established with local Estate Agent, Stow Brothers, has resulted in sponsorship of promotional banners for the Tarzy Woodfest as well as promotional postcards for the Wind in the Willows and Tarzy Woodfest events, with Stow Brothers producing these for us free of charge.

Chingford Golf Course (GD)

- 51. At the start of the financial year sales of members' seasons tickets are around the same compared to last year. The new loyalty scheme packages we now have to offer regular users have pleased some, but has yet to prove itself as a strong incentive to build on occasional users. More promotion and advertising will hopefully improve take up.
- 52. Four balls promotions have been introduced to encourage new players and have proved effective at quieter times at the weekends. Once the café is up and running we expect to introduce more golf package deals.
- 53. The green keepers' yard suffered another break-in on 3 June 2017. Further improvements to security are being looked at, however, the break in managed to get through window, padlock and interior security metal bars to gain entry.
- 54. The new café tenants are finishing decorative works and an opening launch is expected anytime soon.
- 55. The new cycle hire facility has proved to be popular introducing more people to the site and the Forest. Sadly, the facility has also been the victim of burglary with half the hire fleet being stolen. Security for the cycle containers has been improved and new alarms fitted.

Wanstead Flats Football

- 56. The season has now ended and current provision is mainly for schools sports days. The Football Association has provided the site with a detailed free pitch inspection report which we are using to provide a new maintenance schedule.
- 57. The bookings process has been updated and is currently being circulated ahead of the new season including stricter governance and penalties for misuse of

itches and changing facilities. We are hoping to concentrate matches in to two main sites to reduce costs on opening three facilities on both weekend days.

Visitor Numbers

Visitor Numbers

	The View	VC	The Temple	QEHL	Total No
April	5016	2729	2412	3087	13244.00
May	3607	2074	1052	2248	8981.00
	<u>8623</u>	<u>4803</u>	<u>3464</u>	<u>5335</u>	16890.00

Income

	The View	VC	The Temple	Total
April	£15,682.60	£1,258.56	£585.47	£17,526.63
May*	£5,946.60	£847.60	£295.10	£7,089.30
	£21,629.20	£2,106.16	£880.57	£24,615.93

Spend per Head

	The View	VC	The Temple
April	£3.13	£0.46	£0.24
May	£1.65	£0.41	£0.28

% Increase/Decrease year on year

	Total 2016	Total 2017	Decrease/Increase	% Difference
April	9248.00	13244.00	3996.00	>43.21%
May	9467.00	10340.00	873.00	>9.22%

Visitor Services Events

58. **Easter Fun at The View:** 17th April 2017 Over 200 people attending a variety of arts and craft activities, including egg decorating for the annual egg rolling competition, as well as Easter trail around the buildings. Over £500 was taken on shop sales, equating to an average spend per transaction of £12.86
59. **Laser Tag:** April Half Term Back by popular demand, the Easter half term saw the return of Laser Tag in the Forest. Situated at Barn Hoppitt, The Silver Showdown team ran a three day course for local people, with two of the three days fully booked. Although this is not a City of London Event, having an event based at the View and Barn Hoppitt draws in larger groups to the area, who then take advantage of our visitor attractions and local amenities.
60. **Laser Tag:** May Half Term. Following the success of Easter, Silver Show held a repeat of the Easter event during the May half term holiday.
61. **Music at The Temple:** 21st May Kicking of the summer season, the Friends of Wanstead Parklands ran the first in a string of outdoor acoustic performances in partnership with Visitor Services team, attracting over 100 people for an afternoon of music in the sun and was a great success:
<http://www.ilfordrecorder.co.uk/news/hundreds-enjoy-idyllicmusic-in-wanstead-park-1-5031006>
62. **Queen Elizabeth's Hunting Lodge, temporary exhibition design and the forthcoming Forest Charter exhibition 2017** - A new modular interpretation template, has been designed for forthcoming exhibitions which will be flexible, clear and clean in its design and easily removed and rehung for when the Hunting Lodge displays need to be cleared for wedding and other venue hire use.
63. **Audience Development** - Following a museum grant enabling Visitor Services to buy into the Audience Agency audience segmentation framework in 2017, we have been collecting data through active market research surveys with visitors at The View, Connaught Water and sports users. By the end of the year we are expecting this data to give us improved information on our current Forest users and what in initially potential visitors from our local population), may be looking for from us. Audience Profile Reports from the Audience Agency have provided very interesting comparative demographic information for populations within a five mile radius in the Forest north, south and centrally.
64. **London Metropolitan Archive Migration and Heritage – 'Let's Talk About It symposium', 12 May.** The Museum and Heritage Manager contributed to LMA's successful symposium on this very current theme with a presentation on Epping Forest's contribution to Black History month 2016 and 2017 on the theme of Black Tudors. As well as demonstrating good and continuing partnership with LMA, this gave opportunity to develop links with other heritage speakers which will feed into events later on this year.

Major incidents

65. The further discovery of Oak Processionary Moth and Harmful Algal Blooms (HABS) at Perch Pond have been addressed through standing emergency procedures.

Appendices

- Appendix 1 –None

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