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| Committee(s) | Dated: |
| Epping Forest and Commons | 20 11 2017 |
| Subject: Epping Forest - Superintendent's Update for August to September 2017 (SEF 26/17) | Public |
| Report of: Director of Open Spaces & Heritage | For Information |
| Report author: Paul Thomson – Superintendent of Epping Forest | |

Summary

This purpose of this report is to summarise the Epping Forest Division's activities across August to September 2017.

Of particular note was the progress of the City of London (Open Spaces) Bill; a record 16,000 cow grazing days across Epping Forest; extensive wood pasture restoration work across the Forest; agreement through the Local Plans working group on mitigation protocols for the Epping Forest Special Area of Conservation; the commencement of a Parkland Management Plan for Copped Hall Park; a four day study visit by the British Lichen Society; and a powerful demonstration of Social Media 'reach' associated with a Forest Arson attack.

Recommendation(s)

Members are asked to:

- Note the report.

Main Report

Staff and Volunteers

1. The new Safety and Assets Manager, commenced work in early October.
2. A new apprentice grounds person has initially started work at the golf course, and will also be involved in the care of the football pitches

Budgets

3. At the six-month point expenditure is at approximately 47% and income at 50% with reference to original budgets. Revised estimates are underway and highlight considerable challenges for 2018/19 as detailed in the Chamberlains report.

Weather

4. August 2017 was slightly wetter than average, with total monthly rainfall that was 23.6% higher than the average for August since 1979 (fig. 2). There were 14 days of rainfall in total, with one day of exceptionally heavy rain on the 9th, which saw 33.8 mm of rainfall due to a slow-moving band of rain with some heavy and thundery bursts.
5. September 2017 was much wetter than average, with rainfall 61.8% higher than the average for September since 1979 (fig. 3). There were 23 days of rainfall in total, with 27th September as the wettest day with 17.4 mm of rainfall.

Sustainability

6. Photo-voltaic solar panels have now been fully commissioned at Harrow Road. The installation of similar units on the Saw Mill and Ancillary Barn at the Warren have now been completed. This work was funded through the sale of surplus equipment across the Open Spaces Department as part of the activity undertaken by the Fleet Board.

Epping Forest Projects

Open Spaces Bill 2015-18)

The Bill received a Third Reading in the House of Commons on 10 October 2017 and was immediately sent to the House of Lords where it received its first formal reading, opening the Lords petitioning period. No petitions were received during the allotted period, which enabled the second reading to be made on 25 October. The Bill will now proceed to the Unopposed Bill Committee at a date yet to be announced.

Branching Out Project

7. Visitor information signs – All remaining HLF orientation, interpretation, and waymarked trail and fingerpost signage were installed by the end of August. Unfortunately, some vandalism was sustained to one waymarked trail sign and one fingerpost following installation. Replacement parts have been ordered and remedial work is underway.
8. Gateway signage – The final gateway installation at Honey Lane has been scheduled for the beginning of October. Once complete the Car Parks and Access component of the Branching Out Project will be complete and a Gateway 7 report will be submitted to your Committee in due course.

Forest Services

Fly tipping

9. The Forest Service's team have introduced a new recording system which has corrected previous under reporting of fly tipping, the new scheme provides additional information regarding the predominant type of material constituting each fly tip.

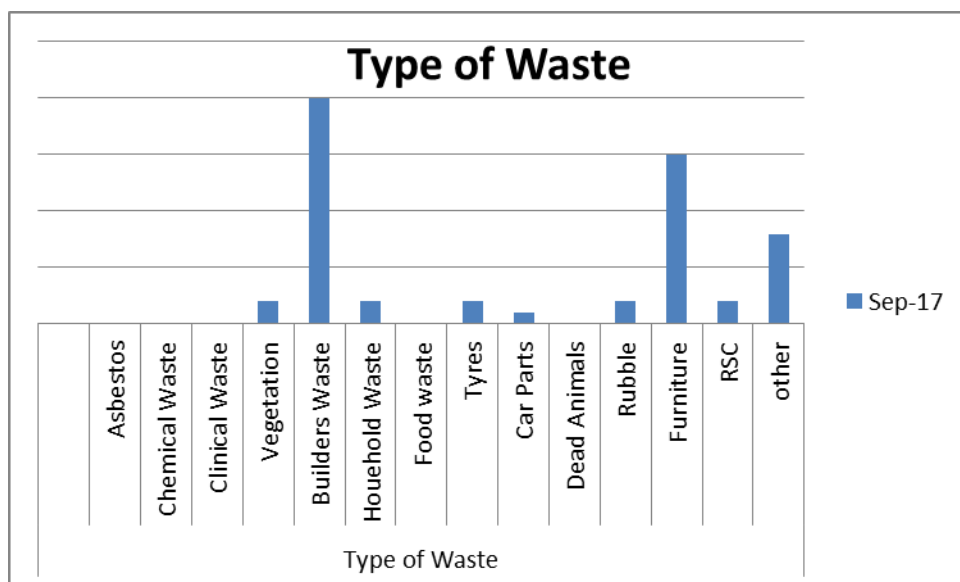
10. The number of fly-tips recorded in Epping Forest for the period from 1st January to the 9th September in 2017 was 458, this compares to 263 for the same period in 2016. This represents an overall 74% increase.

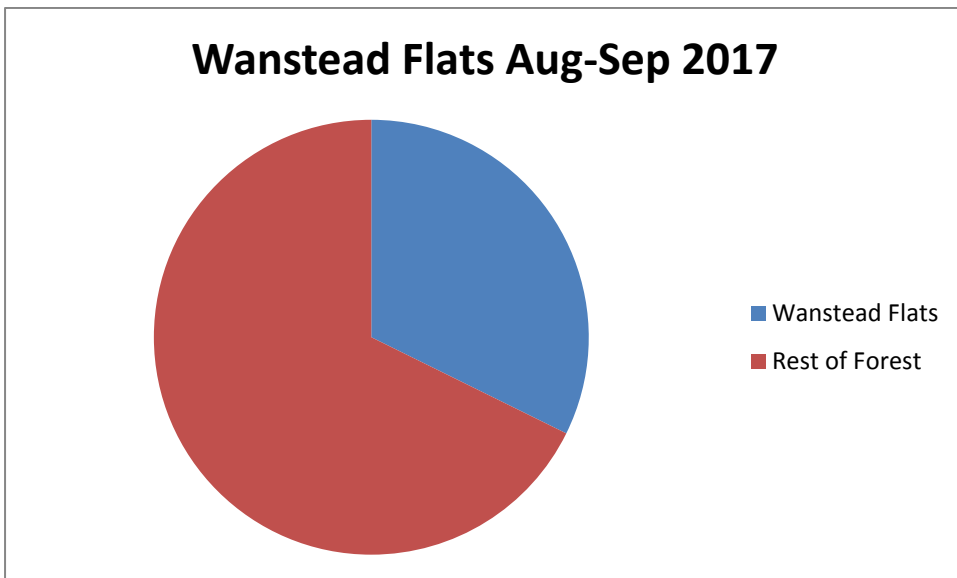
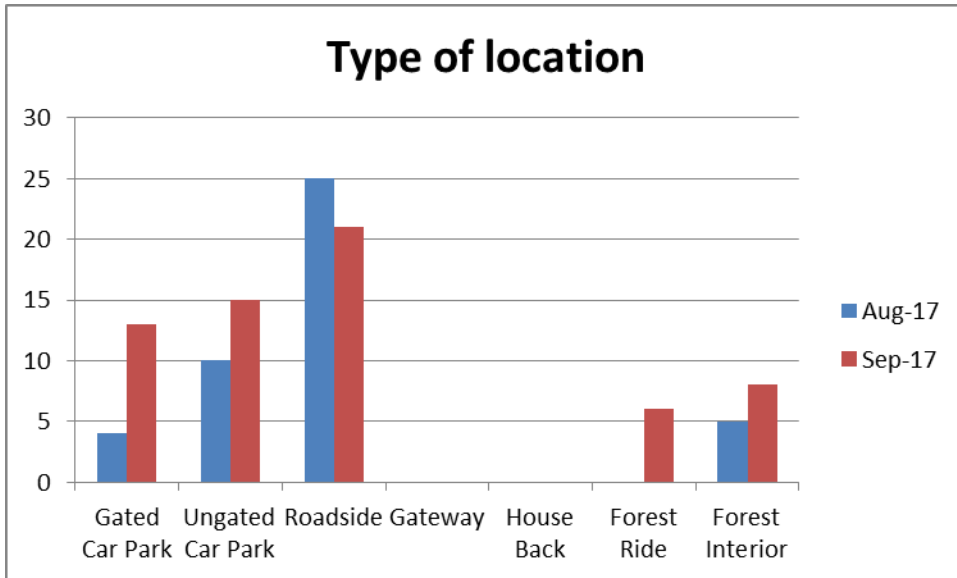
11. Total fly-tips for August 2017 were 33, 15 of which were in the Wanstead Flats area.

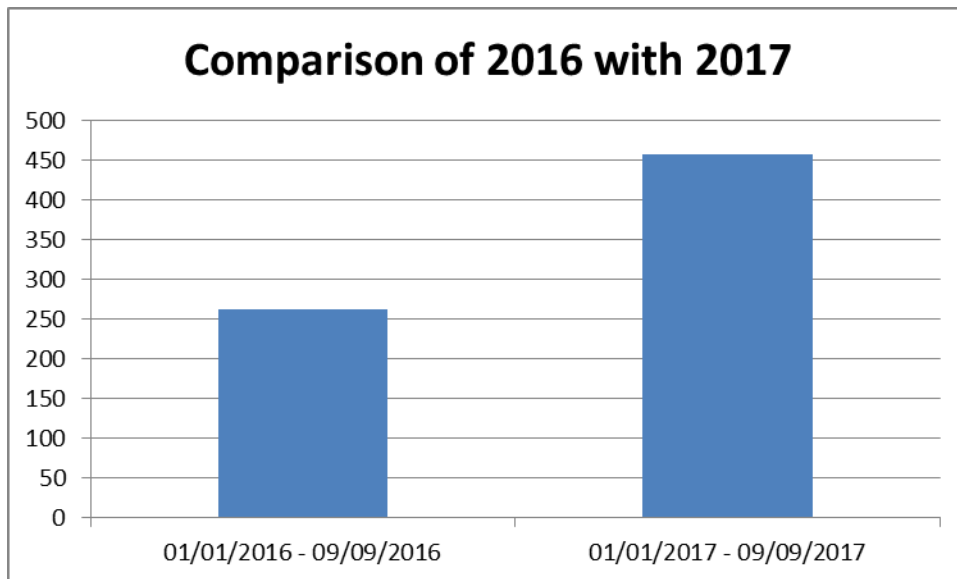
12. Total fly-tips for 9th September 2017 were 63, 16 of which were in the Wanstead Flats area.

13. 43% of fly-tips that occurred within the Forest during August & September 2017 were at roadside locations. New recorded data for September 2017 indicates that at 31% the most prevalent fly-tips comprise Builders Waste (mostly kitchens and bathrooms).

14. The data for fly-tips in Gated Car Parks is unfortunately skewed by figures for the car park at Centre Road, which although gated, has inadequate 'alligator teeth' which do not prevent vehicles entering the car park once the entrance gate is closed.







Rough Sleepers

15. The Forest Keeper team continue to work proactivity with outreach organisations and Local Authority (LA) to address Rough Sleeping within the Forest. Three new cases were dealt with during August and September bringing the total number of cases to 21 incidents in 2017, up 31% compared to the previous year.
16. Forest Keepers have faced two challenging incidents which underline the links between Rough Sleeping and mental health issues. A long-term Rough Sleeper who has been resident in the London Borough of Redbridge (LBR) area of the Forest, adjacent to the City of London Cemetery, had been declining all offers of help and support from Adult Services. Through frequent demonstrations of aggressive and hostile behaviour and the construction of camps and large fires the Rough Sleeper's presence had posed a number of challenges to Forest Keeper, LBR Outreach, Metropolitan Police Service (MPS) and London Fire Brigade (LFB) teams.
17. This individual had been arrested on multiple occasions for public order offences alongside detention under MPS Mental Health powers. After being arrested three times in five days a Forest Keeper was assaulted resulting in charges of Actual Bodily Harm being brought.
18. In another incident a Rough Sleeper in the South of the Forest made serious threats to an off-duty member of staff and members of his family. The MPS responded to this incident but unfortunately the Rough Sleeper had left the area and could not be interviewed. Following a three week absence, the same individual reappeared in the vicinity of the Keeper's Lodge and despite being in possession of a priority crime number the MPS response times were inadequate to secure an arrest. Subsequent engagement by the Head Forest Keeper with MPS resulted in action under MPS Mental Health powers.
19. It is hoped that further work to continue to strengthen the links between the MPS and the Forest Keepers will improve response times in such situations. Both incidents have been investigated internally and are likely to prompt reviews of

incident training; Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and the 2016 Open Spaces Department assessment of Body Worn Video (BWV).

Enforcement Activity

20. Eight Prosecutions were heard during the period under report. Of the previous 40 convictions, some £21,526.27 was awarded to the City Corporation as costs and compensation. The majority of the convictions are subject to payment by instalment and to date £7,448.00 (35%) has been received with £14,078.27 (65%) in arrears. Some 23 of the 40 convictions have yet to make a payment. This pattern reflects the national picture regarding financial impositions owed to the Courts which have been growing since 2014.

| Date of Court Hearing | Name of Defendant | Byelaw/ EPA | Court Name | Outcome | Amount Awarded |
|-----------------------|-------------------|---------------------------------|------------|---------|---|
| 14.09.2017 | J Bradley | Byelaw 3 (45) Disfigurement | Chelmsford | Guilty | Fine £135 Costs £360 V/S £30 |
| 19.9.2017 | C Bujor | EPA 34 2(a) Duty of Care | Thames | Warrant | N/A |
| 28.09.2017 | T Oliver | EPA 33 (5) Use of Vehicle | Chelmsford | Guilty | Fine £120 Costs £267 Comp £41 V/S £32 |
| 28.09.2017 | D Green | EPA 33 1(a) Deposit of Waste | Chelmsford | Guilty | Fine £320 Costs £260 Comp £100 V/S £32 |
| 28.09.2017 | M Dandoo | EPA 33 (5) Use of Vehicle | Chelmsford | Guilty | Fine £800 Costs £373 Comp £50 V/S £50 |
| 28.09.2017 | N Jummun | EPA 33 1(a) Deposit of Waste | Chelmsford | Guilty | Fine £800 Costs £373 Comp £50 V/S £50 |
| 28.09.2017 | I Hartopeanu | EPA 34 1(a) Duty of Care | Chelmsford | Warrant | N/A |
| 28.09.2017 | G Schwarcz | EPA 34 2(a) Duty of Care | Chelmsford | Guilty | Fine £300 Costs £372 Comp £41 V/S £30 |

Totals of above table

| Costs | Fine | Victim Surcharge | Comp |
|--------|--------|------------------|------|
| £2,005 | £2,475 | £224 | £282 |

| Number of Convictions | Costs/Comp Awarded | Payment Received | Arrears |
|-----------------------|--------------------|------------------|-----------|
| 40 | £ 21,526.27 | £ 7,448.00 | 14,078.27 |
| | | 35% | 65% |

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|-----------------------|--------------------|------------------|-----------|
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Licences

21. A total of 51 licences for events were issued during the two months being reported, which yielded an income of £35,107 plus VAT, showing a 305% increase on the previous year where 49 licences were with an income of £8,668.50.

Bushcraft and Community Engagement

22. The second Culture Board's Staff Development Cross department Day took place at Epping Forest on 6th September. 33 members of Open Spaces staff from 6 divisions attended and took part in a range of activities from scrub clearance on Chingford Plain to a ride in the Teupen Mobile Elevated Work Platform and tours of the View and Hunting Lodge. Many of the attendees gave very positive feedback.

23. Volunteer Community Groups coordinated by the Forest Keepers continue to meet monthly to work across the Forest: Tidy Our Flats, Wanstead Flats Litter Pickers, OWL (Hollow Ponds) Highams Park Snedders and Tidy Tarzy.

24. National Citizen Service (NCS) Challenge Social Action Projects continued in August with teams of young people from Redbridge and Waltham Forest worked pulling ragwort at Yates Meadow and installing marginal plants and protective fencing at Highams Park Lake. The participants fundraised £400.80 for Epping Forest which has seen tools and equipment purchased for future events and activities.

25. A Community Payback Team managed by Essex County Council's Epping Forest Community Rehabilitation Company continued their work on the Higher Level Stewardship site at Chingford Plain as part of 'Project Nightingale'.

26. Epping Forest District Council Youth Councillors also worked in partnership with the Forest Keepers on a project to highlight the dangers of Nitrous Oxide and its recreational use as a dissociative anaesthetic, alongside the litter problem that the canisters cause. In September, the Youth Councillors carried out a volunteer litter pick on the Forest at the Pillow Mounds and across the District. which as coordinated and assisted by Forest Keepers and Volunteer Wardens
27. Public Engagement Events coordinated by the Forest Keepers have included: Bushcraft, tracking, Shelter building and an Introduction to Bushcraft held in Wanstead Park. This was a first for the area and well received. Bushcraft events continue to be very popular. The events were fully booked and continue to receive great feedback
28. Two Corporate Workdays organised through East London Business Association were held at Lords Bushes. Staff from Mazars and CMS Law spent the day working on wood pasture restoration. A charge of £25 per person for the Corporate Workdays has allowed public engagement events to run at lower cost making them more accessible to a larger cross section of the community.
29. The Bushcraft and Community Engagement projects receive no internal funding and are run purely on income generated by these activities. As of 1 November this is in surplus of £1471.59.
30. Volunteer Forest Wardens are assisting with various projects across the Forest. These include repainting way marked trails, patrolling with Keepers and assisting with the above events and activities. They, along with other volunteers who assist with these events, continue to be a valuable resource and ensure the project's success.

Heritage; Landscape and Nature Conservation

Biodiversity

31. The British Lichen Society visited Epping Forest for a four-day survey at the beginning of September, coordinated by the Environmental Stewardship Officer. This was the first dedicated lichen survey of the Forest since 2002. Lichens provide information about the level of air pollution and also fine-scale responses to wood-pasture habitat restoration work because of their response to changes in sunlight levels. The valuable records of lichen distribution across the Forest are now being collated by this expert group. Discoveries included the encouraging increase in coverage of an ancient woodland indicator species *Enterographa crassa*, which seems to be benefiting from the restoration of wood-pasture in Bury Wood. There were also several nationally scarce species recorded.

Agri-environment Schemes

32. The Euro: Pound exchange rate set for the Basic Payment Scheme in September 2017 was 0.89, up 5% on 2016, which will result in an increase in the payment received from this scheme in the current year.

33. Contracts were successfully tendered and awarded to RDT Woodlands and GMT Contracting for work in several areas of wood-pasture this autumn/winter, including Bury Wood.

Grazing

34. By August, 60% of the Longhorn herd were grazing across Forest Land, including the newly fenced Trueloves fields and the opened up slopes of Fernhills. At Copped Hall the external grazier from Hertfordshire continued to graze his 200-head of cattle under licence. Heifers were drawn off the Forest in September to allow them to settle down for a month in the fields surrounding Great Gregories before their calving begins later this autumn. Five calves have been born to date.

35. The Invisible fence containment system operated without fault over the summer period, with only minor issues with a faulty battery. Over 2,700 cow days were achieved within the Forest's invisible fenced areas this summer.

36. As a result of the increase in our English Longhorn numbers this year and the addition of an external grazier on the Buffer Lands more sites were grazed than in any previous year since the grazing project began in 2005. As a result of the larger number of animals on the Buffer Lands, as well as the longer period of Forest grazing across more sites, over 16,000 individual cow grazing days were achieved – more than 3 times the totals of each of the previous two years.

Heritage

37. Consultants, *Rural Advice*, have started preparing a Parkland Management Plan for the Registered Park & Garden and Conservation Area of Copped Hall Park. This study is being funded with 80% grant-aid through the new Countryside Stewardship Scheme, following liaison with officers from both Natural England and Historic England. This work will build upon the Conservation Statement completed in 2015.

Land Management

Town & Country Planning

38. Officers commented on 7 applications during the period in question, none of which had significant negative impact on the Forest.

Land Registry

39. Work is underway to register a remaining strip of Woodford Green adjacent to Broomhill Road. – Initial registration has been challenged by a local resident who claims a prescriptive right to park vehicles. Referral to the Land Registry First-tier Tribunal will have been deferred until after 19 March 2018 to allow representations to take place. Counsel is to draft a letter in response to the resident's objection letter.

40. August saw a further two meetings of the Memorandum of Understanding steering group chaired by Epping Forest District Council (EFDC). At these meetings agreement was finally reached over the scope of the mitigation strategy for the Epping Forest Special Area of Conservation (SAC). Two main strands of

mitigation will be on dealing with recreational pressure and addressing the threat of increased air pollution.

41. Agreement was also eventually reached in September with regard to the need to furnish more evidence to inform the mitigation strategy. A stratified visitor survey including counts and questionnaires was approved and five local authorities agreed to fund it. The survey will take place in October and November across 15 locations in the Forest, including 12 car parks. It will be conducted by Footprint Ecology a specialist consultancy with detailed knowledge of recreational impacts on SACs.
42. The East Herts District Local Plan Examination in Public is to begin in October and Natural England made it clear that the protection of the Epping Forest SAC from the potential adverse impacts flowing from the proposed expansion of housing development around Harlow still needed to be addressed by the Plan. Progress on the mitigation strategy was one of the keys to addressing this in its view. The expansion of housing around Harlow is now recognised by national government as a new Garden Town. The project officer for this Garden Town development was appointed in September and will be based at EFDC, as this authority will also be proposing to allow housing to the southern side of Harlow as part of the Garden Town.

Operations

Habitat Works

43. Wood-pasture Restoration and Management – The contractors, RDT Woodlands, started habitat works in the Lincolns lane area and at Honey Lane Quarters over the last reporting period. The work is designed to open up space around flowering scrub and hornbeam pollards as part of the wood-pasture restoration programme and is financially supported by the Higher Level Environmental Stewardship Scheme.
44. Wanstead Park, floating pennywort control - Works are now complete for this year on controlling floating pennywort. A small number of late flushes were identified by local people and this new growth was manually removed by our contractor. Control has succeeded sufficiently for water to start being moved down the cascade to progressively refill the Ornamental Waters.
45. Highams Park Lake - Through a combination of volunteer and staff activity the open areas created in previous years have been maintained with some extension of these areas. The local volunteers have been focussed on developing a new café in the adjacent Highams Park through the summer and are hoping to be able to increase their practical conservation activity in the Lake area over the winter
46. HLS and other Grass cutting: All planned cut and collect grass works by staff and contractors has been completed. Again the relatively dry conditions have aided the completion of this work. Arborist teams have been undertaking flailing of sites cleared as part of the wood pasture conservation works. This annually increasing work package is proving to be a more and more substantive task and additional

planning will be required to ensure that this work is combined with existing commitments.

Risk Management Works

47. Highways Verge Vegetation - Contractors have commenced work on cutting back the highway verges. Work started on the north of the Forest and is working towards the south. This work forms part of a three year contract that ends this year and is scheduled for retendering in 2018. The current activity started later than we hoped but has been executed to be a high standard.
48. Tree Safety – A team is allocated to this task each week and work is progressing on the schedule for all trees.
49. Island Works Ornamental Waters - An arborist team spend two weeks removing fallen timber and cutting back woody vegetation from the edge of island in the Ornamental Waters. This work is designed to restore the definition of the islands and was undertaken now to take advantage of the dry conditions. Only the west side of the islands is planned for working with the east side being left to develop a more natural condition. In the process of the works being undertaken three new structures were found. A brick lined culvert that we suspect was once the inlet for water coming from the Roding when it was on its original alignment. Two bases were also revealed for a bridge linking the Heronry and Rookery Islands. This bridge is relatively unknown in the records and is something of a puzzle.

Access Works

50. Path verges have been cut on the main paths in the Forest, however, the increased need for the Arborist teams to keep focussed on the HLS wood-pasture program has meant we have had to allocate less of their time to this activity than in recent years. Additional non-arborist staff have been trained to operate the path maintenance machinery and it is hoped that over the winter these staff will be able to undertake additional ride management work. In particular, work is planned to reduce the amount woody material encroaching onto the paths.
51. An audit of the condition of the official path network is currently underway with four volunteers surveying key routes across the Forest. The volunteers are looking at three key elements, the edge vegetation, drainage and path condition. Currently over 27km of paths have been assessed with the information ultimately being developed to form the basis of a cyclical maintenance program.

Visitor Services

52. Visitor Figures

| | The View | VC | The Temple | QEHL | Total No |
|-----------|-----------------|-----------|-------------------|-------------|---------------------|
| August | 4197 | 2564 | 794 | 3123 | 10678 |
| September | 4215 | 1958 | 722 | 1902 | 8797 |
| | | | | | <u>19475</u> |

53. Income from Visitor Centres

| | The View | VC | The Temple | Total |
|-----------|-----------------|-----------|-------------------|------------------|
| August | £7,143.11 | £1,357.35 | £899.46 | £9,399.92 |
| September | £7,468.57 | £1,008.35 | £173.30 | £8,650.22 |
| | | | | £18050 |

54. Spend per head at Visitor Centres

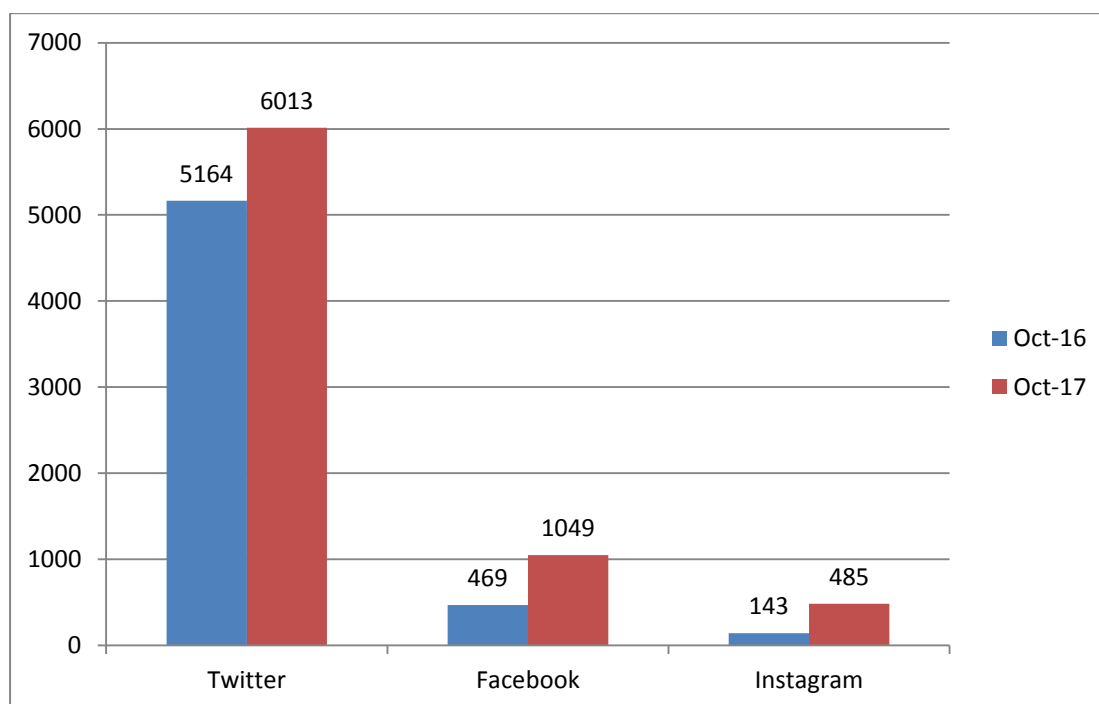
| | The View | VC | The Temple |
|-----------|-----------------|-----------|-------------------|
| August | £1.70 | £0.53 | £1.13 |
| September | £1.77 | £0.51 | £0.24 |

55. Visitor Numbers

| | Total 16 | Total 17 | Decrease/Increase | % Difference |
|-----------|----------|----------|-------------------|--------------|
| August | 9761 | 10678 | 917 | >9.39% |
| September | 6960 | 8797 | 1837 | >26.39% |

56. As of 25 October 2017 our social media following is:

- Twitter followers: 6,013 (16.4% year on increase)
- Facebook followers: 1049 (123.7% increase)
- Instagram followers: 485 (239% increase)
- The chart shows a comparison of our figures at the same point in 2016



57. The autumn edition of Forest Focus, which featured an article about the hydrology of Wanstead Park and promoted the Epping Forest Walking Festival, was well received. For the second time an e-zine version of the magazine was distributed in addition to the printed version.

58. Essex Life once again featured an Epping Forest article in August (sights of summer, and promotion of remaining summer events, including two Open Air Theatre performances) and in September (celebrating fungi in Epping Forest,

with the 'do not collect' message and promotion of the Centenary Walk and the early autumn events).

59. A disappointing arson attack on one of Epping Forest's much-loved veteran oak trees at Warren Pond resulted in record numbers of social media engagement. Epping Forest were quick to report on this within the local community, and this, coupled with quality photographs obtained at the scene, meant that local social media responded very well to the posts on Twitter and Facebook. Two Facebook posts (informing about the incident and an update the following day notifying of the positive outcome that the tree had survived the attack) had a reach of 48,321 people and the two tweets achieved 16,313 impressions – therefore total social media reach achieved was 64,634. Again this demonstrates the power of social media to engage with extremely large numbers of our visitors quickly.

Chingford Golf Course

60. August was quiet as usual due to the holidays with play picking up in September.

61. The Golf Shop is now fully stocked with sales going reasonably well. Buggy and equipment hire remains high especially during August and September with more occasional players.

62. An agronomy report made in early summer indicated a number of areas for improvement to the course. As a result spraying has been increased and further aeration. Drainage work on the new 3rd tee has been carried out to help keep the tee in use all year round without it being waterlogged

63. We will be doing more to market the course as an organically maintained course as this has not been highlighted previously

64. The Holly Trail Café has been fairly popular with customers enjoying the outdoor seating. Cycle hire suffered during the wet weather but has been more popular during the school holidays.

Wanstead Flats Football

65. The new season has commenced. Bookings are lower than in previous years despite remaining the cheapest pitches in the area. Anecdotally some of the clubs have folded and it may be that the time commitment to full pitch games is waning and is beginning to be apparent in our bookings. This reflects the increase in popularity of artificial grass pitches with the focus on shorter games that fit in with busy lifestyles. We are considering how this can be built in to grass pitch provision in future along with pitch improvements and the need to improve facilities.

Visitor Services Events

Exhibition at Queen Elizabeth's Hunting Lodge: Forest Charter 800 for all, 8 July to 6 October.

66. This exhibition continued through August and September and was popular with families over the school summer holidays. We had strong engagement from the public who contributed several hundred drawings of 'Forest picnic food' and 'Happy Dog portraits' to the displays.

67. Professor Nicholas Robinson, an expert on Forest Law (University Professor for the Environment & Kerlin Distinguished Professor of Environmental Law Emeritus, Pace University, USA) commended the exhibition for its 'superb renderings of the Forest Charter chapters'.

The People's Forest: Grimston's Oaks Glorious Picnic, Sunday, 13 August 2017

68. We continued our collaboration with artist Gayle Chong Kwan on the People's Forest art project with an event under Grimston's Oak. Participants of all ages constructed natural towers of sticks, designed Forest protest placards and enjoyed a vigorous tug of war of Forest Protectors v House builders. The afternoon was attended by 30-40 people and viewed by several hundred passers-by including a large group of East London ramblers and London blind ramblers.

Open House, Sunday, 17 September 2017

69. We participated in Open House London's 25th anniversary year of encouraging 'Free public entry to London's best buildings' with three entries:

- i. Queen Elizabeth's Hunting Lodge and The View; including a formal guided tour of the Hunting Lodge and The View and book signing of Forest Charter booklet. The afternoon at The View coincided with the Centenary Walk's lunchtime stop which enriched both groups of visitors. Total attendance 793
- ii. The Temple with archive handling table, lecture and refreshments from Friends of Wanstead Parklands attended by 169 people
- iii. a Wanstead Heritage Walk from the Central Line station to The Temple attended by 45 people.

Singing for the Brain, first session at The View, 9 September 2017

70. The Alzheimer's Society obtained a grant from The City of London Central Grants Programme to provide singing and dance sessions for people with early stage dementia. These have now commenced at the View, Epping Forest has not made a financial contribution but the scheme enables the museum to outreach to a new audience. The Epping Forest Guardian covered this as a 'good news' story on 21 September. Each session has been attended by between 18 and 30 people (usually one person with dementia and a family member as carer). Attendees have commented favourably on the beautiful location of The View and appreciated the opportunity to expand their visit to The View itself, as well as to benefit from the fresh air and green of the Forest.

71. **The Emperor's New Clothes**, Thursday 10 August: Second of three Illyria productions at The Temple, Wanstead Park. With over 200 ticket sold via our online booking system and tickets on the gate, this was a very well received production, with a profit after production costs of **£1062.08**

72. **Pride & Prejudice**, Sunday 20 August: The final of three outdoor summer theatre productions, attracting over 200 members of the public. A very well-received adaptation of Jane's Austin's original story. An overall profit after production cost of **£1132.30**

Major incidents

73. None

Appendices

- None

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