

Committee(s)	Dated:
Epping Forest and Commons	12 03 2018
Subject: Epping Forest - Superintendent's Update for December 2017 to January 2018	Public
Report of: Superintendent of Epping Forest (SEF 18/17)	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 2017 to January 2018.

Of particular note was the significant progress with the passage of the City of London Corporation (Open Spaces) Bill; a major response to the Epping Forest District Council on the soundness of the proposed Local Plan, a report on the main modifications to the London Borough of Redbridge's Local Plan recognising comments by the City Corporation and a successful Christmas Event at The View.

Recommendation(s)

Members are asked to:

- Note the report.

Main Report

Staff and Volunteers

1. Two apprenticeships are currently being advertised for Business Administration and Arboricultural posts. Both roles are funded centrally and recruitment process due for completion by mid-March.
2. Recruitment for the permanent staff at Wanstead Flats and Chingford Golf Course is complete. Three members of staff were assimilated to a new role, two members of staff with short term contracts have been appointed on a permanent basis and one new Green/Grounds Keeper has been appointed.
3. To supplement the permanent staff, three casual caretakers and one casual Green/Grounds Keeper have been appointed.

Budgets

4. Sustained success on income generation, due in the large part to the development of a comprehensive licencing policy, put the Division currently in a slight underspend position. Plans are underway to achieve target expenditure by

year end. At beginning of February, Epping Forest is currently at 81% of target expenditure and 83% through the year, but with significant grant income still to be received.

Weather

5. December 2017 was much wetter than average, with total monthly rainfall 100.8% above the average total rainfall for December since 1979 (52.4 mm). There were 22 days of rainfall in total, the wettest days being 12, 13 and 26 December, which saw 20.2 mm, 14.4 mm, and 15.6 mm of rainfall respectively.
6. This is in contrast to December 2016, which was 72.5% below the average total rainfall for December since 1979 (52.4 mm). January 2018 had just under average rainfall (4.9% below the average total rainfall for January since 1979). There were 21 days of rainfall in total, the wettest days being the 2 and 21 January, which both saw 11.6 mm of rainfall. This is the third January in a row with close to average rainfall.

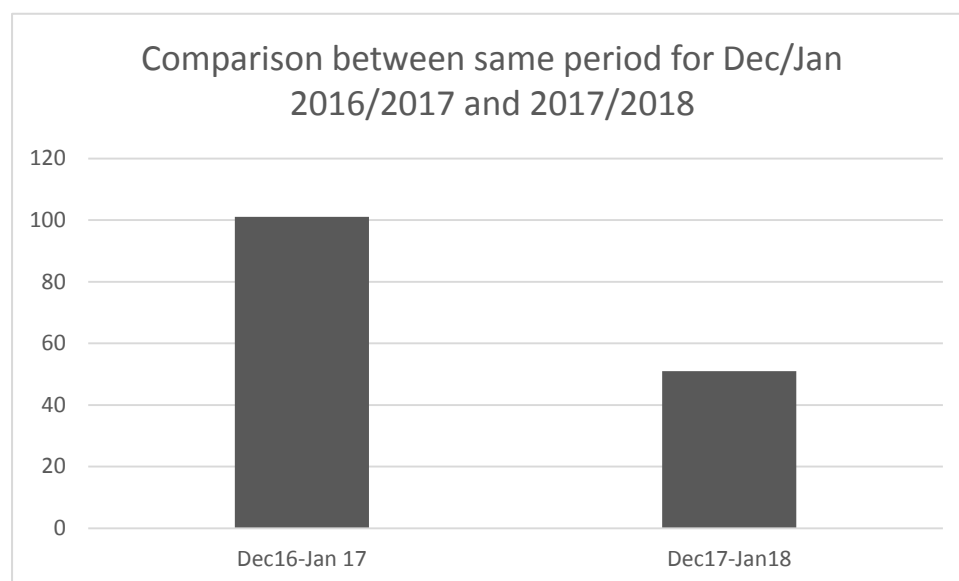
Epping Forest Projects

Open Spaces Bill 2016

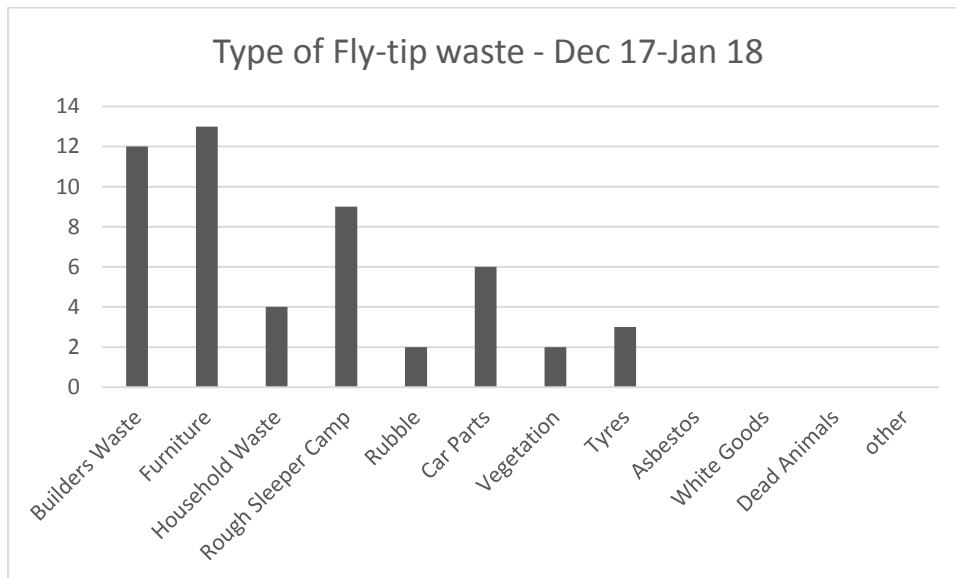
7. The House of Lords Unopposed Bill Committee met on 31st January and after a session of questions, the Chairman, Lord McFall of Alcluith stated he was satisfied with responses and would commend the Bill unchanged to the House. The third reading has a tentative date of 27th February, after which, if unopposed, it will move forward for Royal Assent.

Forest Services

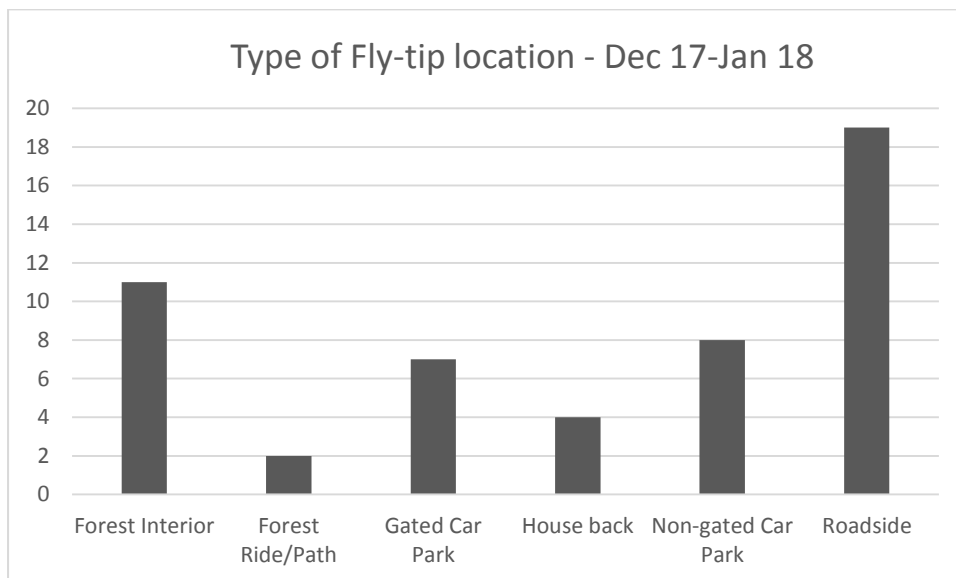
Fly tipping



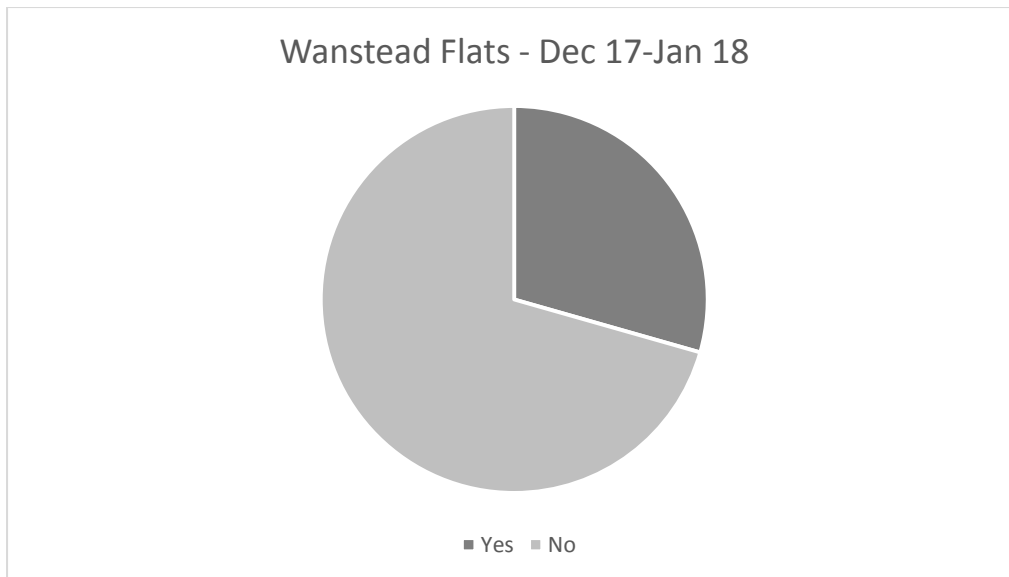
8. Fly-tipping for the period of December 2017 - January 2018 totalled 51 incidents, which is a 50% reduction in comparison to the 102 fly-tips removed during the same period 12 months ago.



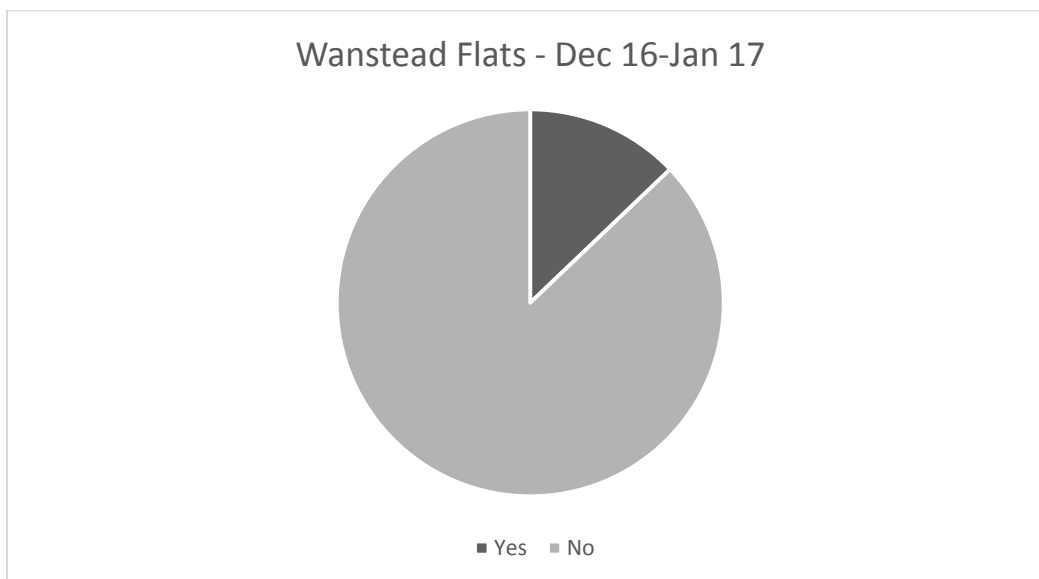
9. Furniture (25%) and Building waste (23%) remain the most numerous materials deposited illegally in the Forest.



10. Forest Roadsides remain the most vulnerable locations for fly-tipping and comprise up 37% of all fly-tips over the December 2017 - January 2018 period.
11. Analysis of fly-tips in gated car parks showed that 4 of the 7 fly-tips were in Centre Road car park. Improvements to the security arrangements at this car park have commenced on the 20 February 2018.



12. A total of 23% of fly-tips occurred in the Wanstead Flats area in December 2017 - January 2018, this is a higher percentage compared to the same period last year at 13%. However, the number of tips remained similar at 15 and 13 respectively.



Rough Sleepers

13. There has been a slight increase of 2% in rough sleeper camps with one found in the Beacontree Avenue area, two on Leyton Flats, one in the Wanstead Flats and Bury wood area. These camps have been cleared, apart from one on Leyton Flats. This camp has been reported to the UK Border Enforcement Agency in the expectation that the person will be subject to enforcement action. The City Corporation is continuing to work closely with the Police, homeless organisations and the local authorities to resolve rough sleeping on the Forest.

Enforcement Activity

14. The following prosecutions were heard during the period under report.

Date of Court Hearing	Name of Defendant	Byelaw/ EPA	Court Name	Outcome	Amount Awarded
Trial 6 Dec 2017	Shanthakumar Sathiyaseelan	EPA 33 1(a) EPA 33 (5)	Chelmsford Crown Court	Adjourned to May 2018	N/A
Mention Hearing 12 Jan 2018	Shanthakumar Sathiyaseelan	EPA 33 1(a) EPA 33 (5)	Chelmsford Crown Court	Prep for May 2018	N/A
PTPH 11 Jan 2018	McGuire	EPA 34 1(a)	Chelmsford Crown Court	GUILTY PLEA	Fine £900 Costs £1100 Comp £500
PTPH 11 Jan 2018	Smith	EPA 33 1(a)	Chelmsford Crown Court	Acquitted	N/A

Licences

15. A total of 18 licences for events were issued during the two months being reported, which yielded an income of £2,148.60 plus VAT. 26 licences were issued during the same period in 2016/17 income of £7,485.83 (inclusive of large compound of £2,000).

Unauthorised Occupations

16. There have been no Unauthorised Occupations recorded during this period. However, the City Corporation has continued to monitor traveller movements following evictions within the area by partner authorities.

Dog Incidents

There have been no serious dog incidents reported.

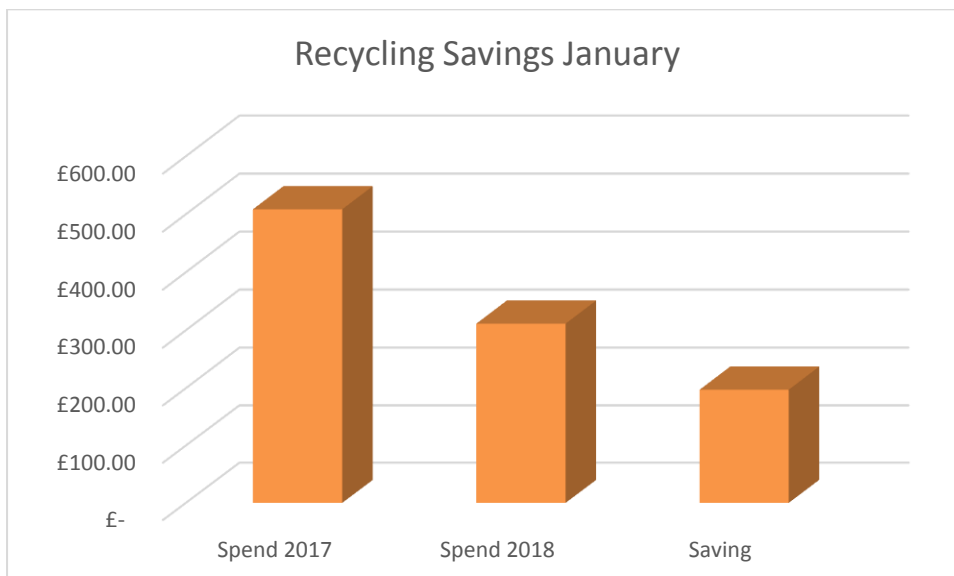
Waste Management and Recycling

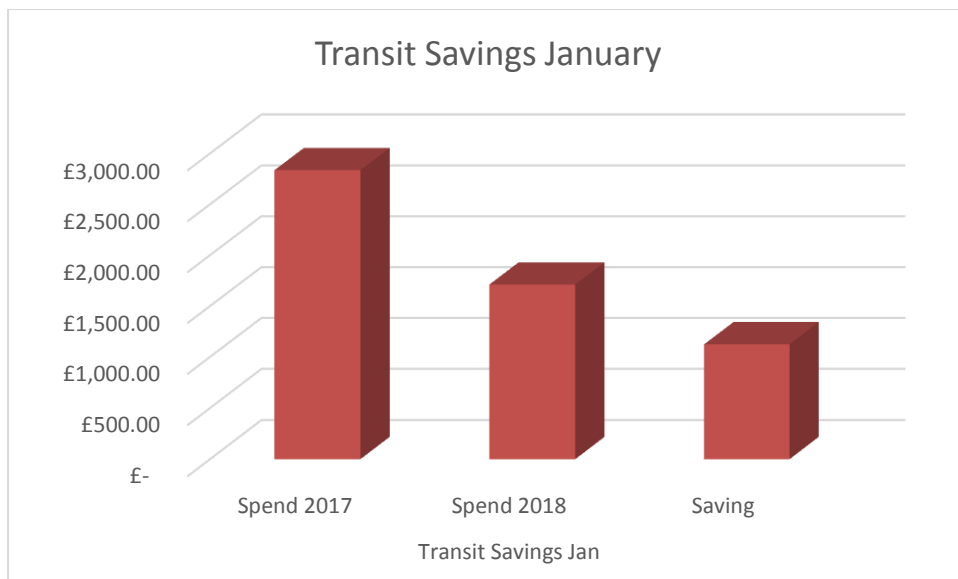
17. We have recently completed a review of waste management and recycling within Epping forest. This includes changes to working practice, procedures and contract review. This has resulted in considerable savings, which are reflected below:

<u>2017</u>					
<i>Month</i>	<i>London Waste £ Transit</i>	<i>Bywaters Tipping £ Transit</i>	<i>Bywaters £ Waste</i>	<i>Bywaters £ Recycling</i>	<i>Total Month</i>
January	£ 2,834.91		£1,693.10	£ 508.44	£ 5,036.45
Total Transit	£ 2,834.91	Total	£1,693.10	£ 508.44	£ 5,036.45

<u>2018</u>					
<i>Month</i>	<i>London Waste £ Transit</i>	<i>Bywaters Tipping £ Transit</i>	<i>Bywaters £ Waste</i>	<i>Bywaters £ Recycling</i>	<i>Total Month</i>
January	£ 928.06	£ 783.00	£ 395.92	£ 311.14	£ 2,418.12
Transit Total	£ 1,711.06	Total	£ 395.92	£ 311.14	£ 2,418.12

<u>Recycling Savings Jan</u>			
	<u>Spend 2017</u>	<u>Spend 2018</u>	<u>Saving</u>
	£ 508.44	£ 311.14	£ 197.30
<u>Transit Savings Jan</u>			
	<u>Spend 2017</u>	<u>Spend 2018</u>	<u>Saving</u>
	£ 2,834.91	£ 1,711.06	£ 1,123.85
<u>Bywaters Waste Savings Jan</u>			
	<u>Spend 2017</u>	<u>Spend 2018</u>	<u>Saving</u>
	£ 1,693.10	£ 395.92	£ 1,297.18
<u>Total Savings For January Only</u>			<u>£ 2,618.33</u>





18. Although this is the first month of the new contract, the savings are encouraging and the trend is expected to be ongoing throughout 2018.

Heritage; Landscape and Nature Conservation

Biodiversity

19. The nationwide influx of wintering continental Hawfinches finally became apparent in Epping Forest in January. Flocks of up to 15 of these birds, our largest finch species, were seen throughout the month in Bury Wood, especially between Ludgate and Pear-tree Plains. The Hawfinch used to breed in Epping Forest and this was one of the first places it was discovered as a British breeding species, by the Epping naturalist Henry Doubleday.

20. **Ramorum Disease update:** the Sweet Chestnut tree at The Warren Plantation reported previously with suspected Ramorum proved positive for the disease.

This tree is now dead and itself no longer poses a threat as the Ramorum spores are only generated from living plant tissues. However, this now means that the disease may appear in the many other Sweet Chestnut trees. This will require a heightened level of monitoring and swift action to fell infected trees. No infection has been found amongst the Larch trees (the other major tree vector species). However, the long-planned felling of these conifers will take place as part of next year's work programme.

Agri-environment schemes

21. Epping Forest officers and their colleagues from other Open Spaces Divisions met Natural England again at the Epping Forest offices at the end of January for more discussions about the new Stewardship Scheme and implications for the income for habitat management work.

Grazing

22. The cattle have spent December and January in the winter housing at **Great Gregories**. Calving for the Longhorn herd continued during this period while the calving of the City Commons Sussex herd began in January. The Sussex herd had had 7 calves by the end of January. In the meantime, in this period 11 more Longhorn calves were born making a total of 21 calves this winter so far, with 7 more expected in February/March. A further 11 Longhorn cows and a bull were purchased which brings the current Conservators' Longhorn herd size to 134 animals with more calves expected. The herd size is now very close to the total number originally envisaged for this stage in the approved Grazing Expansion Plan (prior to the termination of the external grazing contract).

Heritage

23. Good progress has been made with the **Copped Hall Parkland Management Plan** preparations and discussion were held with the consultants during January ahead of the production of a draft for further consultation with officers.

Land Management

Town & Country Planning

24. **Epping Forest District Council (EFDC) Local Plan:** The main planning "event" was the 6-week consultation by Epping Forest District Council (EFDC) on its new Local Plan – a so-called Regulation 19 consultation which comes prior to the Plan's submission to the Planning Inspectorate. The consultation period came to an end on 29th January and a substantive response was made on behalf of the Grand Committee under delegated authority and is reported separately in more detail.
25. **London Borough of Redbridge (LBR) Local Plan:** At the same time as our response to the EFDC Local Plan was being made, the Inspector's Report on the Main Modifications (MMs) required for the London Borough of Redbridge Local Plan was published. Despite our representations the Inspector has accepted the "2km buffer zone" for development control around the Forest, which we argued was arbitrary and too limited for some development impacts, including traffic generation. Although it is considered a buffer, nonetheless a total of 500 new houses are proposed within the zone and the Inspector accepted this number.

26. However, the Local Plan Policy LP39, protecting Epping Forest Special Area of Conservation (SAC) was enhanced by the Inspector and The Conservators' role is highlighted in the MMs. The Inspector required specific mitigation solutions to be provided rather than vague references to mitigation. In MMs 68 & 69 the Inspector has required that the Strategic Access Management and Monitoring (SAMM) and Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG) mitigation measures involve direct consultation with The Conservators. In addition, levels of tariff per house that are required from developers to fund mitigation must be explained in a Planning Obligations Supplementary Planning Document (SPD).
24. Your officers will be seeking to engage LBR in early discussions about mitigation and examine how we might influence the Planning Obligations SPD. It is hoped that a meeting with LBR and involving Natural England, the statutory body responsible for SAC protection, can be arranged early in 2018. We will also be requesting that LBR becomes a signatory to the existing Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) for the protection of the SAC. The MoU is being used as a basis for establishing a mitigation strategy across 4 other local authorities, including EFDC.
25. In addition to the Local Plans responses, your officers also commented on 11 planning applications during the period in question. Key points included:
- 25.1 Land at Greenview, Holyfield Road** – demolition of existing commercial buildings and the erection of nine detached dwellings. Access to the site is across Forest land; current commercial site is claiming a prescriptive right of way.
- 25.2 Forest Rise, Debden Lane** – total refurbishment with outbuilding for swimming pool and guests (second dwelling). Access is across Forest Lane; with the existing property benefits from a prescriptive right of way.
26. **Upshire Millennium Field** – An Easy Access Path, which has been grant funded by Tesco's, has now been installed at the Millennium Field. The trustees are very pleased with the result and feel that this will prove a worthy asset for the public using the recreation area.

Operations

Habitat Works

27. Wood-pasture Restoration and Management – Contract and in-house arborist teams continue working on wood-pasture restoration, which is the main activity for the in-house teams at present. The final measurement of the areas worked this winter has still to be done, however, activity on the ground has been especially prominent this year with increasing positive and negative public comment on the work. The forest mulcher was hired for a further three-week period undertaking work in Lords Bushes, Walthamstow Forest, Three Planks Ride, Almshouse Plain and Barn Hoppitt.
28. Wanstead park: Ornamental Waters continues its path of recovery with water from the borehole still being diverted to it. The level in the Heronry Pond is now relatively low and the source of increasing comment. Our communications have

emphasised that our priority is to restore water levels as best as we can this winter in the Ornamental Waters. Subsequently there will need to be some juggling of the water movement to restore levels in the Heronry Pond while not undermining the gains made in the Ornamental Waters.

Risk Management Works

29. Tree Safety – Consultants surveys of the Forest's tree safety zone have almost been completed with a few additional surveys being commissioned. Work to complete the 2017 program arising from the consultant's survey is still ongoing with a scheduled completion for the end of March 2018.
30. Tree Root Nuisance: A review is being undertaken into all Tree Root Nuisance claims made against the Forest. The first phase of this review is complete with both the paper and electronic files reconciled. We are currently checking the status of works and other commitments identified in the files on the ground. Once complete we will be working with the insurance team to identify possible strategies for reducing the City's significant financial liabilities in this area.
31. Sink hole: A sink hole of around three feet deep by five feet across appeared on St Peters Green on Friday 26 January exposing some infrastructure cables. Following initial investigations, we sought to get UK Power Network to make good the sink hole since, it was their cable being exposed. They have offered a contribution towards the costs of repair however the refilling of the sinkhole is now being undertaken by contractor engaged by the City of London.

Access Works

32. Ride Management: 3.5 km of the surfaced rides have had a significant cut back of the edge vegetation. This work will help to let light and wind penetrate the ride surfaces and will allow quicker drying out of the surface. In undertaking the work, the teams have cleared back to any drains that are present so as to facilitate and potential future drainage works. The current works give a flavour of the likely proposed scale of activity for the wider surfaced path network.
33. Car Park Improvements: With funding from the City Surveyors team we have been able to make some helpful improvements to several car parks:
 - 33.1 Honey Lane car park has had new gating installed along with some resurfacing,
 - 33.2 Lincolns Lane has had its entranceway extended to allow cars to be fully on a hard surface when turning in or out of the car park and the whole car park has been top-dressed. We are keeping this car park closed for a time to allow these works to settle in as ideally they would be undertaken in dryer conditions and any benefits to the resurfacing would be quickly lost if we opened the car park too early.
 - 33.3 High Beach Church: We have improved the edging and undertaking limited surfacing to this small but well used pull in by the church

33.4 Centre Road: Works are pending at Centre Road to improve the surfacing and gateway security. To let the surfacing works settle in the car park will have to be shut for a time and reassessed before opening.

34. The small green on the corner of Nursery Road and Smarts Lane in Loughton has had the new style oak bollards installed along its edge to deter commuter parking. Unhelpfully, part way along, and despite the service check showing no cables, electric cables appeared exactly on the line of the bollards. The current gap section where bollards could not continue to be installed we are proposing to close off by installing couple of benches.

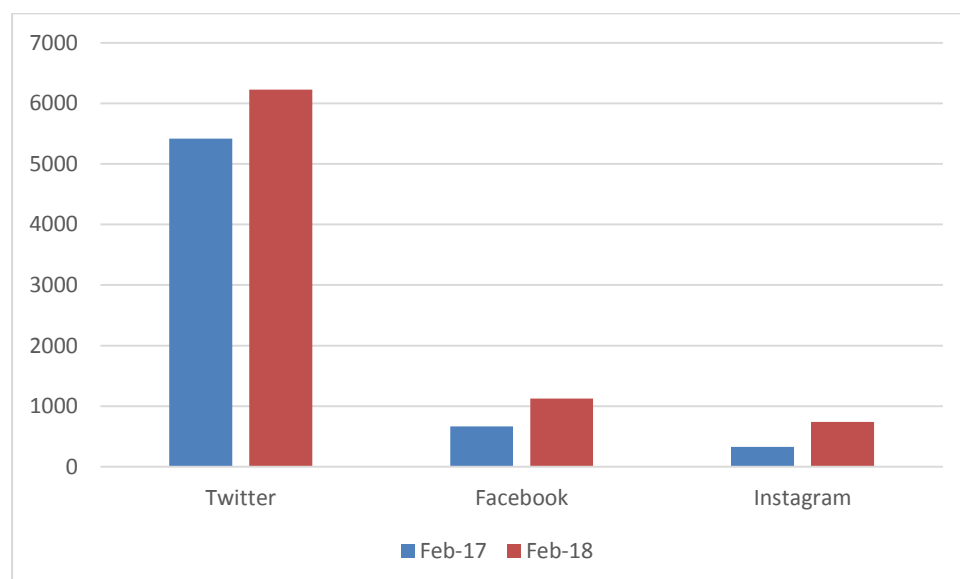
Visitor Services

Communication and Information

35. As of 8 February 2018, Epping Forest social media followers are:

- Twitter followers: 6,226 (15% year on increase)
- Facebook likes: 1126 (69% increase)
- Facebook followers: 1197 (newly included in report so no comparison)
- Instagram followers: 715 (125% increase)

The chart shows a comparison of our figures at a similar reporting point in 2017



36. Forest Focus winter edition was very well received. The ezine edition is greatly increasing in popularity. Consideration is being given to increase the print run of Forest Focus, due to popular demand.

37. Work has now been completed revising the new official Epping Forest map and delivery is expected in March 2018.

38. Work has now been completed on the 'Short walks in Epping Forest' book. The advance 100 copies have been received and reaction has thus far been exceptionally positive. The main delivery is expected in mid-March. The team are currently working on retailing and promotion of the book. The partnership work with local Estate Agent, Stow Brothers, is in place, with the free offer of the book from The View available to those who receive 'welcome to the area' packs from the estate agent (as per the funding application).

Chingford Golf Course

39. Numbers of visitors to the golf course have been lower, partly down to the snow we had in December which closed the golf course for a week along with the wet weather throughout December & January. In a result of this hire equipment has been restricted going out to protect the course.

40. We currently have 724 public registered players on the booking system which is increasing on a weekly basis now we are continuing to register users when visiting.

41. Total revenue for December & January was £21,694.21. Revenue from online bookings for December was £484.50 & £1132.51 for January. Revenue from the front of house golf reception for December & January was £20,077.20 of which:

- Golf Green fees = £16,233.35
- Fridge Sales = £345.50
- Hire Equipment Sales = £1237.50
- Shop Stock Sales = £1600.85
- Football Bookings = £660

42. Total revenue from online bookings and front of house revenue from December & January last year was £26,337,18; a total decrease of £4,642.97. Part of the decrease of income over the wetter months this year is due to our payment schemes changing from last year where season tickets holders were still paying towards their final fees in December & January via the 'pay as you go' system which we've stopped to allow us to collect our fees earlier in the year.

43. The greens were cut once or twice a week depending on the weather throughout December and January. Solid spiking was carried out in front of the tees on wet patches to allow foot traffic to move easier and create less wear. We suffered multiple types of damage to the greens; hole 7 has suffered from severe motorbike damage twice, holes 4, 5 & 6 also had motorbike damage but was not as severe. Dog damage to the greens has increased but this could be down to the fact the surface is softer due to weather conditions.

Wanstead Flats Football

44. East London League, who have a history of delayed payment, have paid in full for 2017/18 season.

Visitor Numbers

Visitor Number	Month	The View	VC	The Temple	QEHL	Total No
2017	January	2383	1263	759	1453	5858
	February	3289	1266	559	1952	7066
	March	2749	1444	532	1603	6328
	April	5016	2729	2412	3087	13244
	May	3607	2074	1052	2248	8981
	June	4018	1790	513	2861	9182
	July	3942	2103	465	2599	9109
	August	4197	2564	794	3123	10678
	September	4215	1858	722	1902	8697
	October	4519	2569	744	2594	10426
	November	2956	1757	649	1775	7137
	December	3530	933	643	2809	7915
Calendar Year		44421	22350	9844	28006	104621

Visitor Centres Income

Income	Month	The View	VC	The Temple	Total
2017	January	£4,060.00	£571.00	£240.00	£4,871.00
	February	£4,674.00	£435.00	£189.00	£5,298.00
	March	£5,404.00	£768.00	£174.00	£6,346.00
	April	£15,682.60	£1,258.56	£585.47	£17,526.63
	May*	£5,946.60	£847.60	£295.10	£7,089.30
	June	£5,211.55	£763.14	£146.47	£6,121.16
	July	£7,951.95	£1,271.17	£246.83	£9,469.95
	August	£7,142.18	£1,358.28	£899.46	£9,399.92
	September	£7,109.09	£1,008.35	£188.18	£8,305.62
	October	£7,236.31	£1,261.64	£217.84	£8,715.79
	November	£5,259.90	£809.92	£211.64	£6,281.46
	December	£8,051.97	£481.02	£245.66	£8,778.65
Calendar Year		£83,730.15	£10,833.68	£3,639.65	£98,203.48

Visitor Services Spend per Head

Spend per Head	Month	The View	VC	The Temple	Total
2017	January	£1.70	£0.45	£0.32	£2.47
	February	£1.42	£0.34	£0.34	£2.10
	March	£1.97	£0.53	£0.33	£2.83
	April	£3.13	£0.46	£0.24	£3.83
	May	£1.65	£0.41	£0.28	£2.34
	June	£1.30	£0.43	£0.29	£2.02
	July	£2.02	£0.60	£0.53	£3.15
	August	£1.70	£0.53	£1.13	£3.36
	September	£1.69	£0.54	£0.26	£2.49
	October	£0.28	£0.49	£0.29	£1.06
	November	£1.78	£0.46	£0.33	£2.57
	December	£2.28	£0.52	£0.38	£3.18

Visitor Figures Comparisons 2016/2017

% Increase/Decrease in	Month	Total 16	Total 17	Difference 16/17	% Difference
Annual Visitor Figures	January	5858	6145	287	5%
	February	7066	6416	-650	-9%
	March	8481	6313	-2168	-26%
	April	9248	13244	3996	43%
	May	9467	10340	873	9%
	June	5978	9182	3204	54%
	July	8807	9109	302	3%
	August	9761	10678	917	9%
	September	6960	8697	1737	25%
	October	9522	10426	904	9%
	November	6403	7137	734	11%
	December	7869	7915	46	1%
Total				10182.00	

Visitor Services Events and Activities

45. Epping Forest Christmas Grotto ran on *Saturday 16th & Sunday 17th December* attracting over 2,000 people, with over 500 pre-booked tickets sold for the weekend, creating £7,458.61 in ticket sales alone. With an array of activities to take part in, the weekend was a huge success with positive feedback given through Survey Monkey. Profit made from the event was £2,568.02.

46. A taster session craft event at The View, 'Printing inspired by Nature', 24 January 2018, was a partnership event with London Borough of Waltham Forest Adult Education Service (LBWFAES). LBWFAES wanted to test appetite for this class in the location. All course costs were met by LBWFAES and 13 people of a maximum 16 attended. Attendees represented over a third of total visitors on a cold wet day and also made purchase in the shop. As a result, further paid for bookings for courses are in discussion.
47. Visitor Services responded constructively to discussions initiated by London Borough of Waltham Forest officers concerning a bid on 1 December 2017 to be London Borough of Culture 2019 or in 2020. Workshops run by LBWF indicated that residents of LBWF felt that Epping Forest was a unique and significant contribution to what was special about their borough and local artists were keen to put on events and activities relating to the Forest. The View is illustrated in the bid document, p15. 22 boroughs have submitted entries: the winning borough will be awarded £1.1 million. The 'Forest' London Boroughs of Redbridge and Newham also bid for this award. The winner, and 6 'exemplary' other bids are due to be announced in February.

Major incidents

48. None.

Appendices

- Appendix 1 – None

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