

Committee(s)	Dated:
Epping Forest Consultative Epping Forest and Commons	13 06 2018 09 07 2018
Subject: Epping Forest - Superintendent's Update for December 2017 to March 2018 (SEF 25/18)	Public
Report of: Superintendent of Epping Forest	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 December 2017 to March 2018.

Of particular note was the significant progress with the passage of the City of London Corporation (Open Spaces) Act 2018 which gained Royal Assent on the 15 March 2018; 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; the successful reorganisation of the Chingford Golf Course and Wanstead Flats Sport turf teams; initial savings of almost £6,000 on the first 3 months of the revised waste management contract; the completion of 222.5 acres of wood pasture restoration and the birth of 28 calves through winter calving.

Recommendation(s)

Consultative Committee Members are asked to:

- Note the report.

Main Report

Staff and Volunteers

1. Fixed term contract arrangements for the Policy Officer contract working on the Epping Forest Management Plan and an Assistant Forest Keeper have now been completed. Following a promotion to the Markets Directorate the Visitor Operations Manager has left Epping Forest.
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. Two new Apprentices a Business Administration Apprentice and an Arborist Apprentice have started through the City Apprenticeship Scheme. Two Criminal Investigations & Waste Management Officers commenced employment replacing previous Forest Keeper roles.

Budgets

4. With accounts still awaiting the final stages of the closing process, indications are that Epping Forest is likely to record a small overspend of £46,000 (1.69%). The overspend is related to procurement contracts where late delivery of equipment has prevented the corresponding drawdown of grant income before year end and a significant overcharge on a new contract for water supply which will be corrected in the new 2018/19 financial year.

Weather

5. The winter weather has seen sustained rainfall with two very wet months and two months just under average rainfall. December 2017 was much wetter than average, with total monthly rainfall 100.8% above the average total rainfall for December since 1979. January 2018 had just under average rainfall (4.9% below the average total rainfall for January since 1979). February 2018 saw slightly below average rainfall, with total monthly rainfall 18.4% below the average rainfall for February since 1979. March 2018 was much wetter than average, with total monthly rainfall 110% above the average rainfall for March since 1979.
6. The cold and wet conditions extended the Closed Riding season which moved to Open Riding from 5 May.

Open Spaces Act 2018

7. The House of Lords Unopposed Bill Committee met on 31 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 Bill's third reading was on 27 February, with the Bill receiving Royal Assent on 15 March 2018. Work is now underway to explore and prioritise new powers of enforcement, licencing letting of vacant premises.

Forest Services

Fly tipping

8. Fly-tipping for the period of December 2017 – March 2018 totalled 110 incidents, which is a 42.4% reduction in comparison to the 191 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 38% of all fly-tips over the period. There was a marked increase in Forest Interior fly-tips, though 25% can be attributed to waste collected from the planned clearance of Rough Sleeper Camps.
11. There has been a marked reduction in fly-tips on Wanstead Flats, which may be attributed to the closure of Centre Road Car Park for repairs, which were delayed due to snow periods. Since the completion of the car park and the new security

arrangements including alligator teeth, there has been a noticeable reduction on litter quantities in general at this site.

Rough Sleepers

12. The City Corporation is continuing to work closely with the Police, homeless organisations and the local authorities to resolve rough sleeping on the Forest. There has been a slight increase of 2% for December-January in rough sleeper camps with one rough sleeper found in the Becontree Avenue area, two on Leyton Flats, one in the Wanstead Flats and Bury Wood area.
13. There was just 1 reported case of rough sleeping for the report period, representing a reduction of 80% and 86% from 5 and 7 cases for the two preceding report periods. The litter team removed a large amount of rubbish from Whipps Cross which was being collected and stored on the Forest by a rough sleeper with a hoarding disorder.

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 62 licences for events were issued during the four months being reported, which yielded an income of £18,920.03 plus VAT. 66 licences were issued during the same period in 2016/17 income of £15,952.29.

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

17. There have been no serious dog incidents reported.

Waste Management and Recycling

18. The new waste management trial period is in the third month of operation and savings of £5,891.77 appear encouraging. There has been a significant increase in amounts sent to recycling rather than landfill, and a reduction in mileage from our own litter vehicles.

	Recycling Savings		
	Costs 2017	Costs 2018	Saving
January	£ 508.44	£ 311.14	£ 197.30
February	£ 508.44	£ 360.00	£ 148.44
Mar	£ 508.44	£ 360.00	£ 148.44
	£ 1,525.32	£ 1,031.14	£ 494.18
	Transit Savings		
	Costs 2017	Costs 2018	Saving
January	£ 2,834.91	£ 1,711.06	£ 1,123.85
February	£ 2,747.00	£ 1,808.61	£ 938.39
Mar	£ 2,966.76	£ 1,417.50	£ 1,549.26
	£ 8,548.67	£ 4,937.17	£ 3,611.50
	Bywaters Waste Savings		
	Costs 2017	Costs 2018	Saving
January	£ 1,693.10	£ 395.92	£ 1,297.18
February	£ 482.91	£ 384.00	£ 98.91
Mar	£ 1,689.42	£ 1,299.42	£ 390.00
	£ 3,865.43	£ 2,079.34	£ 1,786.09
Total Savings For Jan, Feb & March Only			£ 5,891.77

Heritage; Landscape and Nature Conservation

Agri-environment schemes

19. Epping Forest officers and their colleagues from other Open Spaces Divisions met Natural England at the Epping Forest offices at the end of January for

discussions about the new Stewardship Scheme and implications for the income for habitat management work.

20. Two contractors have completed 50.6 acres (20.5 hectares) of wood-pasture restoration between September 2017 and March 2018. This is significant progress in the habitat restoration work supported by the Environmental Stewardship grant. A tender for further works to be delivered by contractors was advertised at the end of March 2018. This, together with the work done by in-house teams and volunteers, should ensure that the targets for restoration will have been met when this grant comes to an end in winter 2018.

Grazing

21. The cattle have spent December to March 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 28th and last Longhorn calf was born on 25 February. Overall the gender split for this year's calving was 17 bull calves and 11 heifers. This brings the total herd size to 138. The Sussex cattle had 13 calves in total and were transported back to City Commons on the 22nd March.
22. Three significant investments in equipment for the grazing project have been made. A new Nissan Navara truck has been leased. The truck's ULEX compliant Euro 6 engine provides a 3.5T towing capacity for daily checking and moving of cattle around grazing sites, increasing flexibility as a tractor is no longer always required for this work. A tractor-mounted straw chopper / blower has also been purchased for spreading bedding for the cattle. Importantly, it also chops hay which increases cattle feed intakes and palatability of forage and considerably reduces the labour and spending on straw bedding. Lastly, a staff welfare cabin has been installed at Great Gregories. The cabin will significantly improve the welfare of staff based at the farm. Included in the cabin is a toilet, kitchenette, office and drying room. The installation of services to the cabin will take place later in the summer, after upgrades are carried out to the power supply feeding the Police Barn.
23. Despite some very tough, wet and cold weather conditions in the middle of March staff successfully installed 4.8km of new invisible fencing cable. These new and revised loops at Chingford Plain / Bury Wood, Sunshine North / South and Big View will add an extra 222.5 acres (90 ha) to the grazeable area on the Forest, making a total of 714.1 (289 ha).
24. The grazing team volunteered a few days to the volunteer hedge layers who completed a further 335m of hedges at Great Gregories leading up to the top fields.
25. New fences were installed at Hornbeam Lane and Fairmead car park. The Hornbeam Lane post and rail fence replaces the regularly vandalised temporary electric fence that prevented cattle from straying onto the West Essex Golf Course. Cleft chestnut fencing has been installed around Fairmead car park with 3 pedestrian access gates, this fence enables the livestock team to safely round up the cattle in an enclosed space before going into the pound for loading or the adjustment of collars. The fenced area also acts as a business continuity fall back

arrangement should there be a failure of the containment system or a disease outbreak. In the rare event that these events occur, the cattle could be temporarily contained, fed and watered on the fenced car park area.

Heritage

26. 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.
27. Consultants, *Rural Advice*, have produced the first draft of the Copped Hall Parkland Plan. This has been reviewed by Epping Forest officers, staff at City Surveyors and the Built Environment, as well as Natural England and Historic England. Feedback is being used to prepare the final draft prior to consideration by the Consultative Committee and the Epping Forest and Commons Committee.
28. The most significant part of the report was the confirmation of the size and importance of the Tudor Square Pond at Rookery Wood and its part in the historic landscape, emphasising the national significance of this element of the Grade II* Registered Park & Garden.

Biodiversity

29. **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.
30. The cold weather and snow during March ensured that winter migrant birds stayed on in the Forest in larger numbers than usual and spring arrivals were very limited. The nationwide influx of wintering continental Hawfinches finally became apparent in Epping Forest in January. Flocks of up to 16 of these birds, our largest finch species, were seen throughout January to March 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.
31. Large flocks of **Redwing** were seen throughout the scrub areas of Chingford Plain and Wanstead Flats in late March with gatherings of over 100 birds. **Fieldfare** also featured more than usual for this large thrush species that is often only seen in numbers on the less wooded agricultural areas of the Buffer Lands. However, perhaps the most notable winter movement came during the "beast from the East" easterly winds when hundreds of **Lapwings** made hard-weather movements west and southwards across the Forest with well over 250 birds recorded flying over both Chingford Plain and Wanstead Flats.
32. Away from the Forest, the Head of Conservation worked for a day with the **Cardiff University PhD student** in preparing samples of wood decay fungi from beech tree slices. The final fieldwork and laboratory work was completed at

Cardiff in March, and along with detailed DNA analysis carried out by the student in the USA over winter, the results of the work are now being written up for the submission of the PhD in the next year. The PhD student has already contributed to a book chapter on the fungi communities in hollowing trees and further peer-reviewed scientific papers are planned.

33. The City of London, through a City Bridge Trust award, is now contributing to the funding of a follow-up PhD studentship at Cardiff, which will work on veteranisation techniques and hollowing of beech and oak at both Epping Forest and Burnham Beeches. The Head of Conservation met the new student and assisted with some of his early lab work on beech material from the Forest.
34. Ancient trees featured during a well-attended conference organised by Place Services Essex at Gilwell Park on 19 February, celebrating the **Forests of Essex** and, in particular, the late Professor Oliver Rackham's unsurpassed contribution to the understanding of the ecological and cultural significance of these ancient landscapes. The keynote speakers were Professors Tom Williamson and Charles Watkins. The Head of Conservation also gave a presentation highlighting Oliver Rackham's great insights into Epping Forest's history and management.
35. The Wren Group held its AGM on 21 March, and was able to celebrate another successful year, particularly with biodiversity recording and also its achievements in managing the grass and scrub habitats of the Exchange Land, Wanstead Park for butterflies. The Head of Conservation gave the main talk on Forest habitat conservation, ahead of the AGM and took part in a detailed question and answer session for members
36. Finally, water levels and the dampness of soils are very important determinants of biodiversity in woodlands and wood-pasture habitats, influencing flower species, invertebrate populations and bat and bird numbers reliant on the latter. Retaining water on the Forest for longer and ensuring areas of marsh, wet grassland and damp woodland is, therefore, of special importance especially with the vagaries of a changing climate with more extremes of conditions.
37. The Environment Agency (EA) is also interested in identifying areas where water can be retained, to reduce the flood risk for areas of housing within river and stream catchments around the country. There is much interest in sites where the two objectives can be achieved together. Epping Forest is one such site and on 29th March the Senior Keeper and Head of Conservation met EA counterparts to discuss the opportunities for achieving flood prevention and biodiversity enhancements around the River Ching and its catchment of tributaries. The EA officers were very interested in the possibilities and the ideas proposed and will be considering working these ideas up and gathering evidence during the next year.

Land Management

Town & Country Planning

38. **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 29 January and a substantive response was made on behalf of the Epping Forest and Commons Committee under delegated authority.

39. Following the comprehensive response by the Conservators to the Epping Forest District Council (EFDC) Local Plan, a meeting was convened by EFDC on 21 February to discuss both the Conservators’ and Natural England’s concerns and disagreements with the Local Plan proposals for housing and infrastructure. EFDC officers were seeking to find a way to agree a Statement of Common Ground with each organisation if possible.
40. In addition, the meeting also examined the continuing requirement for a ‘Mitigation Strategy’ to be developed and also considered the limited progress towards understanding both visitor and recreation impacts as well as those of traffic pollution. Further meetings were agreed to develop aspects of the Mitigation Strategy.
41. One of the early outcomes of the evidence-gathering for the mitigation has been the Visitor Survey 2017 Report. The six funders involved in this report agreed the final version at the end of March and the report will be made public in April. The key result of the Visitor Survey has been the clear demonstration of a 6km “Zone of Influence” with 75% of visitors to the SAC parts of the Forest coming from up to 6km away. This is important evidence in helping to decide which developments are likely to have the most impacts on the Forest and it fully justifies the concerns expressed by The Conservators to EFDC during the Local Plan Regulation 19 consultation.
42. **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.
43. 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).
44. Epping Forest 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.

45. **London Borough of Waltham Forest (LBWF) Local Plan:** Epping Forest officers continue to seek an early meeting with LBWF about its Local Plan review and its role as a competent authority in protecting the Forest. We are awaiting a response and an invitation to a meeting.
46. In addition to the Local Plans responses, officers also commented on 15 planning applications during the period in question. Key points included:
 - 46.1 **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.
 - 46.2 **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.
47. **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.
48. **Woodberry Way** - . At 13-15 Woodberry Way, E4 in a property adjacent to The Hawk Wood, Pole Hill, where an application has been made to develop the gardens at the rear of these properties into nine additional houses. This is a typical *windfall* site which if considered in isolation could be overlooked as having a significant impact on the Forest. However, the response by your officers was to make the point to LBWF that as the competent authority under the Habitat Regulations 2017 it has a duty to consider the "in combination" effects of this development on the Special Area of Conservation (SAC), alongside others housing proposals across the Borough.

Operations

Habitat Works

49. 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.
50. Wanstead Park: The refilling of the lakes at Wanstead Park continues with daily pumping from the borehole for 16 out of 24 hours. Ornamental Waters continues

its path of recovery with water from the borehole still being diverted to it appears to have reached an equilibrium with the water level approximately 75cm below 'full'. The level in the Heronry Pond has been 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.

51. Warren Plantation: Prices to undertake Rhododendron control and felling and removal of the larch trees as part of the agreed Phytophthora control works have been obtained. Herbicide treatment of the Rhododendron will be undertaken in May by contractors.

Risk Management Works

52. Tree Safety - The 2018 tree safety assessment by independent arboricultural contractors has been completed across the Forest. The three arborist teams have largely been focused on completing the 2017 program and undertaking high priority risk management tasks identified in the 2018 survey
53. 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.
54. 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.
55. Hard surfaces Management: The contract to control weed and moss growth on hard surfaces around Forest buildings, including the visitor centres has been continued for a second year. The contract will be slightly extended to include the twice-yearly treatment of the gullies around car parks.

Access Works

56. 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.
57. Car Park Improvements: With funding from the City Surveyors team we have been able to make some helpful improvements to several car parks:

57.1 Honey Lane car park has had new gating installed along with some resurfacing,

57.2 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 kept 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.

57.3 High Beach Church: We have improved the edging and undertaking limited surfacing to this small but well used pull-in by the church

57.4 Centre Road: Works were completed at Centre Road car park to improve the surfacing and gateway security. To let the surfacing works settle in the car park was shut for a time before opening.

58. 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 large logs.

59. Staff and volunteers have completed a survey of the promoted paths in the Forest. The survey work has now to be compiled into a Work Programme..

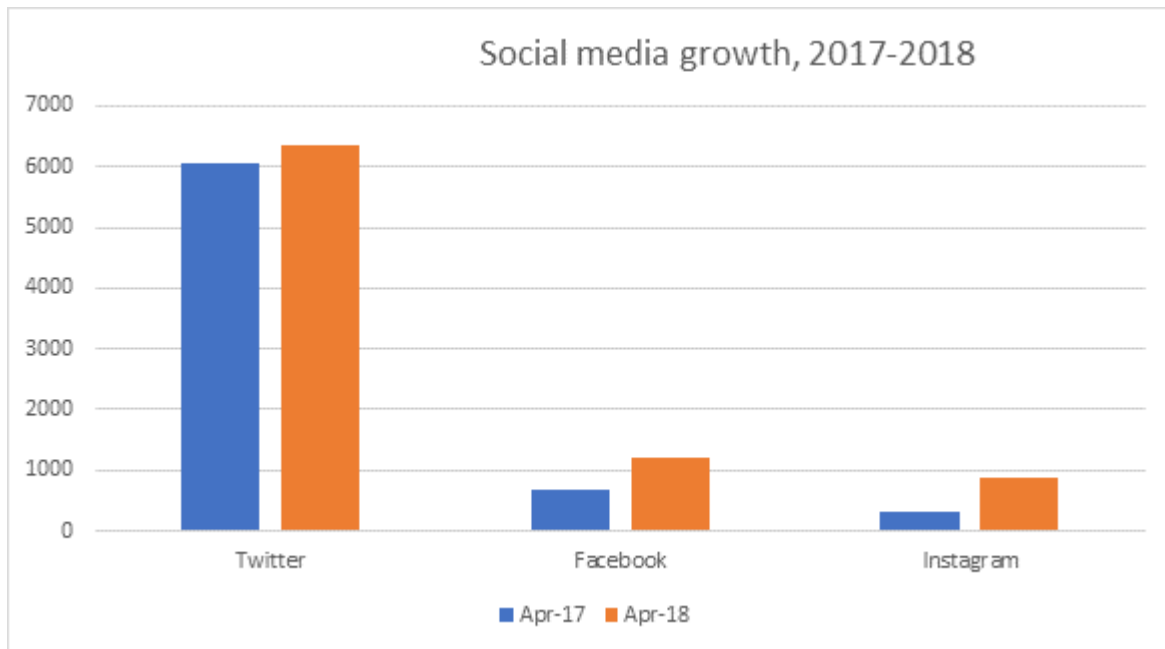
Visitor Services

Communication and Information

60. As of 19 April 2018, our social media following is:

- Twitter followers: 6,371 (54% year on increase)
- Facebook likes: 1,302 (82% increase)
- Instagram followers: 886 (169% increase)

- The chart shows a comparison of our figures at the same point in 2017



61. Forest Focus winter and spring editions were very well received. The ezine edition is greatly increasing in popularity. People also enjoy reading a printed copy of this quality publication and can browse or take a copy from each of the Visitor Centres, as well as lots of local cafes, pubs, health centres, stations, etc. throughout the Epping Forest area, with favourable comments received verbally. The electronic mailing list for Forest Focus continues to grow very well.
62. The new publication 'Short walks in Epping Forest' is now on sale and has been extremely well received in the local area. The promotion with local estate agents to promote the book and Forest Focus electronic subscription will now commence, providing us with some useful audience development feedback.
63. The new, revised Official Epping Forest map is now on sale and selling well with a special offer price if bought together with the book of short walks.
64. Head of Conservation, Dr Jeremy Dagley, was interviewed and introduced by David Attenborough for Epping Forest's feature in the Queen's Green Planet documentary which aired on ITV on Monday 16 April 2016.
65. Bluebells in Wanstead Park were featured in local and national press (Time Out and The Times).
66. Facebook activity around promotion of bluebell season, with accompanying responsible visiting information (around not stepping on or picking the bluebells) has proved exceptionally popular, demonstrating the public interest in visiting woodland bluebells in April / May.
67. Instagram growth has been particularly notable recently with interactions and follows from some high profile, international organisations, photographers and creative individuals. This demonstrates Instagram as a powerful tool for networking internationally and for promoting Epping Forest to creative individuals

who may then gain an awareness for potential use of the Forest as a filming / photography location.

68. Bluebells and other spring flowers was the theme for the Epping Forest article included in the local Essex Life publication for April 2018. The March 2018 article featured spring / Easter events and promoted the new Short Walks book. The February 2018 article looked at some more unusual references to Epping Forest.

Epping Forest Sports Team

69. Work has been ongoing since Autumn to restructure the Epping Forest Sports Team to create a combined staff structure across Wanstead Flats and Chingford Golf Course leading to greater operational efficiency.
70. In February, the rota for the restructured golf shop commenced. Two part-time bookings assistants were employed to work alongside the Sports Business and Sales Officer, on a three-week rota. This ensures reliable cover in response to business need and to be less reliant on casual staff.
71. The rota for the restructured grounds team commenced on 1 March 2018 with existing casual staff securing a permanent contract and new staff joining from elsewhere in Open Spaces.
72. The casual staff team has been expanded to give depth of cover for annual leave, training and sickness within the team. Additional casual staff are as follows; 1 x Casual Sports Bookings Assistant, 1 x Casual Greens/Grounds Keeper and 5 x Casual Caretakers.
73. The Sports Operations and Business Manager remains vacant as recruitment has been unsuccessful. This role is being reviewed but continues to be covered by the Project Officer in the meantime

Chingford Golf Course

74. 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. To protect the course the use of hire buggies was restricted over this period.
75. 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.
76. 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. The course 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.
77. The course was closed in February and March for a total of eight days due to snow. Although open during the rain there was of course less visitors compared

to normal. During the long period of rain, all 18 greens were kept open for play with the use of temporary mats on the par 3's to protect the teeing area for the start of the season. All ditches were cleared, and extra drainage was added in the areas that needed it most such as holes 9 and 10. This helps to keep the course open and at its best all year round. New posts were put in around the back of the 18th green and 1st tee to replace the old white ones that had been rotting.

78. Daily bag tags have been introduced for all users. These bag tags are in 7 different colours and are changed on a weekly basis for each day. This provides a quick visual aid on the course to ensure that players have been in and paid. Feedback from users has been positive.

79. The greenkeeper's yard has again been broken into and the tractor was stolen. This has been reported to the police and new fencing has been put up around the lockup with extra locks and measures to prevent the other tractor from being removed

Wanstead Flats Football

80. Due to the winter snow the season has been extended until the week ending 6 May. Off season works are being programmed to ensure readiness for the new 2018/19 season.

81. There are no outstanding debts this 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	

82. Visitor counts have been affected by the closure of The Temple following a ceiling collapse in January and snow in late February as well as a three-week closure of the Hunting Lodge for essential upgrades.

Visitor Numbers	QEHL 2018	2017	View	2017	Temple	2017	High Beach	2017	Total	Total 2017
February	1563↓	1678	2942 ↑	2820	0 closed↓	650	1485↑	1268	5990↓	6416
March	377 (QEHL closed for electrical upgrade)↓	1761	2439↓	2768	0 closed↓	473	1068↓	1311	3884↓	6313

Visitor Services Events and Activities

83. 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.

84. 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.

85. Visitor Services responded 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.

86. Half Term Winter Trees, 13–16 February: Self-guided cluster of activities laid out across Queen Elizabeth's Hunting Lodge for half-term. This included tree identification activities to encourage families to go out into the Forest; hands-on wooden building and drawing activities. The offer of a range of self-led activities for families has proven to be a popular and resource efficient away for Visitor Services to provide extra experiences for a targeted audience over several days. Kew Gardens staff admired and requested use of the Fractal Trees activity sheet for (COL acknowledged use) at their family events: we were pleased to share it with them.
87. Hunting the King's deer: Epping Forest Poaching in the 16th and 17th centuries, Exhibition 24 February to 11 March and Illustrated Talk, Sunday 11 March. This exhibition and talk designed and delivered by University of Nottingham PhD student and researcher, Tom Rose, was the culmination of a project which offered Tom the opportunity to learn how to adapt his academic work for a more general audience and get hands-on engagement with our visitors. Visitor Services in exchange benefited from Tom's expertise in fact checking interpretation and publications about the Queen Elizabeth's Hunting Lodge's Tudor hunting story.
88. **Exhibition:** You can't see the trees for the woods, Saturday 3 March to Monday 2 April: Marion Sidebottom's exhibition marked the completion of a year as Artist in Residence photographing the Forest's ancient trees and gathering stories of how people value and enjoy them. Marion's final choice of photographs comprised monotone collages with texts to illustrate a range of themes. Both online on social media and in visitor books, there has been a very positive response from the public to Marion's images. Prints of her work have been available in the shop at The View.

Major incidents

89. None.

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