

Committee(s)	Dated:
Epping Forest and Commons	09 07 2018
Subject: Epping Forest - Superintendent's Update for April to May 2018 (SEF 32/18)	Public
Report of: Director of Open Spaces and Heritage	For Information
Report author: Paul Thomson – Epping Forest	

Summary

This purpose of this report is to summarise the Epping Forest Division's activities across April to May 2018.

Of particular note was an unwelcome return to increased fly tipping figures after a spring lull; a successful prosecution at Chelmsford Crown Court unusually involving a 2 day jury trial; the restoration of Open Riding on 5 May; the turnout of 29 cattle on Forest Land on 8 May; further reductions in Floating Pennywort numbers at Perch Pond, Wanstead; the review of current practice in relation to root nuisance insurance claims; the close of a successful football season on 29 April with 2209 games played and a successful presentation to Epping Forest District Council's Local Plan Cabinet Committee on the proposed Epping Forest Recreational Pressure Special Area of Conservation Mitigation Strategy.

Recommendation(s)

Members are asked to:

- Note the report.

Main Report

Staff and Volunteers

1. Recruitment is underway to address a series of staff shortages.

Budgets

2. Accounts for 2017/18 closed with a £70,000 overspend, which was primarily due to the late delivery of equipment 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. The Energy Efficiency loan for the Photo Voltaic panels at the Warren was also settled in full, and funds capitalised towards Parklife for further feasibility work.

Weather

3. April 2018 was much wetter than average, with 65mm of rainfall in total, which is 74.7% above the average rainfall for April of 37.2mm since 1979. There were 18 days of rainfall in total, with the wettest day being 1st April, which saw 11.6 mm rainfall.
4. The High Beach weather station malfunctioned in May, however, alternative meteorological office data suggests that May 2018 rainfall at 46mm matched the long-term average for the area.

Sustainability

5. The Energy Efficiency loan taken to complete the installation of Photo Voltaic panels at the Warren has been paid in full, so all savings will be shown directly in local risk from now on. Future projects, including roof insulation in subsidiary operation buildings are being considered for the future.

Epping Forest Projects

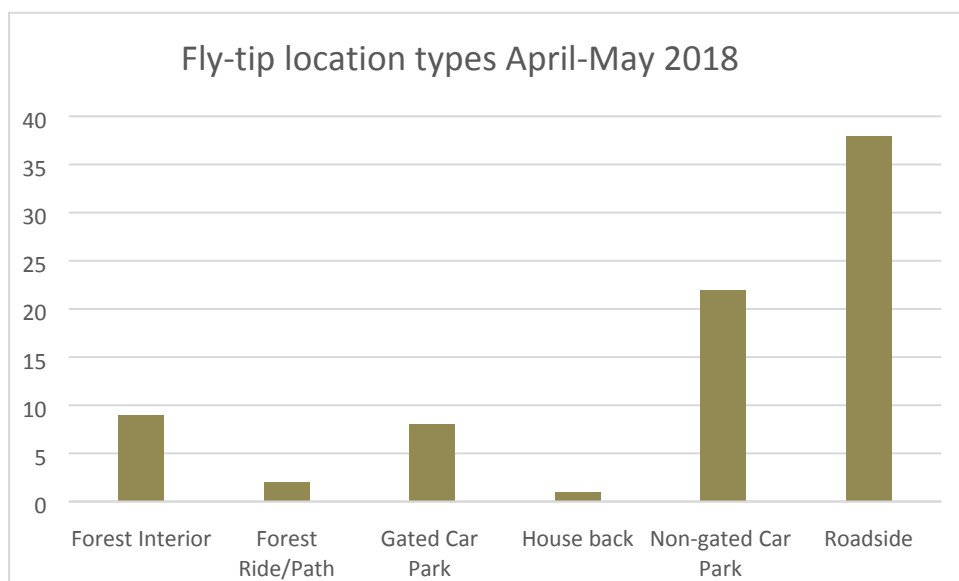
Parklife

6. The Football Foundation has provided a grant of £34,777 to enable the City Corporation to develop plans for Wanstead Flats football to a feasibility stage.

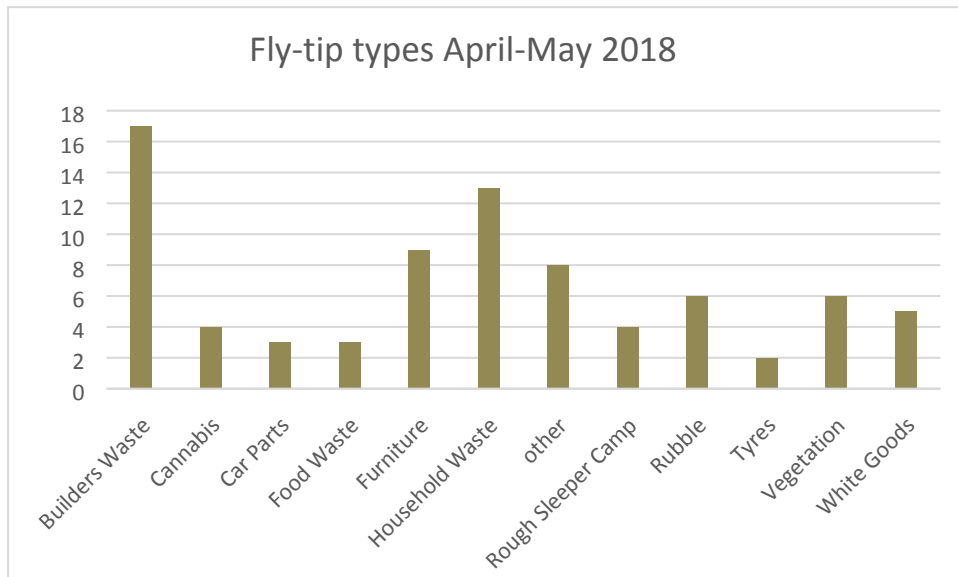
Forest Services

Fly tipping

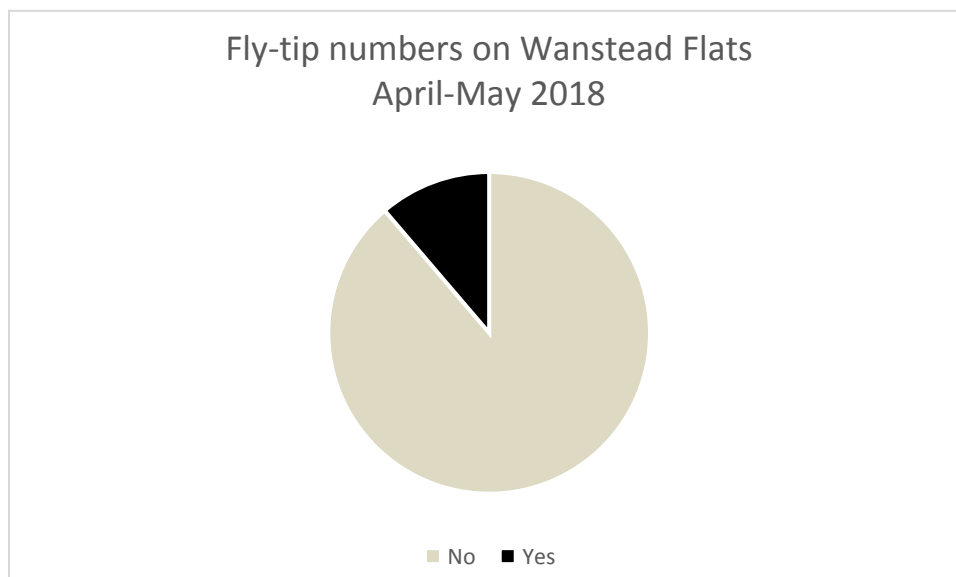
7. Fly-tip numbers for the period of April-May 2018 was 80 tips. This is 58.75% rise significantly more than the 47 recorded over the same period in 2017. This is possibly a repercussion of the reduced volume recorded in the preceding four months.



8. Roadsides continue to be the most vulnerable locations for fly tips and represent 38 incidents (47.5%) of all fly tips. There has been an increase in tips occurring in the Forest interior, follow up work has been completed to increase security after tips have been removed. Some 10% of tips have occurred within gated car parks, however this is within car parks with a single gate or when minor tips have occurred in the middle of the day.



9. Builders waste continues to represent the most common type of fly tip types (21%) There has been an increase in household type waste, followed by furniture which is often second on the list. These three tip types represent nearly 50% of all tips during this period.



10. Fly-tips on Wanstead Flats have decreased during this period most probably due to the improved security at Centre Road Car Park. There were only 9 tips in this area during April-May which represents 11% compared to previous proportions of 22%.

Waste Management and Recycling

11. Average savings are currently working out to £1,490 per month, since the new contract has been active. Skip costs increased in March 18 as there were final charges for skip returns to terminate the old contract. Savings are now expected to stabilise.

	Recycling Savings		
Month	Costs 2017	Costs 2018	Savings
Jan	£ 508.44	£ 311.14	£ 197.30
Feb	£ 508.44	£ 360.00	£ 148.44
Mar	£ 508.44	£ 360.00	£ 148.44
April	£ 566.08	£ 420.80	£ 145.28
May	£ 566.08	£ 260.00	£ 306.08
Billed in Error Credits in Process	£ -	-£ 250.00	£ 250.00
	£ 2,657.48	£ 1,461.94	£ 1,195.54
	Transit Savings		
Month	Costs 2017	Costs 2018	Savings
Jan	£ 2,834.91	£ 1,711.06	£ 1,123.85
Feb	£ 2,747.00	£ 1,808.61	£ 938.39
Mar	£ 2,966.76	£ 1,417.50	£ 1,549.26
April	£ 2,974.09	£ 2,485.54	£ 488.55
May	£ 3,845.80	£ 3,451.05	£ 394.75
Billed in Error Credits in Process	£ -	-£ 362.70	£ 362.70
	£ 15,368.56	£ 10,511.06	£ 4,857.50
	Bywaters Waste Savings		
Month	Costs 2017	Costs 2018	Savings
Jan	£ 1,693.10	£ 395.20	£ 1,297.90
Feb	£ 482.91	£ 384.00	£ 98.91
Mar	£ 1,689.42	£ 1,299.42	£ 390.00
April	£ 797.02	£ 596.70	£ 200.32
May		£ 596.70	-£ 596.70
Billed in Error Credits in Process	£ -	£ -	£ -
	£ 4,662.45	£ 3,272.02	£ 1,390.43
Total Savings Jan, Feb, Mar, April, May		Total Savings	£ 7,443.47

Enforcement Activity

12. One prosecution was heard during the period, where the defendant opted for a crown court jury trial, which lasted 2 days under report and one conditional caution.

Date	Case Ref	Byelaw/ EPA/Caution/ Conditional Caution	Court Name	Outcome	Costs/Fine
21-23 May 2018	PE018 Defendant 1	Prosecution EPA 33 1(A) Depositor	Chelmsford Crown Court	GUILTY	Fine £500 Comp £562 Costs £1500
21-23 May 2018	PE018 Defendant 2	Prosecution EPA 33 (5) Vehicle	Chelmsford Crown Court	NOT GUILTY	None
28 May 2018	PE174	Conditional Caution EPA 34 2(A)	The Warren	GUILTY	Costs £328

13. In addition, the Superintendent and Head Forest Keeper issued two verbal warnings, five written warnings and one Simple Caution in the period under report.

Rough Sleepers

14. There were six reported or discovered Rough Sleepers on Forest during April and May in the vicinity of Leyton and Wanstead Flats. This represents a 100% increase on the total of 3 for 2017 and 500% for 1 camp in 2016.
15. Two individuals were visited by Forest Keepers and moved on of their own accord. A further two rough sleepers were visited by Forest Keepers and outreach workers and two other camps were deemed to be abandoned and were subsequently cleared by Forest Keepers and Litter Pickers.

23/04/2018	Leyton Flats	36	Near Lido site	1 tent 1 male	Given advice asked to move on complied
25/04/2018	Forest Glade E11	36	Opposite Ambulance Stn	1 tent	Will visit with homeless organisation
25/04/2018	Canada Plain	35	By allotment boundary fence	1 tent	Given advice asked to move on complied
26/04/2018	Oak Hill	34	Opposite Empress Ave	1 tent	Occupier not present will re-visit

26/04/2018	Leyton Flats	36	Near Boathouse	1 old camp	Will be cleared by litter pickers
21/05/2018	Forest Glade E11	36	Opposite Ambulance station	1 tent	Will visit with homeless organisation

Licences

16. A total of 44 licences for events were issued during the two months being reported, which yielded an income of £63,895.50 plus VAT (inclusive of two compounds fee of £23,975.00 and £19,180.00). 33 licences were issued during the same period in 2017 (income of £11,792.49).

Unauthorised Occupations

17. No incidents were recorded during this reporting period.

Dog Incidents

18. No incidents were recorded during this reporting period.

Heritage; Landscape and Nature Conservation

Biodiversity

19. Breeding Birds – a pair of Firecrests, a Schedule 1 bird species are once again breeding within the Warren Plantation for the second (known) year running. This is the only known breeding site within the Forest for this species. The coniferous habitat within this site is perfect for this species.
20. A single pair of Cuckoo were observed displaying at Copped Hall in May. A Red Listed Species of Conservation Concern and a species in serious decline, this is the only known breeding pair within the Forest.
21. A study is being undertaken by a student from Middlesex University on the breeding behaviour and nesting habitat preferences of Yellowhammer at Copped Hall Park. This is the only known breeding site within the Forest for this Red Listed Species of Conservation Concern.
22. Another species in serious decline and a Red Listed Species of Conservation Concern is the Linnet. Breeding pairs for this species have been observed at Copped Hall, Great Gregories and Monkams.
23. There has been a population explosion of the beech leaf mining weevil *Rhynchaenus fagi*. Almost every beech tree within the Forest has been affected with many trees suffering extensive leaf damage leaving the tree canopies looking brown. Many trees are now attempting a second flush of leaves.

24. A further occurrence of the grazing indicator plant Lousewort has been discovered on Fairmead Plain providing a total of 5 distinct, separate sites for this species in the Forest.

Agri-environment Schemes

25. The joint application between City Commons and Epping Forest for the Basic Payment Scheme funding was submitted in early May, with the co-ordination of this application lead by the Environmental Stewardship Officer.
26. The annual claim form for the Higher Level Environmental Stewardship grant was submitted in early May for the ninth year of this agreement.

Grazing

27. The grazing team undertook a five-day training course in excavator operation. This training has enabled the team to use the digger and vibrating post driver which was used to replace over 150 fence posts across Copped Hall. Further digger works at Great Gregories for landscaping and removing muck from awkward areas of the buildings can now be undertaken in-house.
28. Cattle started leaving the winter housing at the end of April moving onto Buffer lands and the training field at Great Gregories. Invisible fence grazing on the Forest started on 8th May with two sites and 29 trained cattle being released in one week.
29. Volunteer Wardens managed by the Forest Keeper department are now undertaking cattle checks across the Forest at weekends as part of their duties. A cattle training day for the Volunteers was conducted by the Stockman and was attended by all 9 volunteers.
30. Forest Keepers have undergone training on the cattle GPS system and continue to assist in working with handling cattle. Improving the livestock skillset within the division aids the grazing team at peak times and bolsters our ability to respond to emergencies.

Heritage

31. Epping Forest and City Surveyor's Officers have been reviewing the second draft of the Copped Hall Parkland Management Plan.

Contractors

32. The Environmental Stewardship Officer began a tendering process for contract work to deliver part of the Higher Level Environmental Stewardship grant work in 2018.

Land Registration

33. The City Corporation has made a Statement of Case in respect of land claimed at Woodford Green to the First-Tier Tribunal (Property Chamber) ahead of a hearing in July.

Operations

Habitat Works

34. Grass cutting started in May with a first cut of the amenity areas, paths and along the Beckton desalination pipe line. Regrowth has been very rapid and after a slow start to growth everywhere is looking very lush with grass. Around half of the grass cutting is undertaken by contractors and this work has gone out to tender.
35. Wanstead Park: Monthly monitoring for floating pennywort has commenced on the lakes at the Park. Our contractor has picked up occasional individual specimens on their first inspection. The outlook is that with monthly monitoring and physical removal we should see this problem resolved for the end of the year. Inspections of The Heronry and Ornamental Water have not identified the spread of the Invasive Non-Native Species (INNS) of Floating pennywort.
36. Annual work to control weed growth in and around the Grotto have commenced with the herbicide treatment of the weed growth. A number of sections have been left as these will be cut to encourage grass rather than herbaceous weed growth.

Risk Management Works

37. Tree Safety – The main task for the arborist teams at present is working through the more urgent, within three months, tree safety tasks. This has involved traffic control across a number of areas and the teams have completed a key task with the repollarding of the Poplar avenue at North Farm.
38. Fire Safety – Fire belts have had the first cut by staff on Leyton and Wanstead Flats.
39. Nuisance claims with colleagues from the Insurance team we have been reviewing our practice in responding to Root nuisance claims. At present our insurer has around £1.5 million of estimated outstanding claims against the City for trees at Epping Forest. These claims can be very costly to respond to and the aim of this review is to agree a process that manages subsidence claims efficiently with an aim to reduce costs to the City. It is likely that we will increase annual work commitments to respond to maintenance issues because of the review of previous and ongoing claims.

Access Works

40. Following a few issues where car tyres were being punctured by vehicles crossing dragon's teeth in the correct direction we have obtained a different style of dragon tooth to see if they work better. The main issue seems to be vehicles crossing the teeth at an angle rather than straight on and the teeth not depressing as they need to.

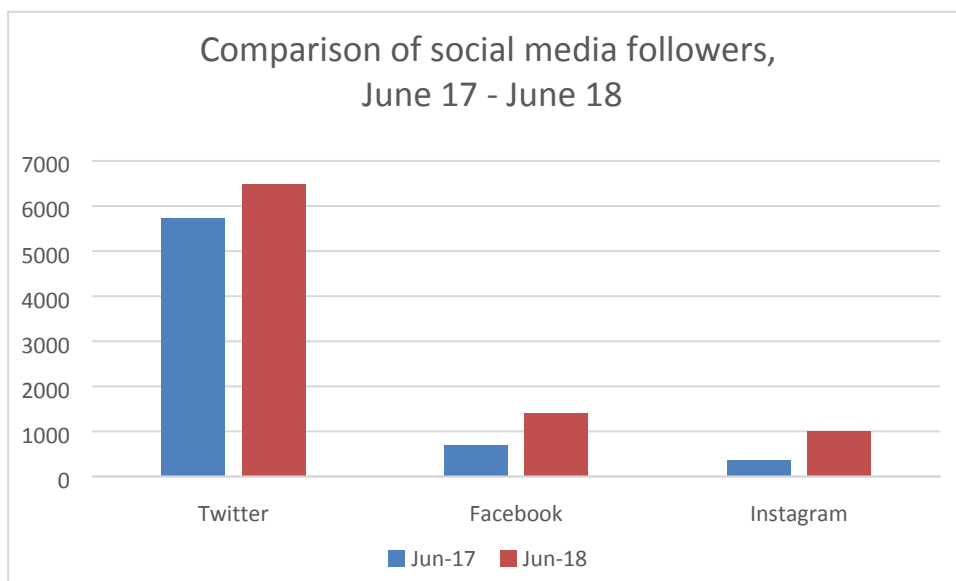
Visitor Services

Communication and Information

41. As of 19 June 2018, our social media following is:

- Twitter followers: 6487 (13% increase)
- Facebook followers: 1415 (103% increase)
- Instagram followers: 1011 (184% increase)

The below chart demonstrates the increase in followers for the Epping Forest social media platforms:



42. The Summer edition of Forest Focus has been well received and featured an article on the recent City of London Corporation (Open Spaces) Act and promotes the forthcoming Open-Air Theatre season in Wanstead Park. This edition has also introduced a new Top Ten Awards survey which will run until Autumn 2018. The print circulation has been increased from 6,000 to 10,000 and has proved very successful in increasing the locations for distributing this publication as well as increasing the numbers of copies left in key locations. To accommodate the additional printing cost for increasing the print run we have slightly reduced the quality of paper for the inside pages of the magazine, however no negative comments have been received to date.
43. The local Essex Life publications (Wanstead Life, Loughton Life etc.) continue to print a full-page Epping Forest article free of charge each month. May 2018 covered wildlife, particularly birds, to spot in Epping Forest with International Dawn Chorus Day featured, and June 2018 article promoted Open Air Theatre in Wanstead Park which takes place on 18 July and 12 August.

Chingford Golf Course

44. Despite increased rainfall the generally good weather since the start of April has seen the number of visitors to the golf course increase; helped also by

golfers finding alternatives to other local courses suffering problems. In total, we had 124 people take out season tickets for the new season, which is down by 1 from last year. 66 from Royal Epping Forest Golf Club, 32 from Chingford Men's Golf Club, 1 from Chingford Ladies Golf Club and 25 Public. This year we introduced a 5% discount for those paying their fees in full, out of the 124 season tickets, 65 of these were paid in full in April compared to 29 last year.

45. Horse riding licences were handed over to the golf course/ sports hub from The View on April 1st. Based on the feedback from the Epping Forest Horse Riding Committee meeting, this seems to have gone down well, especially as the hub's car park is more horse friendly and opening hours are longer and cover the full 7 days of the week.
46. Total revenue from online sales was £6231, total revenue from reception was £125,964.83 broken down into:

	2018	2017	% Change
Green fees	£106,228.36	£86,714.18	+22.5%
Drinks	£1,353.60	£1,508.80	-10.3%
Hire Equipment	: £4,738.50	£5,027.30	-5.7%
Shop Sales	£3,131.50	£680.90	+653%
Football:	£487.00	£415.00	-17.5%
Horse riding:	£10,025.87	£0.00*	--*
<i>* Horse Riding Licence fees were not managed by the Sports Hub at this time.</i>			

47. Compared to last year, online bookings have increased by £2,568.50 from last year and revenue taken from reception increased by £31,618.65 in the same period (of which £10,025 is from horse riding which is a new area of income).
48. In terms of operating, the sports hub is now on our summer hours which sees the reception open between 6.45 – 19.00. A new Electronic Point of Sale (EPOS) till was introduced on 1 April allowing the team to collect and track our data quicker and easier compared to the old systems. Flag colours have been changed on the back nine and practice areas to allow new users to help navigate a little easier.
49. The greenkeeping team struggled to keep on top of the grass cutting at the start of the season as the weather was so changeable the grass was growing quicker than it was possible to cut. The green keepers yard has had a CCTV upgrade but works to secure the building are yet to be completed. Greens were spiked and top-dressed but large amounts of watering have been needed

to keep playing surfaces to the required levels. Weekly spraying has been carried out.

Wanstead Flats Football

50. At present, it is closed season but there are a number of soccer schools who will continue to play on Saturdays at Capel Road through the summer. These are all contained within the mini pitches and 'off-pitch' areas so as to not affect the renovation works of the full size adult pitches which are being made ready for next season. Soccer school play will not generate significant income but will cover the cost of staffing.
51. Parkrun attracted 1,722 runners during the period April – May 2018.
52. Capel Road car park is scheduled for levelling and top dressing during the off-season as some of the pot-holes were becoming significant and reducing the capacity of the parking area.

Visitor Numbers

53. Visitor numbers are again down overall compared to last year due to the continued closure of The Temple following the ceiling collapse. QEHL saw an increase in last year's numbers as did the View in May. Numbers at the View were less this year in April due to poor weather which affected main events such as the Easter egg rolling.

Visitor Numbers	QEHL 2018	2017	View	2017	Temple	2017	High Beach	2017	Total	Total 2017
March	377 (QEHL closed for electrical upgrade)↓	1761	2439↓	2768	0 closed↓	473	1068↓	1311	3884↓	6313
April	3870↑	3087	2142↓	5016	0 closed↓	2412	tbc	2729	4281↓	7752 without HB/ 13244 with
May	2683↑	2248	3717↑	3607	0 closed↓	1052	tbc	2074	4874↓	5254 without High Beach /8981with

Visitor Services Events

54. Easter Egg Rolling: 2 April. This popular event attracted an audience of 456 people tallied at The View and 325 at Queen Elizabeth's Hunting Lodge. The event took place over both buildings and in the enclosure outside. Cold wet

weather over the weekend kept visitor figures down somewhat over the Bank Holiday weekend and meant that some of the activities had to take place inside.

55. Taster Session: Treasure Hunt Photography: Wednesday 25 April: The View. This event, one of a series run in partnership with London Borough of Waltham Forest Adult Services at no cost to Epping Forest, attracted 18 people. Participants took photos around Barn Hoppitt and the group looked at composition and editing. Three participants had never been to the Forest before, the others were local Forest users. Ten people attended because of publicity in Forest Focus: others from online sources such as The Londonist.
56. London History Day: A Passion for Preservation & How it Saved Epping Forest: Thursday, 31 May: The View and Queen Elizabeth's Hunting Lodge. This first event offered by Epping Forest for London-wide London History Day managed by Historic England attracted a reasonable audience of 200 people across the day. Evaluation suggested that about half were new or infrequent visitors to Epping Forest. This half term event, the first in the season celebrating 140 years since the 1878 Act, was offered as a self-guided trail around both buildings, with activities, museum handling objects and a steer to people to go out into the Forest to see the Longhorn cattle grazing on Chingford Plain.
57. Visitor Services volunteers helping with events: Visitor Services are recruiting new heritage-minded volunteers, including a gap year History student who was able to benefit from contact and training from our oldest volunteer and Tudor timber expert, age 92.

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