

<b>Committee(s)</b>	<b>Dated:</b>
Epping Forest and Commons	14 01 2019
<b>Subject:</b> Epping Forest - Superintendent's Update for October to November 2018 (SEF 01/19)	<b>Public</b>
<b>Report of:</b> Colin Buttery, Director of Open Spaces	<b>For Information</b>
<b>Report author:</b> Paul Thomson – Superintendent of Epping Forest	

### Summary

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

Of particular note was a continuing reduction in fly-tipping; a new lichen record for the Forest; the completion of a new cattle-handling system at Great Gregories; a successful Team award for Innovation presented to the conservation grazing Team; approval by the District Council of the Interim Mitigation Strategy for the Epping Forest SAC; the successful completion of a 128 hectare grass-cutting season and a popular series of art installations and exhibition commemorating the centenary of the First World War.

### Recommendation(s)

Members are asked to:

- Note the report.

### Main Report

#### Staff and Volunteers

1. A further Enforcement Officer joined the Forest Services Team in October 2019.

#### Budgets

2. At the end of November, Epping Forest was at 60% spend against a profile spend of 66%, indicating a small underspend at this point. The underspend reflects scheduled work plans for wood pasture restoration this winter and the scheduling of works to redress the Wanstead Flats fire damage. There has also been some overperformance on income related to the repeated extension of the Bury Road TfL works compound and the successful renegotiation of the three mobile phone mast rental agreements.

## **Weather**

3. October 2018 saw just below average rainfall. Total monthly rainfall (55.4 mm) was 7.4% below the average rainfall recorded for October in Epping Forest since 1979 (59.8 mm). This is the fourth year in a row where October rainfall has been below average. There were 19 days of rainfall in total, the wettest day being 14th October, which saw 24.4 mm of rainfall.
4. November 2018 saw higher than average rainfall in Epping Forest. Total monthly rainfall (79.2 mm) was 19.8 % above the average rainfall recorded for November in Epping Forest since 1979 (66.1 mm). There were 20 days of rainfall in total, the wettest being 10th November, which saw 29.8 mm of rainfall.
5. Epping Forest was largely unaffected by Storm Callum 12-14 October.

## **Epping Forest Projects**

### **Parklife**

6. Consultants QMP have continued working on the feasibility studies for Artificial Grass Pitch Provision at both sites, Aldersbrook and Harrow Road. Studies/surveys completed so far are topographic, ecology, arboriculture and transport. The consultant's final report is due in mid-January.
7. Officers have been working with the Football Association to ratify current usage at Wanstead Flats to ensure demand modelling is accurate. The FA use team affiliation data but not all teams choose to affiliate. Over 70 teams are missing from the data with 38 Adult and 37 Junior teams identified as playing at Wanstead Flats (home ground) but unaffiliated.

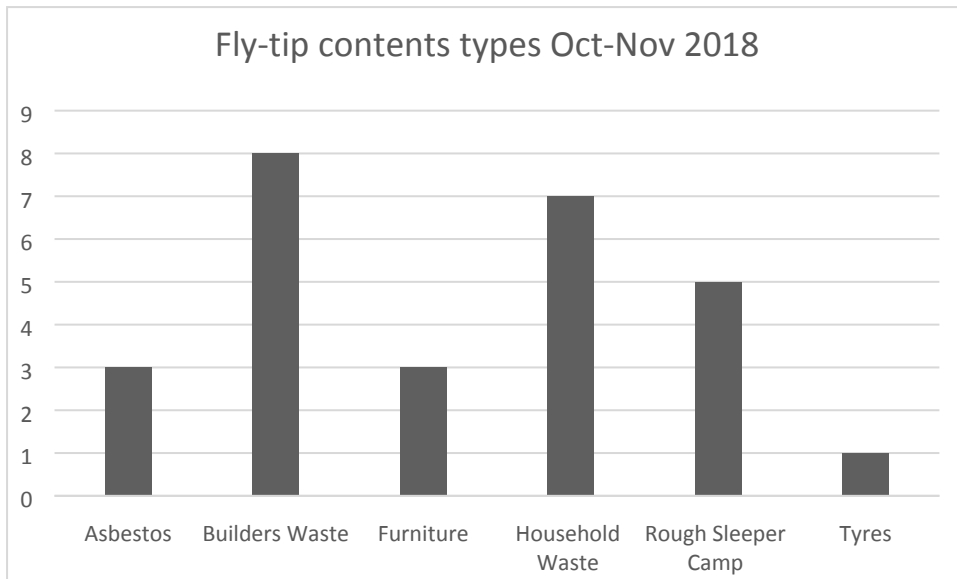
### **Epping Forest Heritage Trust Duck Champions Project**

8. EFHT have been working with Officers to fund several interpretation signs to be displayed at ponds where over-feeding of ducks, geese and swans is apparent.
9. The final number of signs is funding dependent and yet to be agreed but Officers are confident signs will be installed at Eagle Pond, Alexandra Lake and Hollow Ponds as a result.

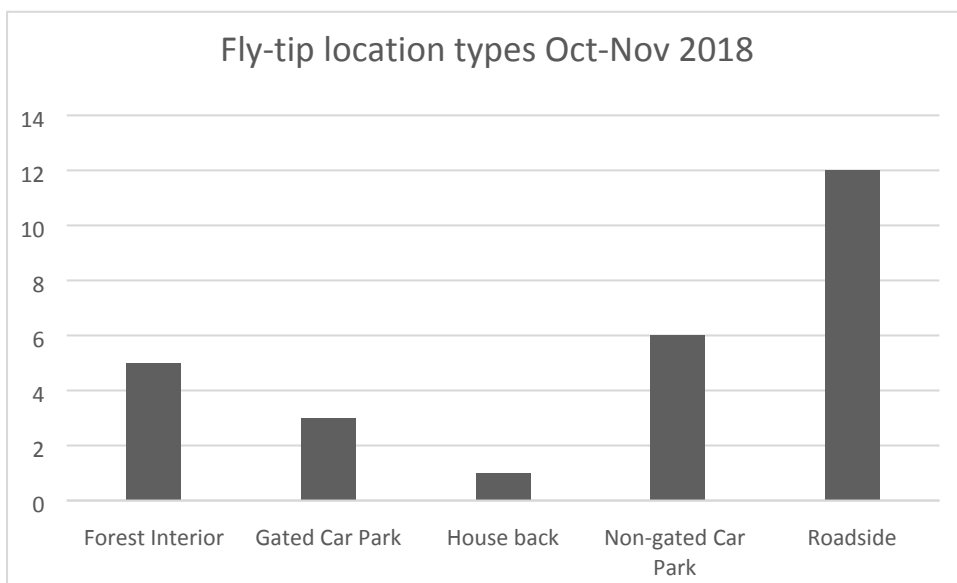
## **Forest Services**

### **Fly-tipping**

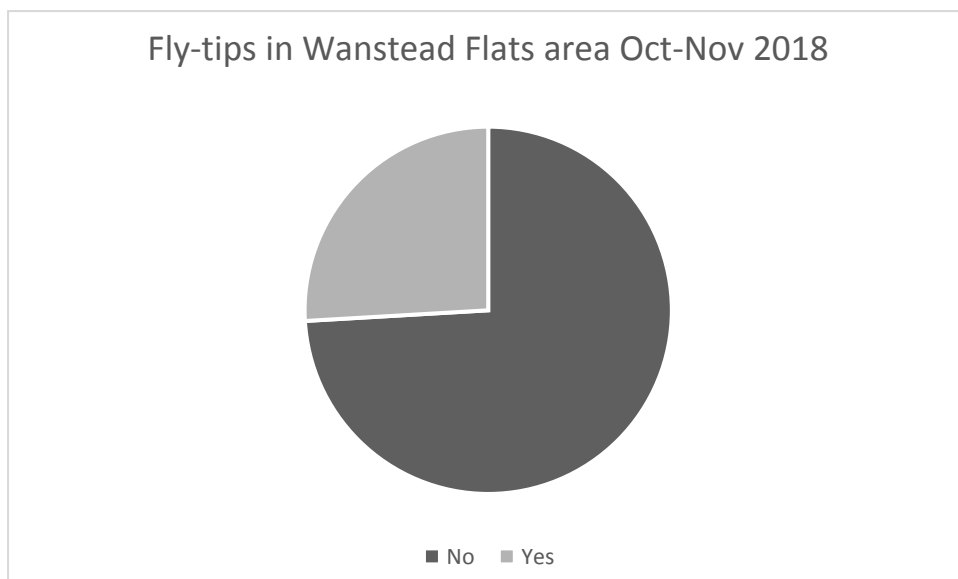
10. There were 27 fly-tips over the Oct/Nov period of 2018, which is 68% decrease on the same period last year. However, there were three asbestos tips which are very expensive to collect, the total of the three tips costing £1,855 to remove (this cost equates to the disposal of 13.25 tonnes of non-hazardous waste which costs £69.50 per 500 kilo). There have been significant steps taken to increase security of Forest locations over the recent months, which may have contributed to this figure, it is becoming more obvious that the locking of car parks is displacing fly-tipping to neighbouring areas.



11. Builders waste and Household waste remain the most commonly tipped items representing 30% and 25% respectively.



12. Roadsides remain the most vulnerable place in the Forest for security and represents 45% of the fly-tips that occurred over the period.



13. Some 25% of all tips occurred in the Wanstead Flats area. It is hoped the repositioning of the Belgrave Road Wayleave gate nearer the roadside will make it more difficult to park and therefore help reduce or stop fly tipping, as well as the placement of a licenced and staffed compound at Centre Road.

#### **Enforcement Activity**

14. There were no prosecutions for the reporting period.

#### **Rough Sleepers**

15. Four Rough sleeper camps were found in the following areas:
- Rear of the City of London Cemetery: 1 tent occupied by 1 male.
  - The Triangle, Wanstead Flats: 1 tent occupied by a couple.
  - Wanstead Flats opposite the City of London Cemetery: 1 large tent occupied by two males.
  - Forest Glade E11: 2 tents occupied by 2 males.
16. All the occupants were offered and given assistance by Redbridge Homeless Team or St Mungo's Homeless Charity. There should be a decline in rough sleeping over the winter months due to the adverse weather and the opening of seasonal night shelters.

#### **Licences**

17. A total of 28 licences for events were issued during the two months being reported, which yielded an income of £21,005.42 plus VAT. 32 licences were issued during the same period in 2017 yielding income of £131,774 (which included one compound of £124,670 and one compound of £1,020.00).

#### **Unauthorised Occupations**

18. There have been no traveller incursions over the period. In partnership with the London Borough of Redbridge, the City Corporation has seen the inclusion of parts of Woodford Green and George Green in the London Borough of Redbridge's High Court Traveller Injunction.

### **Dog Incidents**

19. There were no incidents recorded during this reporting period.

### **Deer Vehicle Collisions**

20. Over the period of October/November, there were 5 recorded incidents of deer vehicle collisions.

## **Heritage; Landscape and Nature Conservation**

### **Biodiversity**

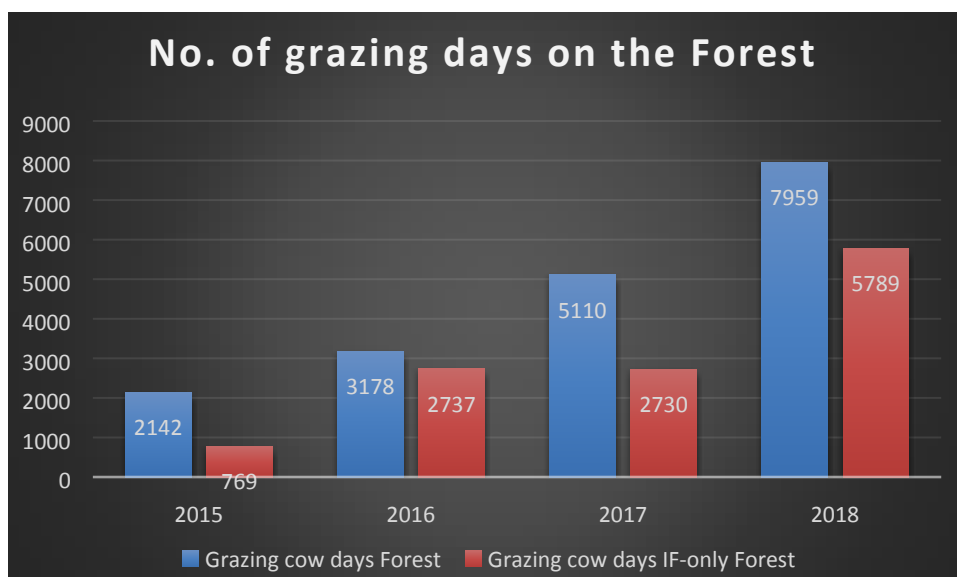
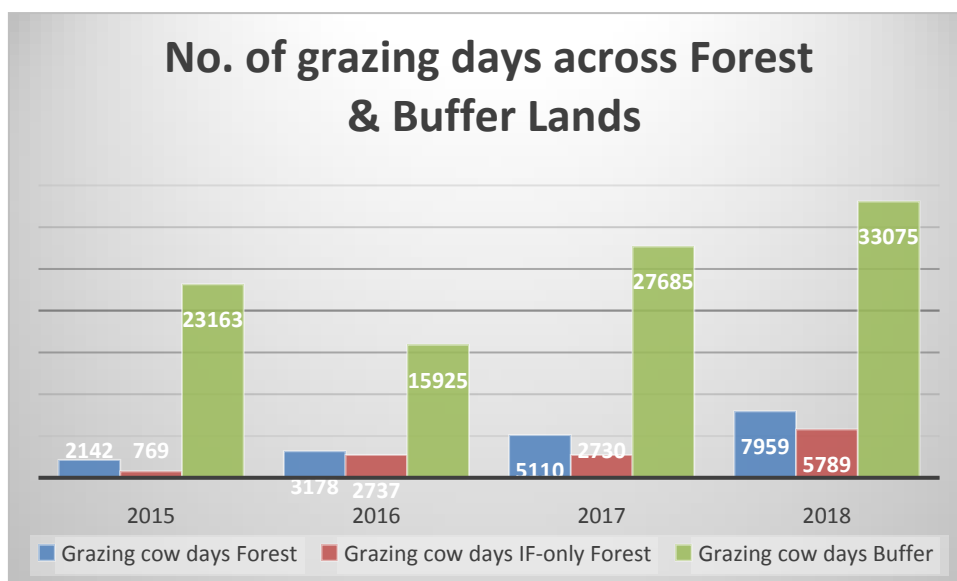
21. *Sarcosagium campestre*, a new lichen record for the Forest. Found by Essex lichenologist John Skinner. There are only three other records for East Anglia after 2000.

### **Agri-environment Schemes**

22. The Environmental Stewardship Officer assisted the Remembrancer's Department with the City of London's response to a consultation on the Agriculture Bill.
23. A consultation was initiated with Epping Forest Commoners regarding the exercise of their grazing rights, for the purposes of the new Countryside Stewardship. A small number of Commoners indicated they might be considering grazing during 2020-2030 and have been contacted to discuss their plans.

### **Grazing**

24. The cattle handling installation at Great Gregories Farm has been installed by contractors in the Top Shed. The system is designed to work with the animal's natural behavioural instinct to improve safety and welfare for both animal and staff.
25. The Grazing and Landscape Project Officer arranged a site visit for retired-Verderer, Commoner and honorary Reeve Michael Davies. As Verderer, Michael Davies had supported the return of traditional commoners' grazing and provided his own herd of cows for many years to graze sites across the Forest. On this visit, he was shown several key grazing sites across the Forest and Buffer lands, including Gt Gregories Yard cattle buildings, and viewed the new calves recently born into the Epping Forest conservation herd of English Longhorns.
26. The Longhorns had been moved to fields surrounding Great Gregories Farm in September in preparation for calving and by 30th November the majority of animals were in pens at Great Gregories, with 25 calves born and more expected during December.
27. Several thefts of electric fencing equipment took place on the Buffer Lands at Warlies Estate and Great Gregories Fields.
28. A record number of grazing days was achieved across both the Forest and Buffer Lands this year, and more than 70% of Forest grazing was achieved within invisible-fenced areas, another record achievement.



29. To cap a successful grazing year, The Grazing Team won the City of London staff team award as part of the 'Celebrating Our People' Awards, against tough competition across the whole of the City Corporation. The Team was awarded top position for "Innovative and Improved / new ways of working". The Stockman attended and received the award on behalf of the team. The subsequent article about the team's success was the most read article on the City's intranet site across the following week.

## Heritage

30. Further fieldwork by your officers was completed on Copped Hall to help inform the draft Conservation Management Plan (CMP) and, in particular, the proposed restoration of the parkland and treescape of this historic Grade II\* listed Park and Garden. The CMP will be brought to your Committee in 2019 for review and consideration.

## **Contractors**

31. Contractors have undertaken work at four key sites across the Forest's wood-pasture: Lords Bushes, Bury Wood, Pole Hill and Honey Lane as part of the Higher-Level Stewardship Scheme. There has been some localised concern expressed about the amount of work completed at Lords Bushes recently, and a number of site meetings were held, or have been planned, to explain the works and future proposals. Following 15 years of wood-pasture restoration there, further engagement with local residents is planned for the New Year.

## **Land Management**

### **Town & Country Planning – Forward Planning – Local Plans**

32. Epping Forest District Council's full Cabinet met on 18<sup>th</sup> October and approved the interim Mitigation Strategy to protect Epping Forest Special Area of Conservation (SAC). The core of this Strategy, the on-site mitigation proposals to reduce the impacts of recreation, had been prepared by your officers and were incorporated in their entirety in the Council's Strategy.
33. On 28<sup>th</sup> November the Inspector, appointed to examine the EFDC Local Plan, published the dates of the many hearings that will be held to consider the Plan Policies. There are hearings programmed for mid-February, March and mid-May. A separate report on the EFDC Local Plan has been prepared for your committee's consideration.

### **Town & Country Planning – Development Control**

34. Proposals for a new Next plc storage and distribution centre at Dowding Way close to Junction 26 of the M25 have been released. The 80,000 m<sup>2</sup> of warehousing on the 14-hectare site is of concern because of the adverse impacts from the traffic generated by the site, especially HGVs, would have on the Forest's environment and tree health. A detailed response was made to this proposed development in November and subsequently was quoted in the local press.

## **Land Registration**

35. Following the submission of Statements of Case in the last reporting period, witness statements were completed in November and filed with the Lands Tribunal for the Broomhill Road, Woodford Green case which will be heard in the early part of 2019.

## **Operations**

### **Habitat Works**

36. **Grass cutting** - The annual grass cutting program by staff of some 128 hectares of amenity and conservation land has been completed on schedule. In addition, because of the dry conditions we have been able to undertake additional cutting work on the buffer lands in support of the grazing operation, with cutting of coarse grass and bramble areas.

37. The primary focus of arborist staff has been the final works to complete the ten-year program of Wood Pasture restoration. As at the end of November teams still had around a month of work to go with the possibility of some smaller operations to be scheduled for later into 2019.
38. Highams Park Lake: Working together with the volunteer group, the Highams Park Snedders, staff continued with the program of works to strengthen the views linking the formal park managed by the Local Authority and the City Corporation's land at Highams Park. Revised fencing has been installed around the reservoir draw down structures as the former fences were prone to vandalism/theft. A small but important success was that following fencing of the dam boundary and reseeded of worn sections on the dam face we have seen much improved grass growth on the dam. This has previously been a concern of the inspection engineer on his six-monthly visits.

### **Risk Management Works**

39. **Tree Safety** The annual program of works largely continues on schedule. The main area of delay is the working of the Churchill Poplar Avenue where a public consultation exercise first needs to be undertaken as outlined in the May 2018 Work program report to your Committee.
40. **Highway Verge management:** Highway verge management was slightly delayed this year with our contractor starting work late in the season. This work is now largely complete with some areas left for December. This is the first year of a three-year contract and we will be holding a performance review meeting in the New Year to agree a better way forward.

### **Visitor Services**

#### **Chingford Golf Course**

41. The Head Green Keeper and his team continued to clear leaves from fairways and ditches to help improve playability and speed of play. The spraying programme has continued to help prevent any diseases on the greens. Tees were spiked to help break up compaction and allow air and water into the root zone to promote better growth. Work was carried out on creating a new path between holes 2 & 3 within the course boundary. Severe motorbike damage occurred on the 5<sup>th</sup> green, repair work has been carried out as best as possible for this time of year and more repair work will be carried out early spring next year to try and restore the green back to its normal high standard.



42. Total revenue from online sales this period is £5,364.50, total revenue from reception was £42,835.27 broken down into:

Breakdown of figures from Reception			
	2018/19	2017/18	Difference (+/-)
<b>Green fees:</b>	£33,889.80	£32,131.68	+£1758.12
<b>Drinks:</b>	£869.20	£740.70	+£128.50
<b>Hire Equipment:</b>	£4066.50	£4477.00	-£410.50
<b>Shop Sales:</b>	£2517.45	£2603.75	-£86.30
<b>Wanstead:</b>	£1044	£670	+£374.00
<b>Horse Riding:</b>	£452.02	NA	+£452.02

43. Compared to last year the total difference in revenue equates to an increase in income of £3,735.64. (8%)
44. Online bookings for the same period last year was £3,413.50 compared to £5,364.50 this year, making an increase of £1,951 (57%).
45. Total revenue from reception last year was £41,050.63 compared to £42,835.27 in the current year, an increase amounting to £1,784.64. £452.02 of this year's takings is however from horse riding licences, which was administered from The View in previous years
46. The number of rounds for October & November last year was 2,991. This year number of rounds for October & November was 3,937. This represents an increase of 946 (32%).



## Wanstead Flats Football

47. Seasonal pitch booking payments have been received with some hirers opting for a split payment option. Currently there are no outstanding debts.
48. The new 3-week rota has also seen improvements for hirers and staff. The on-duty greens/grounds keeper is supported by casual caretaker staff across sites which allows better operational consistency and the staff have 2 weekends in 3 off-duty.
49. Parkrun attracted 1,857 runners over October and November, up 250 runners on the same period last year.

## Visitor Numbers

50. Visitor numbers remain lower than last year. In part this may be due to the finer weather as people are more likely to just have an 'outdoor' visit. Wedding bookings are less frequent as we were unable to take bookings during the limewashing works for The Hunting Lodge. There were also less events held in half-term.

Visitor Numbers	QEHL 2018	2017	View	2017	Temple	2017	High Beach	2017	Total	Total 2017
October	1680	2594	3209	4519	0	744	2043	2569	6932	10426
November	1103	1775	2877	2956	132	649	1467	1757	5579	7137

## Visitor Services Events

51. Approximately 4,000 people attended the Epping Forest Fair over the weekend of 8 / 9 December, including 500 children paying to visit the Father Christmas' Grotto in The View. The Festive Fair was free and craft activities were provided by the CoL Open Spaces Learning Team. The Field Studies Centre led woodland walks and Suntrap Forest Centre brought along a variety of reptiles and insects for handling. Stall holders and caterers provided local, hand-crafted items for sale and food / drinks. Local choirs provided traditional Christmas carols, and a snow machine provided a wonderful, festive atmosphere for all to enjoy. Wellgate Community Farm attended with their petting farm and the Hunting Lodge was seasonally decorated with greenery along the theme of a 'Midwinter Night's Dream with storytelling and craft activities a local community farm.
52. London Borough of Waltham Forest Adult Learning ran three afternoon Art Workshops at The View in October: Start Painting the Forest. These were the first charged sessions that were offered and the organisers paid for room hire.
53. On Friday 12 October, the Museum and Heritage Manager was invited to give a talk on Audience Development in Epping Forest to the London North and East

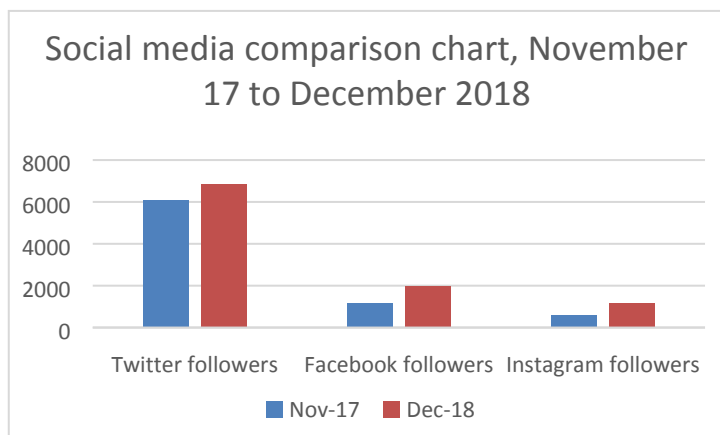
Museum group meeting at Alexandra Palace. This was a useful opportunity to promote what we do, and learn from, other small museum services. The Manager also gave a talk on *1878: Saving the Forest* to Woodford Historical Society as part of the 140<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Epping Forest Act programme.

54. *Children's Games: What we used to do*, was the theme of the October half term family drop in activities at Queen Elizabeth's Hunting Lodge and The View.
55. As Epping Forest's contribution to the centenary remembrance of the end of the First World War, Visitors Services offered an exhibition and related activities, entitled 'Returning from the War: Beyond the 11th Hour', from 1 November, at The View. The exhibition was replicated at The Temple. The exhibition told the story of Forest Keepers and their war stories and invited visitors to ponder the impact of the War on their own families via a 'Family Story Tree', war poems and age appropriate children's activities. The duration of this popular exhibition has been extended to the end of the year. This exhibition was enhanced by the installation of six '*There but Not There*' wire 'Tommy' figures installed at The View, Pole Hill, High Beach and three war memorials on Epping Forest land.
56. The Temple was reopened, one weekend in four, on 10/11 November. Interpretation at The Temple was refreshed with some linked object displays telling various strands of the Wanstead Story: including the Orangery, The Temple as menagerie. Staff worked with Friends of Wanstead Parklands to create a story-telling area and displays.
57. 10 November to 27 January, an exhibition at The View shows photographs of Gayle Chong Kwan's *The People's Forest*. This multi-venue art project funded by Arts Council, Barbican and William Morris Gallery, inspired by the popular campaign to save the Forest, included activities in the Forest and forest staff as inspiration for fantastic headdresses displayed at the William Morris Gallery earlier in the year. This theme is to be continued as part of the London Borough of Culture forest theme in 2019.
58. On 12 November Rutgers American drama students studying at The Globe returned to the Forest for the fourth year on a paid walk and talk around Queen Elizabeth's Hunting Lodge and Barn Hoppitt. This now annual visit enables us to maintain useful links with The Globe and to reinforce narratives about the use of the Hunting Lodges stairs at The Globe, limewashing and the important influence of the Forest as a Shakespearean theme.

## **Communication and Information**

59. As of 13 December 2018 our social media following is:
  - Twitter followers: 6,843 (12.1% increase)
  - Facebook followers: 1,979 (71.9% increase)
  - Instagram followers: 1,164 (100% increase)

60. The chart shows a comparison of our figures at the same point in 2017:



61. The Top Tweet for November 2018 with 7,484 impressions was:

We would like your help...This aircraft related fly tip was dumped in The Lower Forest earlier this week. Please share and let us know if you have any information which may help our investigation. Thank you in advance. [#TreesNotTrash](#) [#EppingForest](#) [pic.twitter.com/kRv7TmSUVO](https://pic.twitter.com/kRv7TmSUVO)



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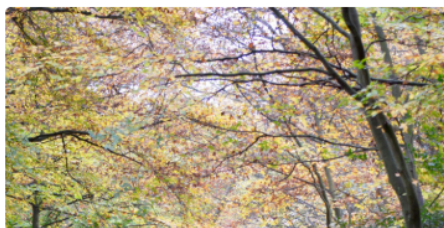
62. The Top Tweet for October 2018 with 9,287 impressions was:

Nature and the outdoors can help with anxiety and depression.

If you need a quiet walk, somewhere to exercise, or just time out to sit and watch the world and be yourself, [#EppingForest](#) is always here for you.

[cityoflondon.gov.uk/eppingforest](https://cityoflondon.gov.uk/eppingforest)

[#WorldMentalHealthDay](#) [pic.twitter.com/veE7Dmz5PC](https://pic.twitter.com/veE7Dmz5PC)



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**Major incidents**

63. There were no major Forest incidents.

**Appendices**

- None

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