

Committee(s): Epping Forest Consultative: For information Epping Forest and Commons: For decision	Date(s): 23 10 2019 18 11 2019
Subject: Wanstead Park Permanent Orienteering Course (SEF 39/19b)	Public
Report of: Director of Open spaces	Decision
Report author: Geoff Sinclair – Head of Operations	

Summary

Orienteering is an outdoor sport designed to challenge mind and body as participants navigate between locations marked on specialist mapping. Orienteering events have been successfully organised in Epping Forest for over 40 years by local clubs, normally using temporary courses established for the specific event.

This report is necessary to consider the Chigwell and Epping Forest Orienteering Club's request for permission to undertake a joint initiative with the City of London Corporation to establish a permanent orienteering course at Wanstead Park. This would largely serve to introduce young people through schools and youth groups to orienteering and builds on recent City Bridge Trust supported work at Wanstead Park led by the Field Studies Council. The initial £500 and ongoing maintenance costs are relatively minimal and within the capacity of the Local Risk budget.

Recommendation(s)

Members are asked to:

- Consider any comments made by the Consultative Committee on the Wanstead Park Orienteering Course
- Approve option 2 to allow officers to work with the Chigwell and Epping Forest Orienteering Club to install a standard permanent orienteering course at Wanstead Park

Main Report

Background

1. Orienteering is an outdoor sport that takes place in woodlands, open countryside, urban city parks and streets. The participant's aim is to navigate between control points whose location are marked on a large-scale specially drawn topographical orienteering map.
2. Temporary markers are typically utilised to mark out orienteering courses for organised events. Increasingly, Permanent Orienteering Courses (POCs) are

being established by local clubs using specially installed permanent control points. The main benefit of these courses is that they allow individuals and groups, such as schools or scouts, to organise their own orienteering activities directly. The Chigwell & Epping Forest Orienteering Club (CHIG) has established five POCs in the wider Epping Forest area, but not in Epping Forest itself.

3. Wanstead Park and Wanstead Flats, with the permission of the Conservators, have been mapped and used for orienteering events by CHIG for over 40 years (Appendix 2). Across Epping Forest since 2014 there have been 30 licensed organised orienteering events, with CHIG responsible for 17 of these events

Current Position

4. With financial support from the City Bridge Trust, the Field Studies Council are delivering sessions introducing orienteering to young people at Wanstead Park across the Autumn of 2019. These will require the establishment of a temporary orienteering course being marked out by representatives from CHIG.
5. At Hampstead Heath, the City Corporation established a POC around 30 years ago. This course makes use of Smartphone technology to allow users, via the MOBO App, to download a map, record their progress using Quick Response (QR) codes on the control points and to measure personal performance undertaking the course. The course also allows for conventional use without reliance on a Smartphone application.
6. CHIG have approached the City Corporation with a proposal for a joint initiative to install a POC at Wanstead Park (Appendix one). A map of the proposed course and control point locations is given on page 9 of Appendix 1. CHIG considers Wanstead Park to be particularly suited to a POC for new and young participants: it is an enclosed site with no roads to cross and has a range of features to make it an interesting and varied course.

Options

7. Three options are presented for consideration by your committee:

Option 1: Not to progress with creating a POC at Wanstead Park. This will result in no additional expenditure for the City Corporation. Community benefits from having a permanent facility will not be achieved, such as encouraging a healthy activity among young people and providing an engaging way for people to explore Wanstead Park more widely. **This option is not recommended.**

Option 2: Work with CHIG to install a standard permanent orienteering course. This will not make use of smartphone technology but will provide a POC facility at a minimal cost of around £500 in materials plus staff time to install up to 20 posts. Should it be thought desirable to adopt Smartphone technology this can be relatively easily achieved in the future. **This option is recommended.**

Option 3: Work with CHIG to install a smartphone compatible permanent orienteering course. This is a slightly more costly option with additional ongoing costs to cover registration on the MOBO app and purchase of metal plaques for posts. It is a possible future improvement however at present **this option is not recommended.**

Proposals

8. Detailed actions, including a project costing for progressing Option 2, are given in Appendix 1. In outline it is proposed that the City Corporation supply and install the posts for the control points while CHIG supply the course specific materials and lead on the course design and promotion. Wherever possible existing infrastructure will be used rather than install new posts. The initial stock of maps will be supplied by CHIG with the distribution of maps and related publicity material being available at the Epping Forest visitor centres. On installing the course, it is proposed that a joint CHIG/COL launch event be held.

Corporate & Strategic Implications

Corporate Plan

9. Increasing opportunities for young people to visit a world class open space and take part in healthy activities contributes towards two outcomes in the Corporate Plan: *People enjoy good health and wellbeing* and *People have equal opportunities to enrich their lives and reach their full potential.*

Implications

10. **Financial** - An initial cost of £500 will be incurred by the City Corporation which can be met through the ground's maintenance budget under Local Risk. Ongoing costs will be the very occasional replacement of posts which is a weekly activity in the Forest and easily accommodated in existing work programs.
11. **Legal** – Subject to the provisions of the Epping Forest Act 1878 the Conservators are under a duty at all times to keep Epping Forest uninclosed and unbuilt on as an open space for the recreation and enjoyment of the public. They are also under a duty at all times, as far as possible, to preserve the natural aspect of the Forest.
12. The Epping Forest Act 1880 includes an additional power at section 5 to maintain "*ornamental inclosed lands*" which most probably reflects the City Corporation's purchase of Wanstead Park in 1880 and requires the Conservators to make proper provision for securing the enjoyment thereof by the public for exercise and recreation at all reasonable times during the day.
13. The proposal is considered to be consistent with the Conservators' statutory functions.

14. Epping Forest is a registered charity. Members are reminded that decisions they make in relation to the charity must be made in the best interests of the charity and within their powers (i.e. consistent with the charity's objects and powers).
15. **Equalities & diversity:** An initial screening exercise of the equality impact of this decision has been undertaken by the City Corporation. At this stage, it is considered that there are no negative impacts on the protected equality groups.
16. **Charity:** Epping Forest is a registered charity (number 232990). Charity Law obliges Members to ensure that the decisions they take in relation to the Charity must be taken in the best interests of the Charity.
17. **Consultative Committee:** The Committee was supportive of this proposal, echoing warm support from the Local Friends Group. Members also felt infrastructure that encouraged physical exercise was welcome, in addition to the ability to manage the impact on sensitive areas by carefully locating the scheme's control points.

Conclusion

18. Orienteering clubs have been successfully organising orienteering events at Wanstead Park and across Epping Forest for at least forty years.
19. The Chigwell and Epping Forest Orienteering Club have requested permission for a joint COL/CHIG initiative to establish a POC at Wanstead Park.
20. It is recommended that a standard POC be established with the option that if popular the POC may be upgraded to being Smartphone compliant, should circumstances in the future indicate the desirability to do so.

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Proposal to City of London Corporation for the Design and Implementation of a Permanent Orienteering Course in Wanstead Park

Appendix 2 - Orienteering Maps of Wanstead Park for 1974 to 2016

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