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| <b>Committee(s)</b>   | <b>Dated:</b>          |
| Epping Forest and Commons   | 18 11 2019             |
| Epping Forest Consultative Committee  | 13 02 2020             |
| <b>Subject:</b><br>Epping Forest - Superintendent's Update for August to September 2019 (SEF 44/19) | <b>Public</b>          |
| <b>Report of:</b><br>Director of Open Spaces  | <b>For Information</b> |
| <b>Report author:</b><br>Paul Thomson – Epping Forest   |                        |

### Summary

This purpose of this report is to summarise the Epping Forest Division's activities across August to September 2019.

Of particular note was the above average rainfall for the two months which has helped restore soil moisture deficit levels and reduce fire risk; three successful prosecutions by enforcement officers; the submission of a £5 Million part-common Countryside Stewardship Scheme application; a response to the London Borough of Waltham Forest's Local Plan and the use of a new tractor-mounted Quad saw cutting head to improve the management of trees adjacent to shared used trails.

### Recommendation(s)

Members are asked to:

- Note the report.

### Main Report

#### Staff and Volunteers

1. A Forest Keeper has retired, after 23 years' service. Recruitment is underway to fill the vacancy on a fixed-term contract basis.

#### Budgets

2. At the six-month point spend is at approximately 42% rather than 50% of the operating budget, this position reflects restricted spending to address an anomalous £100,000 shortfall resulting from a grant income interregnum this year. The shortfall is planned to be managed, by vacancy management and a temporary reduction in grounds maintenance budgets. Plans are in place to

manage the budget shortfall alongside additional spending commitments by the year end.

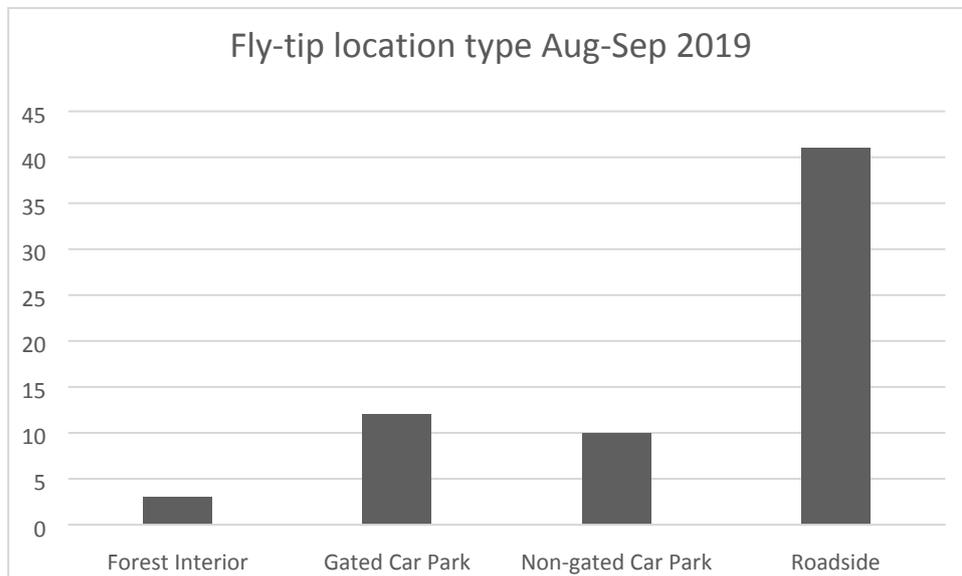
## Weather

3. August 2019 had a mix of dry and wet days, with the longest stretch of dry weather lasting 8 days. The total rainfall for this month was 46.6mm of rain which is close to the average of 43.15mm of rain for this time of year. There was a total of 13 days of rainfall with the wettest day being the 14 August, where 13.6mm of rain fell.
4. September had a very similar pattern to August in terms of a mix of wet and dry days with the longest stretch of dry weather lasting 7 days. The total rainfall for this month was 63.8mm which is well above the average of 42.7mm for this time of year. There was 16 days of rain in total with the wettest being the 23 September, where there was 16mm of rain.

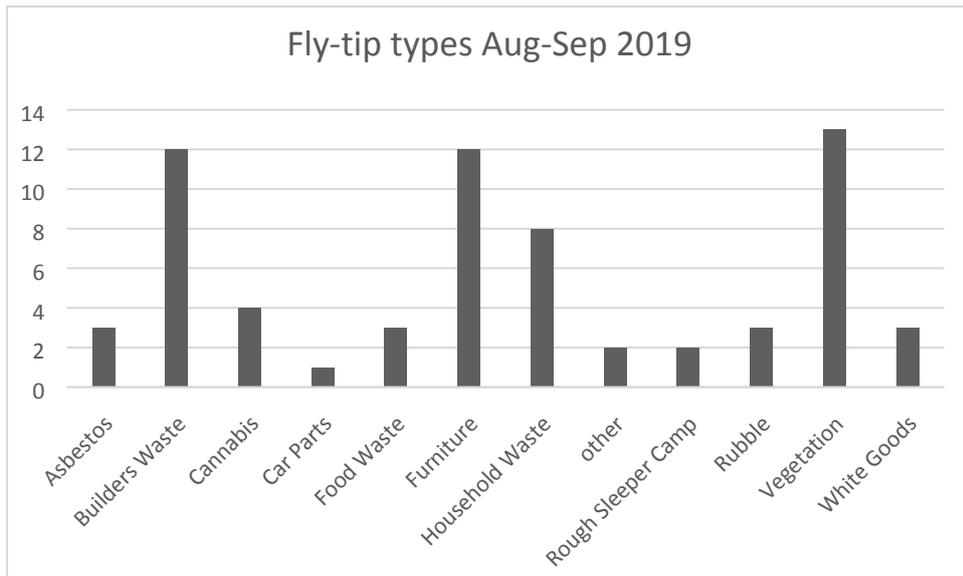
## Forest Services

### Fly-tipping

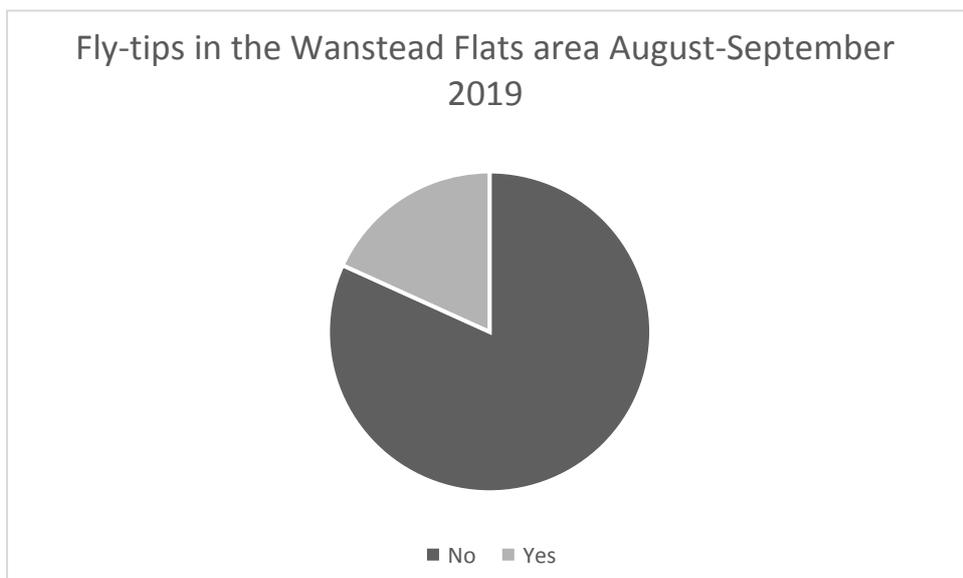
5. There were a total of 66 fly-tips over the period of August – September 2019, which represents a 34% increase over the same period last year.



6. Roadside locations remains the most prominent location for fly-tips to occur on the Forest, representing 41 of the 66 tips (62%).



7. Builders waste and furniture represent 18% of all tips respectively. There was a noticeable rise over the period of the quantity of small-scale garden waste/vegetation tips amounting to 13 tips, 7 of which were found around the High Beach area. These tips contributed to increase over the period. The perpetrator is possibly a gardening firm working in the local area.



### Enforcement Activity

8. There were three Byelaw prosecutions and one Environmental Protection Act prosecution during the period under report.

| Date       | Defendant Name | Offence Accepted<br>33: Deposit<br>34: Duty of Care | Court Name | Outcome | Costs Recovered                     |
|------------|----------------|---|------------|---------|-------------------------------------|
| 29.08.2019 | Connor HARMER  | Byelaw 3 (5)<br>Damaging Trees                      | Chelmsford | Guilty  | Costs: £93<br>Fine: £200<br>V/S £30 |
| 29.08.2019 | James HUDSON   | Byelaw 3 (5)<br>Damaging Trees                      | Chelmsford | Guilty  | Costs: £93<br>Fine: £200<br>V/S £30 |
| 29.08.2019 | Geoff CASLAKE  | Byelaw 3 (5)<br>Damaging Trees                      | Chelmsford | Guilty  | Costs: £93<br>Fine: £440<br>V/S £30 |
| 21.08.2019 | Joe GREEN      | EPA 34  | Chelmsford | Guilty  | Costs £400<br>Fine £333<br>V/A £30  |

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| <b>Total Costs Awarded to Epping Forest</b> | £679   |
| <b>Total Fine</b>                           | £1,173 |
| <b>Total Victim/Surcharge</b>               | £120   |
| <b>Total</b>                                | £1,972 |

### Unexplained Deaths

9. There have been no unexplained deaths over the reporting period. Forest Keepers worked closely with the Police to prevent a potential self-harm incident from escalating at Leyton Flats on 18 August.

### Rough Sleepers

10. There were 8 rough sleeper camps over the period; Wanstead Flats, Leyton Flats and Walthamstow Forest. One camp comprised of multiple tents and a significant amount of rubbish (500kg). The remaining camps were removed on 5 October.

## **Licences**

11. A total of 54 licences for events were issued during the two months being reported, which yielded an income of £37,008 plus VAT. 53 licences were issued during the same period in 2018 (income of £36,465.44).

## **Unauthorised Occupations**

12. There were 2 traveller incursions on Friday 30 & on the 3 September when 15 vehicles and 10 caravans entered Forest Land at Honey Lane and broke a gate. They were quickly moved on without Police assistance.

## **Dog Incidents**

13. During the period there were 2 reports of dog-related incidents over the period:

- 09/08/2019 Small dog attacked and killed on Leyton Flats
- 01/10/2019 Report of an out of control dog jumping up onto tables in Wanstead Park taking food from small children scaring them.

## **Deer Vehicle Collisions**

14. There were a total of 11 Deer Vehicle Collisions (DVC) during this reporting period: Two of the 11 deer were killed on Piercing Hill near the Golf Course.

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

### **Biodiversity**

15. As part of a long-term study of bats within the Warren Plantation, Copped Hall Estate and the tunnel under the M25, licenced trapping sessions are occasionally undertaken (by staff and volunteers) to help with identification and establish the breeding condition of bats within these sites. The highlight of the trapping was the capture of 2 barbastelle bats in September, one female and one male within the Warren Plantation. The female was shown to be a post lactating individual and the male showing signs of having bred (testicle shape and colour). Barbastelle is a rare woodland species within the UK, this is the first ever documented evidence of breeding within the Forest.

### **Agri-environment Schemes**

16. The Conservation Team submitted an application to the Countryside Stewardship grant scheme at the end of August. The application seeks funding to contribute to the management of the Forest's most important habitats and rarest species. If successful, the grant will provide funding for 10 years. The outcome of the application will be known by the end of the year. The application covers approximately half of the Forest. A second application for the remaining parts of the Forest will be prepared.

### **Heritage**

17. As part of the application process for the Countryside Stewardship grant scheme, Officers undertook the required liaison with Historic England to discuss the management of important heritage features within the application areas. The main feature within the discussions was Loughton Camp and it has been agreed with Historic England that to help conserve this Scheduled

Monument, bracken, bramble and holly will be removed from the site to both protect the buried archaeology and allow the site to be viewed better by visitors.

### **Contractors**

18. Contractors have resumed work on wood pasture restoration which will continue until the winter. Work will take place at Pole Hill, Lords Bushes and Bury Wood.

### **Land Management**

#### **Town & Country Planning**

19. Officers have been closely involved in reviewing the Inspectors Interim Advice for the Epping Forest District Local Plan which was published on the 8 August and reported to your Committee in September. Considerable work was also undertaken in the preparation of The London Borough of Waltham Forest's Regulation 18 Local Plan public consultation, ahead of the consultation deadline of 30 September. This response is the subject of an accompanying Local Report.

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

20. Officers have made a further response objecting to the proposed development at Woodberry Way, Chingford.

### **Land Registration**

21. A successful registration claim was made for Forest Land at the junction of Mott Street and Lippitt's Hill.

### **Operations**

#### **Habitat Works**

22. Grass cutting by staff and contractors has been the main habitat management activity during this period. Contractor-led cutting represents around 55-60% of the annual area cut and was largely complete for the end September. Late in August staff also commenced cutting areas cleared as part of our wood pasture restoration program undertaken over the last ten years. The initial restoration work was funded by a Countryside Stewardship grant and this year and next will be a test of our capacity for maintaining these grant legacy areas. Staff also provided additional support for the grazing team on tasks such as fencing and ground works.

#### **Insurance works**

23. So far in 2019, for the period up to the end of September The City Corporation has had been the subject of 17 insurance claims, representing a combined claim of £52,564. Nine claims relate to tyre damage on dragons' teeth at car parks, three to consequent damage to property from falling, three claims of subsidence damage related to our trees and two claims for damage to vehicles caused by trees. Operations staff work closely with the City of London insurance team to manage potential liability issues related to these claims.

## **Risk Management Works**

24. Tree Safety works continue apace with at least an arborist team tasked daily with progressing the list of nearly 600 jobs our inspectors identified. During the period staff have also continued cutting back sightlines at gateways. Our contractor started Highway verge cutting in August with work continuing over the next couple of months. Verges in the south of the Forest were worked in the first instance. Coordinating our response to Oak Processionary moth and liaising with contractors removing nests took a month of an arborists time during this period.

## **Access Works**

25. Using the new tractor -multibladed Quad saw head, work commenced in August to open up overgrown rides in the Forest. In the first instance, to make use of the drier ground conditions, unsurfaced official rides on Pole Hill, Yardley Hill and Hawkwood were cut back. Subsequent work progressed to the Green Ride in the period. The new saw head has considerably improved productivity and the Operations team has been able to progress more quickly along some quite overgrown sections. Follow-up work is still needed through the use of a traditional tractor-mounted flail cutter to respond to associated brambles and low growing woody material.

## **Visitor Services**

### **Events**

#### **Open House weekend: 21/22 September**

26. Epping Forest contributed four events to Open House 2019 on 21 and 22 September. Epping Forest Visitor Centre at Chingford (The View) and Queen Elizabeth's Hunting Lodge, attracted a total of 805 visits across the weekend despite closure of the overground line Chingford-Liverpool Street.

27. The Wanstead Heritage Walk and the Hollow Ponds Heritage walk. were pre-booked to their maximum of 35 and started at tube stations. All events attracted new visitors as well as drop-in regulars, with people accessing sites via bus, tube, replacement bus, foot and car.

#### **Ways of Seeing August events**

28. A total 18,290 visits were made over the duration of the Ways of Seeing exhibition featuring works by Jacob Epstein and Clare Woods organised as part of LB Waltham Forest's London Borough of Culture (April to August). Two summer holiday family events were delivered to support the exhibition with 29 people attending the workshop on 21 August and 33 on 28 August. The partnership working initiated a very positive relationship with the Government Art Collection: and the City is in discussions about arranging a further loan of artwork in 2020.

### **The Temple summer weekend opening**

29. The Temple was opened every weekend from 28 July to 1 September including the August Bank Holiday Monday. The event offered a historic games activity linked to the known children of Wanstead Park owners through the centuries from the Rich Tudor family to the Wellesley Poles and Keeper Puffet's family.
30. The summer opening was less well attended than hoped with visit counts ranging from 23 on Sunday 23 August (Bank Holiday weekend) to 116 on Sunday 4 August. The figures for the 13 days' opening in total was 621 (an average of just under 50 people per day).

### **Chingford Culinary event: our Tudor contribution**

31. On 28 September, Queen Elizabeth's Hunting Lodge was the launch venue for the London Borough of Culture culinary tour of Chingford organised by Abdul Maalik-Taylor. Participants found out about what Tudor luxuries – and venison – might have been served at the Hunting Lodge and tasted quince paste, marzipan and ginger biscuits with a 'Victorian' cup of coffee; a nod to the Retreat history of the building.

### **Museum Accreditation**

32. Arts Council England have revised the museum accreditation framework and extended the period between submissions from 3 years to 5 years. The View (Epping Forest collection,), accredited in 2016 and is awaiting notification of a new resubmission date. Work is in progress to revise the 2016 documentation and policies in the light of the new framework alongside progress on cataloguing, backlogs and ways to display more of the collection to the public.

### **Chingford Golf Course**

33. Sports turf consultants STRI were contracted to review the grounds management of the golf course. STRI's report has helped highlight potential improvement areas. In addition, CCTV has been installed to the workshop at Jubilee Yard. Due to the periodic dry weather, daily watering was carried out in August on greens and tees which also required irrigation system maintenance works including the replacement 8 pop-up sprinklers. Wetting agents and nutrients were also applied to help encourage growth on the greens. All tees and greens were top-dressed to help elevate compaction. Sadly, the water storage tank for the irrigation system which is over 30 years has been compromised by a cracked foundation. A new tank expected to cost 5,000 is currently being considered by the City Surveyors Department.
34. Total revenue from online sales this period is £8,281.50, total revenue from reception was £60,384.93 broken down into:

| <b>Breakdown of figures from Reception</b> |                |                |                         |
|--|----------------|----------------|-------------------------|
|  | <b>2018/19</b> | <b>2017/18</b> | <b>Difference (+/-)</b> |
| <b>Green fees:</b>                         | £45,630.25     | £54,778.82     | <b>-£9148.60</b>        |

|                        |          |          |          |
|------------------------|----------|----------|----------|
| <b>Drinks:</b>         | £1810.80 | £1760.40 | +£50.70  |
| <b>Hire Equipment:</b> | £6255.00 | £7246.00 | -£911.00 |
| <b>Shop Sales:</b>     | £4179.20 | £3349.90 | +£829.30 |
| <b>Wanstead:</b>       | £2229.50 | £2548.00 | -£315.50 |
| <b>Horse Riding:</b>   | £280.18  | £403.90  | -£123.72 |

35. Online bookings for the same period last year was £6612 compared to £8,281.50 this year, an increase of £1,669.50 (25%). Total revenue from reception last year was £70,086.75 compared to £60,384.93 in the current year, a decrease amounting to £9701.82. (-13%). Compared to last year the total difference in revenue equates to a decrease in income of £8,032.32 (-10%). The number of rounds for August & September last year was 5077. This year number of rounds for August & September was 4941. A decrease of 136. (-2%), reflects reduced play associated with the much wetter summer this year.

### Wanstead Flats

36. September saw the start of the Football season with block bookings secured from 13 teams, 4 leagues and 2 soccer schools.

37. Parkrun attracted 2,044 runners in August and September this year, representing an increase of 187 on the same period last year. This initiative continues to grow and attract new runners to the Forest.

### Visitor Numbers

38. Visitor numbers were generally higher in August than the previous year, reflecting a trend for increased footfall despite reduced number of events. September was lower due to lesser event put on for Open House and the wet weather.

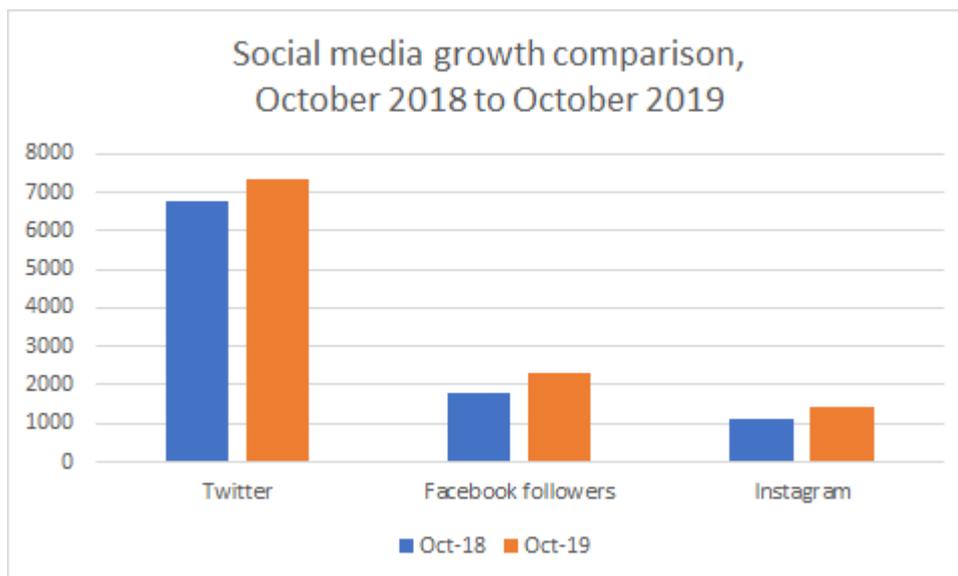
| Visitor Numbers | QEHL 2019 | 2018 | View 2019 | 2018 | Temple 2019 | 2018 | High Beach 2019 | 2018 | Total 2019 | Total 2018 |
|-----------------|-----------|------|-----------|------|-------------|------|-----------------|------|------------|------------|
| Aug             | ↓<br>2957 | 3973 | ↑<br>4658 | 3973 | ↑<br>463    | 0    | ↑<br>2592       | 2458 | ↑<br>10670 | 6395       |
| Sept            | ↓<br>1719 | 1872 | ↓<br>3221 | 3280 | ↑<br>69     | 0    | ↓<br>1684       | 2055 | ↓<br>6693  | 7408       |

## Communication and Information

39. As of 16 October 2019 our social media following is:

- Twitter followers: 7,359, an increase of 8.5%
- Facebook likes: 2,130
- Facebook follows: 2,310 an increase of 30%
- Instagram followers: 1,452, an increase of 28%

40. The chart below shows a comparison of our figures at the same point in 2018:



41. The recent autumn edition of Forest Focus, which featured a historical article on the charcoal burners of Epping Forest, an article on fungi, a celebration of 200 years since the birth of Queen Victoria, and her relevance to Epping Forest, and information on taking care to avoid deer crossing Forest roads, was very well received and was widely promoted as an e-zine online, as well as copies distributed very widely throughout centres and cafes in the Epping Forest area.

42. New signage installed at Wanstead Flats has been very well received by the local community. This signage promotes the special wildlife importance of Wanstead Flats and serves to remind people that skylarks require extra consideration in this area.

## Major incidents

There were no major incidents during the reporting period. A Forest Keeper did successfully manage a significant event on 25 August regarding a serious accident involving two cyclists at Fairmead Road which required first aid, crowd control and support for the landing of an Air Ambulance on Fairmead Plain.

**Appendices**

- None

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