

<b>Committee(s)</b>	<b>Dated:</b>
Epping Forest and Commons	13 01 2020
<b>Subject:</b> Epping Forest - Superintendent's Update for October to November 2019 (SEF 01/20)	<b>Public</b>
<b>Report of:</b> Colin Buttery, Director of Open Spaces	<b>For Information</b>
<b>Report author:</b> Paul Thomson – Epping Forest	

### Summary

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

Of particular note was the continuing above average rainfall which has been recharging lakes and watercourses, which had been depleted by earlier dry weather; the closure of Open Riding in the Forest for the winter of 2019/2020; some 6 proposed prosecutions for the removal of excessive quantities of fungi from the Forest; the return of 1875m<sup>2</sup> (0.463 acres) Forest Land following the remodelling of the Whipps Cross roundabout; and the provision of a range of cultural performances, exhibitions and installations in association with the 'Welcome to the Forest' London Borough of Culture.

### Recommendation(s)

Members are asked to:

- Note the report.

### Main Report

#### Staff and Volunteers

1. Four part-time Forest Keepers (2 Full-Time Equivalents - FTE) were recruited during November, together with a new part time booking assistant started in November who has been a great addition to the front-of-house team.

#### Verderers

2. The draft Register of Commoners was published by the City Corporation's Elections Team on 7 November and was available for inspection at Guildhall and The Warren for 6 weeks between 5 November and 18 December as required by the Epping Forest Acts 1878 & 1880.
3. All entries on the draft register are under review, ready for the meetings scheduled for 13 and 20 January 2020 to settle the register.

## **Budgets**

4. Revised estimates were uploaded in mid-December. At almost 75% of the financial year, actual net expenditure is 72% of budget, with some underspend in staffing costs due to vacancy management obligations. With adjustments for grant income still due, expenditure is planned to be approximately on budget for the year.

## **Weather**

5. Building on the previously reported 49.4% above average rainfall in September, October 2019 was also a very wet month with 25 days of rain in total, the wettest day being the 5th where 19.8mm of rain fell. The total rainfall for this month was 110mm of rain which is 81.6% above the average of 60.58mm for this time of year.
6. November was also a very wet month with 24 days of rain in total, the wettest being the 25<sup>th</sup> where 14.2mm of rain fell. In contrast to September and October, the total rainfall for this month of 84mm was just 9.2% above the average range of 76.86mm.
7. The continued above average rainfall has seen many forest watercourses returning to normal levels of winter flow. Although there have been no weather warnings for the period, there does seem to be an increase in the amount of trees falling in the woods associated with the saturated soil conditions. Conversely, the weather this year has had a positive impact on the fungi, producing a huge variety of fruiting bodies.

## **Projects**

### **Wanstead Park**

8. Survey work has commenced on the engineering Study for the Wanstead Park Lake Cascade. An initial report on the implications of 'High Risk' designation is expected in March 2020.

## **Forest Services**

### **Fly-tipping**

9. There were 49 fly-tips over the October-November period of 2019, which is 63.3% decrease on the 30 fly tips recorded for the same period in 2018.
10. There were 9 fly-tips in the Wanstead Flats area, representing 18% of all Fly-tips, which demonstrates that improved car park security continues to reduce the amount of fly tipping on the Flats.
11. The Builders Waste (14.5%) and Furniture (10.2%) categories which normally dominate fly-tipping by type have been eclipsed by a marked increase in horticultural waste fly-tips (21.7%), associated with illegal cannabis cultivation

and reflects the 26 week production cycle when the Forest last experienced an increase in fly-tips.

12. When analysed by location, roadside fly-tips remain the biggest category, equating to 77.5% of total fly-tips.

### Enforcement Activity

13. One successful Environmental Protection Act prosecution took place during the period under report.

Date	Defendant Name	Offence Accepted 33: Deposit 34: Duty of Care	Court Name	Outcome	Costs Recovered
14.11.2019	Mohammed CHAUDHRY	34 1(a)	Thames	GUILTY	Fine £200 Costs £928 V/S £30

<b>Total Costs Awarded to Epping Forest</b>	£200
<b>Total Fine</b>	£928
<b>Total Victim/Surcharge</b>	£30
<b>Total</b>	£1158

14. 2019 has proved to be a very productive year for fungal fruiting bodies, which has in turn attracted many pickers. As the picking contrary to the Epping Forest Byelaws, Enforcement Officers intend to prosecute 9 individuals under 6 actions for taking commercial quantities of fungi from the Forest. The City Corporations stance on exploitation was extensively covered by local and national press together with BBC Television.

### Unexplained Deaths

15. There have been no Unexplained Deaths over the reporting period.

### Rough Sleepers

16. Five rough sleeper camps have been identified over this reporting period. The unexpected and unseasonal increase is thought to be related to rough sleepers seeking to qualify for inclusion in a new local winter night shelter initiative.

Locations of camps;

- By Alexandra Lake – Camp cleared
- North Bushwood – awaiting clearance.
- Oak Hill nr Leighs Pond – Camp removed 17/11/2019

- Earls Path – awaiting clearance.
- Wanstead Park – Camp cleared 20/12/2019

### **Licences**

17. A total of 46 licences for events were issued during the two months being reported, which yielded an income of £29,271.65 plus VAT. 39 licences were issued during the same period in 2018 (income of £27,797.92).

### **Unauthorised Occupations**

18. There were no traveller incursions over the reporting period.

### **Open Riding**

19. Open Riding in Epping Forest was closed on 4 November with 17 days' notice in response to the deteriorating ride conditions associated with the saturated Forest soils.

### **Dog Incidents**

20. During the period there were 2 reports of dog-related incidents over the period:
  - 01/10/2019 Report of an out of control dog jumping up onto tables in Wanstead Park taking food from small children and scaring them.
  - 17/10/2019 Report from a dog owner that his Jack Russell's was viciously attacked by a Dalmatian in Wanstead Park. The Jack Russell required veterinary treatment and the owner of the Jack Russell has reported the incident to the Police.

### **Deer Vehicle Collisions**

21. 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 Theydon Bois Golf Course.

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

### **Biodiversity**

22. Wren Wildlife Spider Walk on 13 October identified a nationally rare Buzzing Spider *Amphaena numida* and the scarce *Robertus arundineti*.

### **Agri-environment Schemes**

23. The City Corporation is awaiting a decision on a potential £5,000,000 Countryside Stewardship grant from the Rural Payments Agency.

### **Heritage**

24. The 2019 Historic England Heritage at Risk Register was published in October which includes 3 entries for land at Wanstead Park:

- 24.1 **Wanstead Park** (1000194) – Grade II\* Registered Park and Garden, listed for the tenth year with condition described as 'Extensive Considerable Problems'; while vulnerability is described as 'High' and the trend as 'Declining'.

24.2 **The Grotto**, Wanstead Park (1183624) – Grade II Listed Building listed for the second year with a condition described as ‘Poor’.

24.3 **Wanstead Park Conservation Area** – listed for the 9<sup>th</sup> year with Condition described as ‘very bad’ and vulnerability as ‘Medium’.

### **Contractors**

25. Wood-pasture restoration works have been completed in Lords Bushes.

### **Land Management**

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

26. Epping Forest District Council published its response of 11 October to the Inspector's Interim Advice on 16 October (Appendix 1). The Inspector's subsequent response of 25 November was also uploaded on 28 November (Appendix 2).

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

27. An objection was registered with Epping Forest District Council for a proposal for two properties (4/5 bedrooms) at Bowlands Meadow, Theydon Bois.

### **Land Registration**

28. Following detailed documentary research, the City Corporation has abandoned plans to pursue the registration of two potential unclaimed areas of the Forest Land alongside Mott Street at Manor House and Oak Farm.

29. Working in partnership with the London Borough of Waltham Forest the City Corporation was pleased to formally accept at a ceremony on 17 October the return of 0.463 acres of Forest Land previously dedicated as highway land from the remodelling of the Whipps Cross roundabout.

### **Operations**

#### **Insurance works**

30. During the reporting period, the City Corporation has received seven new insurance claims at Epping Forest. Two claims relate to possible tree root nuisance leading to subsidence of adjacent properties. One claim was for a cycling accident on a path installed and maintained under licence by Whipps Cross Hospital. Tyre bursts on two cars crossing the ‘dragon’s teeth’ control flow plates installed on some car park exits were the subject of new claims. To date, the City Corporation has been successful at defending regular claims for such tyre damage. Lastly, a garden wall bordering Forest Land has collapsed, and it is claimed that ivy growing from the Forest was responsible for this. Researching and defending these claims absorbs considerable time for investigations to be completed and to be brought to a resolution.

#### **Risk Management Works**

31. The 2020 Tree safety survey contract was re-let to Islington Tree Services during the reporting period. With Islington's appointment of a new lead

surveyor an enhanced contract induction was completed to brief the Inspector on the special requirements at Epping Forest when considering Ancient trees. In particular there are concerns about a number of trees along the all-ability path at High Beach where measures to safeguard both the public and a number of notable trees have been raised by the surveyors. The management of these surveys will be reviewed in 2020, however, the recent installation of a simple rope fence around one tree seems to have been an effective, but not too obtrusive barrier and presents one possible option for managing public safety around these notable trees.

32. Routine tree safety works arising from the 2019 Survey are still being progressed but are on schedule for completion by the end of March 2020. A near miss during one roadside operation gives an indication of the issues faced by the teams when trying to safeguard the public. The team had stopped the traffic with Stop/Go boards prior to felling a tree onto the road. At the last minute a driver came up the wrong side of the road, overtaking the parked cars by the Stop sign and when eventually stopped by the team insisted on continuing.
33. The second of the twice-yearly reservoir inspections were completed in October with no significant new works required.

### **Access Works**

34. Cutting back overhanging vegetation across main forest paths was the focus for one of the arborist teams for the reporting period. The full extent of the work is still to be counted but approximately 15km of paths were substantially worked in the central to northern parts of the Forest. A new multi-bladed circular saw has improved productivity for this work significantly.
35. Following on from works to address a tree root nuisance claim along Mays Lane, a historic drove route in Chingford, the overgrown nature of the route led the teams to continue working along the path to open it up. While it will take a couple of years to get the path into a more pleasantly accessible condition, this historic route is now accessible and City Corporation is now better placed to tackle problems of fly-tipping at the rear of properties along the path.

### **Visitor Services**

#### **Events**

#### **London Borough of Culture**

36. Several events took place in October and November in partnership with the London Borough of Culture
37. The veteran oaks at Barn Hoppitt hosted 'GIANTS', a concert and light show, which took place over two nights on 18 and 19 October. Scripted by the award-winning landscape writer Robert MacFarlane, children from local schools spent many weeks rehearsing and sang whilst suspended from the trees along with two opera singers who also were positioned high in the branches.

38. The artist Una Hamilton Helle launched a new sound installation in the Hunting Lodge with a special event on 31 October.
39. This was followed by the culmination of the Artist-in-Residence musical and composer Ellie Wilson's new composition being released based on the history of Epping Forest. Ellie Wilson's five-times great uncle was Thomas Willingale which provided part of her inspiration. Visitors can borrow headphones to listen to the piece while visiting the Hunting Lodge.
40. Artist Esther Neslen's 'Monstrous Assemblies' was a grant-funded project to create life-size 'monstrous' statues made by pupils from local schools in Waltham Forest. The fun installation ran for a week in November in the courtyard of 'The View'.

### Chingford Golf Course

41. Grounds staff have been out clearing leaves to ensure the course is playable for visitors. Regular cutting has been carried out when the weather has allowed vehicles to operate. Greens and tees were solid tined, spiked and top dressed to help reduce compaction and improve drainage to help keep the course open and in play during the very wet weather. A new winter mat has been built on hole 7 for a competition tee to keep the length of the hole. Unfortunately, the 6<sup>th</sup> green suffered some motorbike damage, a repair was made on the day and the green has recovered well.
42. A decrease of 667 rounds (-20%), reflects reduced play associated with the much wetter winter this year. The number of rounds for October & November last year was 3,937. This year number of rounds for October & November was 3270. Online bookings for the same period last year was £5,364.50 compared to £2,731.00 this year, a decrease of £2633.50 (-96%). Total revenue from reception last year was £42,835.27 compared to £39,827.57 in the current year, a decrease amounting to £3007.70. (-8%). Compared to last year the total difference in revenue equates to a decrease in income of £5641.20 (-13%).
43. Total revenue from online sales this period is £2,731.00, total revenue from reception was £39,827.57 broken down into:

Breakdown of figures from Reception			
	2019/20	2018/19	Difference (+/-)
<b>Green fees:</b>	£32,330.53	£33,886.80	-£1556.27
<b>Drinks:</b>	£746.50	£868.50	-£122.00
<b>Hire Equipment:</b>	£2107.50	£4066.50	-£1959.00
<b>Shop Sales:</b>	£2128.20	£2517.45	-£389.25
<b>Wanstead:</b>	£2403.00	£1044.00	+£1359.00
<b>Horse Riding:</b>	£474.84	£452.02	+£22.82

## Wanstead Flats

44. League fixtures were played across all 3 sites for football for October and November. Total number of casual bookings taken for this period was 27 matches compared to 11 matches for same period last year.
45. Parkrun attracted 1,886 runners in October and November this year, **representing an increase of 29 or 1.4% on the same period last year.**

## Visitor Numbers

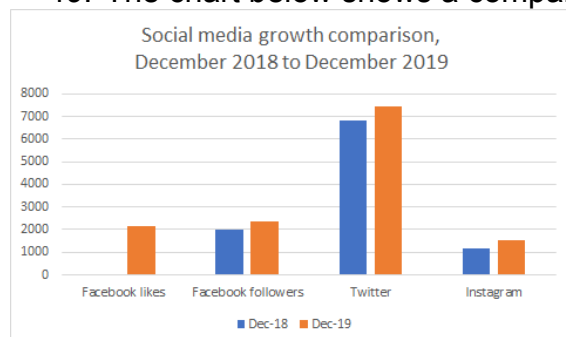
46. Visitor numbers were largely increased this year compared to last year. Additional London Borough of Culture events near to The View will have helped contributed to the increased figures

Visitor Numbers	QEHL 2019	2018	View 2019	2018	Temple 2019	2018	High Beach 2019	2018	Total 2019	Total 2018
OCT	1899	1680	3604	3209	58	48	1661	2043	7222	6980-
NOV	1488	1103	3539	2877	67	132	1539	1467	6633	5579

## Communication and Information

47. Four new signs were installed at Wanstead Flats, with maps and information about the area. Two of the signs are specifically interpretation signs highlighting the habitat importance.
48. As of December 2019, our social media following is:
- Twitter followers: 7,450 an increase of 9%
  - Facebook likes: 2,152
  - Facebook follows: 2,338 an increase of 18%
  - Instagram followers: 1,543, an increase of 33%

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



50. The top tweets for October 2019 with 5,237 impressions and November 2019 with 5,729 impressions were those promoting Epping Forest's autumn colours.



51. The top Instagram post for October, with 119 likes was a message about the deer rut and a warning to drive safely and the top Instagram post for November, with 158 likes was a message promoting the autumn colour.
52. The top Facebook post for October, with a reach of 13,945 people was once again promoting the autumn equinox and the start of the rutting season. The top Facebook post for November, with a reach of 1,520 people was once again promoting the autumn colour in Epping Forest.
53. The autumn edition of Forest Focus was very well received with the usual wide distribution across the Epping Forest area. The winter edition also recently went out, with good feedback received.

### **Major incidents**

None

### **Appendices**

- Appendix 1 – EFDC Response to Inspectors Interim Advice – 11 October 2019
- Appendix 2 – Inspectors Response to EFDC – 25 November 2019

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