

Committee(s)	Dated:
Epping Forest Consultative Epping Forest and Commons	24 06 2020 06 07 2020
Subject: Epping Forest - Superintendent's Update for May to June 2020 (SEF 16/20)	Public
Report of: Colin Buttery, Director of Open Spaces	For Information
Report author: Paul Thomson – Superintendent of Epping Forest	

Summary

The purpose of this report is to summarise the Epping Forest Division's activities across May and June 2020.

While much of the Division's activity has been heavily influenced by the COVID-19 national health emergency, of particular note was the suggested 122% rise in visits; the completion of a number of strategic project reports; further work on the control of Oak Processionary Moth; considerable engagement with the Epping Forest District Council and London Borough of Waltham Forest Local Plans and the successful resumption of 'Safe Golf' at the City Corporation's Chingford Course and tenanted courses at Theydon Bois and Woodford Green.

Recommendation

Consultative Committee Members are asked to:

- Note the report.

Main Report

Staff and Volunteers

1. A new term time Schools Officer was "virtually" welcomed to the Learning Team in May.
2. Colleagues were saddened to learn of the loss of former Forest Keeper Ian Greer on 26 May 2020, who recently retired having served at Epping Forest for 21 years.

Budgets

3. At end of the 2019/20 financial year the Epping Forest Local Risk budgets were £22,000 overspent, with £100,000 of work on Lodge Refurbishment and Golf Course Welfare Facilities being spent from Forest Fund. In addition, a further £36,000 of carry forward from the overall Open Spaces underspend has been approved for items at Epping Forest which could not be realised in-

year due to COVID-19 restrictions.

4. Forecasting of the budgetary implications of the COVID-19 changes is underway, with a significant decrease in income projected due to the cessation of sports and licenced activities and income from commercial tenants, as well as increased expenditure needs for additional staffing and modifications to premises.

Projects

5. While COVID-19 has reduced overall staff time available for project work, good progress has been made with a number of project areas:

5.1 Epping Forest Countryside Stewardship Scheme (CSS) (part-common application) - Confirmation of the agreement for the first CSS application is still awaited and procurement for some of this work has been impacted by COVID-19 constraints, although most will go-ahead. A review of a second application for the remaining compartments of the Forest will consider the changed situation, therefore, including an assessment of the timing for a 2nd application and a re-examination of the priorities for and scope of any second agreement.

5.2 Artificial Grass Pitches at Wanstead Flats (Parklife) Project – Work to revise the Parklife bid has been undertaken following a request from Resource Allocations Sub-Committee (RASC) in January. The revised proposal will be presented at the 9 July RASC meeting.

5.3 Baldwins & Birch Hall Park Ponds Project (Gateway 4) - Detailed analysis of engineering options are currently underway following a scoping exercise for a Habitats Regulations Assessment examining the likely significant effects on Epping Forest SAC ahead of Gateway 5.

5.4 Wanstead Parks Ponds Project (Gateway 2) – Further discussions are underway with the contractor regarding the findings of the Engineering Study.

5.5 Epping Forest SAC Mitigation Strategy – Land Use Consultants (LUC) are working on the final version of the revised Strategy which will be brought to your Committee shortly.

5.6 Epping Forest Review of Deer Strategy – The Deer Initiative have completed their Review which will be brought to your Committee shortly.

5.7 Epping Forest Car Park Strategy – Consultants PMS completed their study which will be brought to your Committee shortly.

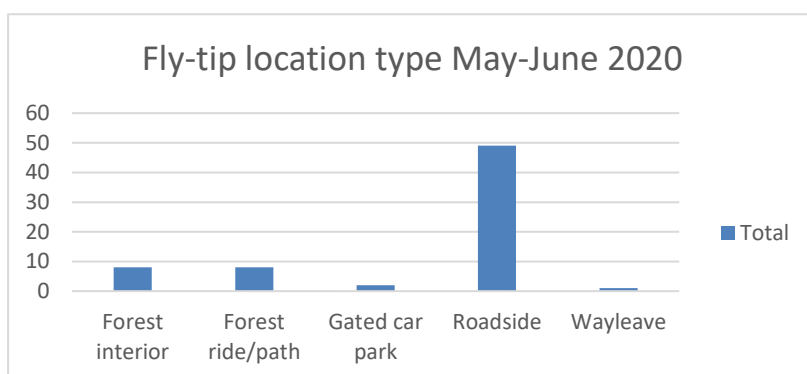
5.8 The Warren House future options study – Consultants Amion & Architects Crosby Granger have completed their Options Appraisal which will be brought to your Committee later in the year.

5.9 Copped Hall Conservation Management Plan. Consultants Wells and Way are completing amendments to the CMP which will be brought to your Committee later in the year.

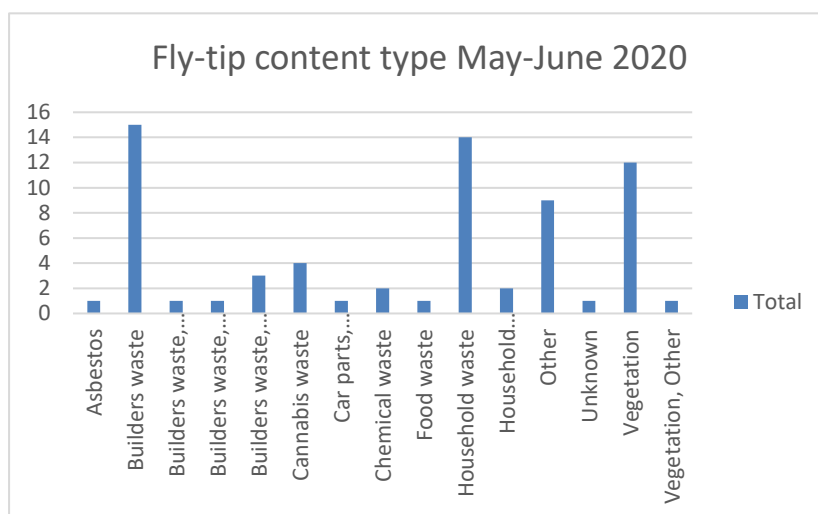
Forest Services

Fly Tipping

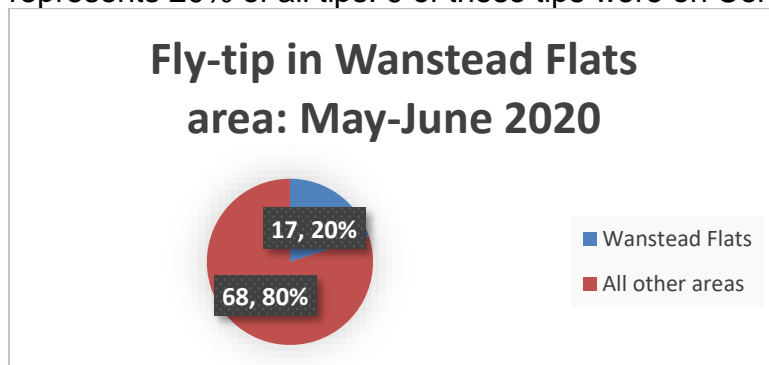
6. There were a total of 68 fly-tips recorded over the period of May-June 2020, this is a 54% increase over the same period in 2019.
7. Roadside locations represented 72% of the tip locations over the period.



8. Builders waste represented the largest category of items tipped over the period at 20 (29%), while household waste represented 17 tips (25%).



9. There were 17 fly-tips in the Wanstead Flats area over the period which represents 20% of all tips. 9 of these tips were on Centre Road.



Enforcement Activity

10. No Environmental Protection Act prosecutions took place during the period under report due to COVID-19 court restrictions. 6 conditional cautions were issued totalling £1,150.

Licences

11. A total of 9 licences for events were issued during the months being reported, which yielded an income of £2,393.90 plus VAT. 52 licences were issued during the same period in 2018/19 (income of £36,274.60).

Unexplained Deaths

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

Rough Sleepers

13. There have been a total of 7 Rough Sleeper camps on Epping Forest:

- 2 in compartment 38
- 1 in compartment 35
- 1 in Compartment 29
- 1 in compartment 28
- 1 in compartment 27

Unauthorised Occupations

14. There have been no traveller incursions over the reporting period.

Dog Incidents

12. During the period there have been 4 reports of dog-related incidents over the period
- 02/05/2020 - Out of Control Dogs Bury Woods
 - 06/05/2020 - Out of Control Dogs Wanstead Park
 - 26/05/2020 - Concerns about the increased numbers of dogs on the Forest
 - 29/05/2020 - Concerns about dog fouling near Roebuck Heights.

Deer Vehicle Collisions

13. There were no reported Deer Vehicle Collisions (DVC) during this reporting period.

Heritage; Landscape and Nature Conservation

Biodiversity

15. A brief botanical assessment was carried out during June of the central grasslands and glades around Fairmead, including Pear-tree Plain, Almshouse Plain and Fairmead itself. This has been the area where extensive grazing returned to the Forest in 2002 after an absence of several decades. The flora of these sites has been transformed by the combination of restoration work and grazing over this time.
16. The June survey revealed an enormous expansion in the area of grassland occupied by Small Lousewort *Pedicularis sylvatica*. This locally rare plant has been the subject of previous reports in which its rapid increase across Almshouse Plain north, in the decade after grazing started, has been detailed

and mapped. However, in the second decade since grazing's return it began to be found in small pockets of other sites. This year the assessment revealed strong populations, each of many hundreds of plants, at 3 other sites including a completely new site.

17. Lousewort has not been the only locally rare plant to benefit. Petty Whin, *Genista anglica*, at one time down to one plant in the Forest and a handful of plants in Essex, has now successfully seeded and, although still under the threat of local extinction, is now represented by nearly 20 young plants of which several are flowering and setting seed this year.
18. Other notable recovering species, now numbering tens or hundreds of new individuals, include the rare Heath Grass *Danthonia decumbens*. Burnet Saxifrage *Pimpinella saxifrage*, Heath Bedstraw *Galium saxatile* and Heath Wood-rush *Luzula multiflora*.
19. The unbroken spell of hot and sunny weather was important for many insect species. Stag Beetles *Lucanus cervus*, which, despite their size, are not often observed because the species usually flies at dusk, have already been recorded on two occasions in June on the edge of the Forest at Loughton. This is a stronghold for the species for which the Special Area of Conservation (SAC) is designated. This species also has another stronghold at Leyton Flats and it is hoped records may yet be forthcoming from this southern area too.
20. Other insects to benefit from the sunny weather have been some of the butterflies. There were good counts of grassland butterflies at both Wanstead Flats and Fairmead with the first generation of Small Coppers *Lycaena phlaeas* (12 and 5 on transects respectively) the most numerous but accompanied by Small Heaths *Coenonympha pamphilus* and Common Blues *Polyommatus icarus*. Of even greater significance, on gorse and broom scrub still regrowing in places after the fire damage of 2018, there were also excellent numbers of the rare Green Hairstreak *Callophrys rubi*. The Wren Group recorded the hairstreaks on scrub in at least 4 separate sub-sites within Wanstead Flats, with a maximum count of this cryptic but beautiful species of 8 individuals alongside Long Wood.
21. Records from The Wren Group at Wanstead Flats have also brought some encouragement for the Skylark *Alauda arvensis*. One pair was observed feeding young – a first brood – which is the first concrete sign of breeding success for some time from this site. There also may be as many as 5 singing males, up from 3 or 4 in the last two years. Centre Road car park has been closed during the breeding season to dissuade do walkers who may disturb this ground nesting species. Two males of the declining Meadow Pipit *Anthus pratensis* have also been regularly recorded, but this species' foothold may be even more tenuous than that of the Skylark's.

Agri-environment Schemes

22. Countryside Stewardship Scheme (CSS) agreement offer that had been received on 1 May from the Rural Payments Agency (RPA), after a significant delay, was checked and reviewed. Extensive amendments had to be made due to errors that had taken place during RPA's transcription process. In

addition, mapping and prescriptions had to be updated to comply with new RPA formats and this included liaison with Natural England and Historic England officers. The amended agreement documents, along with the acceptance of grant award, was signed by the Director of Open Spaces, were returned to the RPA and confirmation of the agreement acceptance is now awaited from the agency.

23. At the same time as the CSS work was being undertaken, the annual application for Basic Payment Scheme (BPS) grant was made and coordinated with the other Open Spaces divisions. This BPS grant, now in its 16th claim year, provides financial support for the maintenance of grasslands across the Forest and Buffer Lands.

Grazing

24. As indicated in the Grazing Programme 2020, cattle were put out onto Chingford Plain on 12 May. The 10 Longhorns grazed the site throughout the remainder of the month attracting much attention from the increased number of visitors to this area of the Forest. They were also filmed during *BBC Countryfile*'s visit to the Forest in May and may be part of the programme that is due to be aired on 21 June.
25. As planned, this herd was then moved during the first week of June onto the lower parts of Chingford Plain and Bury Wood for grazing across this month. In the meantime, during the *BBC Countryfile* visit on 29 May, six Longhorns were de-pastured at Deershelter Plain heathland. This site was a swap for Sunshine Plain south where some fencing problems meant that the grazing has been postponed until July. At Deershelter the grazing over the last 17 years has seen the successful control of birch regeneration and bracken growth alongside a significant increase in the cover of Heather and other rare heathland flowers.
26. Both of these sites can be grazed because of the presence of invisible fencing. This technique, which many conservation organisations, including the National Trust, are now using was pioneered in the UK at Epping Forest. Invisible fencing has transformed the options for grazing in the Forest and allowed the grazing of small, difficult-to-access sites, where grazing had been absent for many years, and also extensive grazing amongst large areas of pollarded trees. Remarkably, this summer's grazing marks the 10th anniversary of the use of this system at Epping Forest.

Heritage

27. The update on the Knighton Woods Conservation Statement mentioned in the last Superintendent's Report has now been undertaken by a consultant and will be finalised shortly.

Contractors

28. The haylage and hay contract sites across the Buffer Lands and the Forest were agreed by early May for future cutting in June and July on the usual sites. The Oak Processionary Moth work involving specialist contractors is detailed below.

Land Management

Town & Country Planning – Local Plans

29. All meetings referred to below involved online meetings using *Microsoft Teams* with external authorities and consultants.
30. The most notable engagement in this period has been the launch of Epping Forest District Council's (EFDC) Green & Blue Infrastructure Strategy. This was launched on 5 June and formed one of the main agenda items for the second meeting of the recently re-formed Epping Forest Special Area of Conservation (SAC) Oversight Group of competent local authorities (competent authorities as defined under Regulation 7 of the Habitats Regulations 2017 (as amended)). The Oversight Group was attended by all authorities expected, apart from the Greater London Authority (GLA).
31. There is a 6-week consultation period for the EFDC G&BI Strategy finishing on 16 July. The Buffer Lands sites of Copped Hall (south) and Warlies Park are referenced in relation to Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspaces or SANGs.
32. The London Borough of Waltham Forest (LBWF) is also developing its Green Infrastructure (GI) Strategy and has consulted your officers on SANGs on 16 June.
33. Both EFDC and LBWF are still working on their Local Plan Habitat Regulations Assessments (HRA) to consider the protection of the SAC from proposed developments. The EFDC HRA is re-examining the issue of air quality in the SAC area and also the recreational Zone of Influence (Zoi).
34. Continuing the examination of air quality issues, a meeting was held on 4 June with EFDC's consultants and Natural England on 4 June. The consultants confirmed the use of 2017 as the detailed baseline year for which traffic data are sufficiently accurate. However, they also confirmed that the analysis would consider all growth due to the Local Plan from its start date of 2011.
35. This air quality work, in contrast to that included in the earlier HRA, is now proposing specific air quality mitigation measures. These are designed to be achievable and measurable. However, on the first point, much uncertainty remains about how such mitigation measures might work in practice. The air quality and traffic modelling work is unlikely to be concluded until late July or early August. However, despite this EFDC officers indicated that intended to take air quality mitigation proposals to Cabinet on 13 July.
36. One of the possible mitigation measures was outlined and discussed at an earlier meeting on 15 May, attended by 20 local authority officers. Hosted by Essex County Council Highways, its consultants outlined proposals for creating a B1393 sustainable transport corridor between Epping and Harlow. The outline proposal had been criticised by your officers and others at the EFDC Local Plan Examination-in-Public in June 2019 for the lack of obvious options and space on the highway for sustainable transport. The more detailed proposals put forward at this 15 May meeting were criticised along similar lines by a wide range of participants. Similar problems were raised about distance for cyclists, high traffic speeds and a narrow carriageway. The absence of

proposals for including proposed residential development at North Weald airfield was also raised as an issue.

37. In relation to the recreational Zone of Interest (Zoi) - the Zoi is the distance from the SAC boundary from within which 75% of visits emanate -, the meeting on 5 June of the Oversight Group tried to come to an agreement amongst all the competent authorities present as to the new distance to be used. The Group were considering the recent findings of the Epping Forest Visitor Survey 2019 conducted by *Footprint Ecology* Ltd (using the same survey points within the SAC as the 2017 Survey).
38. The Oversight Group meeting agreed that each competent authority would review the two Zoi distances that had been calculated for SAC-only survey points, and which excluded holidaymakers. The choice was agreed to be between either 6.31km, which represents the average of the two medians from the 2017 and 2019 Visitor Surveys (VS), or 6.59km, which is the median distance from the 2019 VS alone.
39. A meeting was held with Natural England officers ahead of all the above meetings to discuss issues around developments within all the competent authority areas with potential to impact Epping Forest SAC. NE officers reported that London Borough of Enfield (LBE) still had no mitigation tariff in place. However, LBE was showing signs of a willingness to engage and had collected financial contributions from two big developers who had insisted on paying mitigation monies.
40. London Borough of Redbridge (LBR) is collecting a mitigation tariff. It had been collecting £30 per dwelling on larger developments within 6km but after a legal challenge last year was now also collecting from even the smallest development within 3km of the SAC boundary. LBR officers are considering appointing a consultancy to advise on collecting the tariff in the long-term. The borough was also re-examining the issues of green infrastructure and recreational pressure on the SAC.
41. For its part, Natural England (NE), having been reduced to half a post in London for the last 6 months is now back with a full-time London officer and is considering a second officer. The GLA has also recently increased its Green Infrastructure Team and a meeting will be sought by NE with these new officers as soon as practically possible.

Town & Country Planning – Development Control

42. Comments were submitted to EFDC planners on just two applications in May. There were no developments in the London Boroughs requiring comment at this stage.
 - 47 Forest View, Loughton was a case on appeal for which the issue of SSSI and SAC protection had not been mentioned. Although no direct impacts would be expected from the development the issue of ‘in combination’ was raised and the planners were asked to take this into account in any conditions.

- Danbury Road Loughton – no objection was made, as this small residential development is likely to have Roding Valley Meadows as its local green space. However, comments were made in relation to ‘in combination’ impacts on the SAC.

Land Registration

43. The access audit of wayleaves and private access points across Forest Land continued but was restricted continuing desk research work due to the COVID-19 restrictions and the increase in related work with Forest visitors. In addition, examination of recently purchased 2019 aerial photographs for GIS mapping is providing possible new evidence of encroachments onto Forest Land and this is being collated to support the groundwork on the access audit.
44. Discussions with the City Solicitor & Comptroller were started in May concerning options for legal action relating to challenging the registration of land by a private landholder on land covered by the Arbitrator’s Award at Bell Common.

Operations

Insurance works

45. To date from January 2020 there have been 12 subsidence insurance claims submitted, twice as many as normal. These are all being responded to in line with managing Vegetation against Property (VAP) procedures.
46. One historic claim from 2014 for a substantial sum was settled. It transpires that, following an earlier claim in 1993, which had not been successful on the same property, the house owner’s representative wrote to the City Corporation stating that whilst no issues found now, there could be in the future. This was enough to put City Corporation on notice and that City Corporation should have been managing the boundary trees in accordance with any root nuisance requirements. The recent review of VAP management picked up all the actions where historically the City Corporation committed to undertaking work, however, this reference to the possibility of a future issue was not picked up.

Risk Management Works

47. COVID-10 works have been the main area of risk management activity for the Forest Operations team working alongside the Keepers, Contractors and local Police. The main actions completed were:
 - I. Risk assessing and opening of benches with modification to accommodate social distancing requirements.
 - II. Risk assessing and subsequent widening of the easy access trails to ensure social distancing achievable on these popular visitor routes: High Beach, Connaught Water and Knighton Wood.

III. Installing additional signage points along verges for use with no parking signs.

30. Oak Processionary Moth (OPM) (*Thaumetopoea processionea*): All oak trees within 50m of OPM nest sites identified in 10 OPM priority (Hotspot) management areas were treated by contractors with the biological control *Bacillus thuringiensis*. Each location has two treatments spaced two weeks apart with the control largely specific to the target species. Contract surveyors will be surveying the OPM priority areas from the 15 June for OPM nests below 10 feet on oak trees. Nests at higher heights on trees will be left, as these are less likely to be hazardous for people and it also helps to facilitate the development of natural parasites of OPM, such as the Tachinid Fly *Carcelia illiaca*, that are beginning to establish in the UK.
31. Tree safety: For much of this period it has not been possible to undertake routine tree safety works and at the start of June there are still 171 tree safety tasks from 2019/20 outstanding. This figure appears high, but 15 jobs were added to the overall works number from follow up surveys, 63 added due to the second *massaria* survey and 75 added as the tree safety management data base was reviewed and a number of anomalies picked up where jobs were missed from previous years, mainly dead elm at the road side. In addition this year's contractor survey identified the following tasks: High priority response (3 months) 50 trees and Scheduled response (12 months) 577 trees.
32. March through Spring is the main tree safety work period, then move onto path maintenance, and CSS initial and maintenance works in August through to February. Progress with this work has been delayed by COVID-19. Options to catch-up on this works to help catch up on this essential task are being considered.
33. Reservoir management: Reservoir inspections have continued as required during the period. Staff have supported the Department of Built Environment (DBE) staff in the preparation of plans for the repair works to the large raised reservoirs Baldwins and Birch Hall Park (Deer Sanctuary) ponds, including preparatory work on the HRA for the Baldwins Pond work within the SAC.
34. Highway verges: The contract has been let for this year's verge management work. Operations team staff have commenced work on clearing sightlines across the Forest. The verge through Woodford Green has had to be cut twice due to the prolific regrowth following the first cut, normally it gets a single cut in this period. LBR has also stopped cutting the verge on City of London Corporation land on Whitehall Road where there was no care and maintenance agreement in place. These areas will receive a single cut by City Corporation teams timed to ensure the best outcome for biodiversity. This is a change from earlier practice by LBR where they were cut to a short sward.

Access Works

35. All major car parks have had a grass cut and general maintenance visit during the period. As outlined above Easy access trails have had enhanced

maintenance visits to better prepare them for Social Distancing requirements. Similarly, picnic benches have risk assessed and relocated, as required.

36. Following up on the Theydon Bois Individual Site Plan works have been implemented which had been delayed by COVID-19 to upgrade the seating on the Green. This is part of a package of work to be undertaken this year in association with the Parish Council.

Visitor Services

48. Analysis by Google on location data from anonymised location history opt-ins shows May visits to open spaces, such as parks, beaches and gardens, suggests grew 122% above baseline levels. As an average this data is likely to underestimate the impact on Epping Forest.
49. Visitor Centres closed to the public on 15 March and remain closed in line with Government restrictions. Front of house staff have been redeployed to a number of other functions and tasks including conducting regular litter picks of popular areas.
50. Time has also been taken to re-survey the waymarked trails across the Forest to ensure that these meet public expectations. These will be used to help inform maintenance and improvement works.
51. With events and private hire on hold, time has been taken to prepare for future exhibitions and repair work to existing displays. Repairs and restoration to our stock of Tudor costume has been completed, as well as primary research to inform upcoming exhibitions.
52. Working in conjunction with consultancy firm 'Footprint Ecology' the visitor services team have been undertaking a visitor count. This will enable comparison of usage trends with previous years. Footprint Ecology have been commissioned to carry out alternative survey and analysis work across the Forest during this time to assess and compare the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on visitor numbers and trends.

Museum and Heritage

53. Work is ongoing with an audit of our replica costume collection, washing, mending and researching information to provide a higher quality 'dressing up' area in the Queen Elizabeth's Hunting Lodge for when fully reopen. Adult and children's costume are extremely popular with visitors and enable staff to offer costumed tours and add interest to heritage events. Research is taking place between costumes and historic characters linked to the Forest including the obvious Henry VIII and Elizabeth I but also John Stonard, Antony Denny, named 16th century Forest keepers who appear in the royal accounts as well as local people who have left their names in Tudor parish records
54. The View (Epping Forest Collection) has provided archive images for the Epping Forest Countryfile feature to be aired later in June. Remote working is

facilitating progress on both museum documentation, the eHive online museum catalogue and first explorations into iBase, the digital image archive.

Learning

A total of 19 sessions involved 384 children and 51 adults over the reporting period.

Q4	Jan-20	Feb-20	Mar-20	Total
EF No. Sessions	4	9	6	19
EF No. Students	120	157	107	384
EF No. Adults	8	23	20	51

55. Since the COVID-19 pandemic, school bookings from 17 March 2020 onwards have been cancelled. There were an additional 8 sessions booked in for the rest of March that could not take place.

56. Since March, the learning team have therefore been working on a variety of online resources for schools and families, including videos, worksheets and a time travel activity pack. The current videos have roughly 300 views in total on YouTube, which will hopefully increase once they have been shared on EF Facebook.

Chingford Golf Course

57. The golf course re-opened for play on Monday 18 May in line with government guidelines set out by England Golf. For the opening 2 weeks, play was restricted to 2-balls only, this increased to 3 or 4 balls on Monday 4 June. During the opening 3 weeks bookings were restricted from 7.30am - 6pm with 10-minute intervals, bookings in this period were full each day. 'Safe Golf' measures were put in place out on the golf course as well as a safe entry/ exit system into the Caddie House for visitors to check in to help safeguard both staff & visitors.

58. Throughout this period scheduled maintenance work has continued to maintain the course in a good condition, staff now have more time to carry out essential tasks with irrigation operated by Bluetooth® wireless linking technology now in full operation reducing labour used in previous years to manually water during hot & dry spells. Hire buggies returned on 9 June with increased security features and booking restrictions in place till end of June due to COVID-19 but has allowed us to increase revenue and customer experience.

59. Total revenue from online sales from 1 May – 7 June was £21,945, total revenue from reception was £26, 605.62 broken down into:

Breakdown of figures from Reception from 1st May – 7th June
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	2020/21*	2019/20	Difference (+/-)
Green fees:	£20,249.95	£34,936.22	- £14,686.27
Drinks:	£493.50	£1098.90	-£605.40
Hire Equipment:	£886.00	£4565.00	-£3679.00
Shop Sales:	£1366.20	£2722.75	-£1356.55
Wanstead:	-	-	-
Horse Riding:	£3,609.97	£946.90	+£2663.07

**The golf course re-opened for play on 18 May, income for this period is based on 3 weeks income compared to 7 weeks income for previous year.*

60. Online bookings for the same period last year was £7030.50 compared to £21,945 this year, an increase of £14,914.50 - all bookings are now to be pre-booked in advance either over the phone or online which explains why this figure has increased. Overall income for this period last year amounted to £51,300.27 compared to £48,550.62 this year a decrease of £2,749.65. *This is based on 3 weeks income for this year compared to 7 weeks in 2019/20.*
61. Golf season tickets have been suspended for 2020/21 at present due to the restrictions in place due to COVID-19. Horse-riding licences renewals recommenced on 1 June in tandem with open riding reopening with a pro-rata reduced fee.

Wanstead Flats

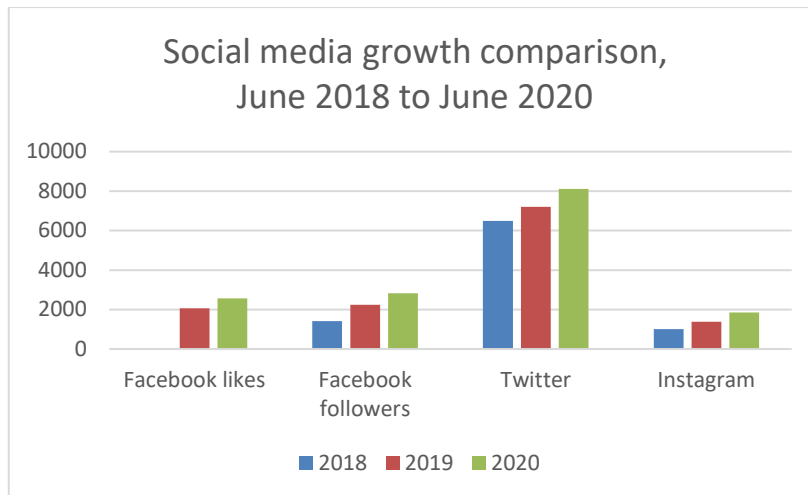
62. Goals and other pitch infrastructure were removed to discourage social gathering and informal play. However partial pitch markings have been retained and re-marked to allow the rapid return to operation when the situation allows. Pitch maintenance work including cutting and goal mouth repair continues with social distancing measures in place to protect staff.
63. The upswing in usage of greenspace and high population density in Wanstead had resulted in an increased proportion of the team's time being devoted to litter and general maintenance during this period
64. Parkrun has not been in operation due to COVID-19.

Communication and Information

As of 11 June 2020, Epping Forest social media following is:

- Twitter followers: 8117 (12.6% increase)
- Facebook followers: 2821 (26.2% increase)
- Instagram followers: 1855 (34% increase)

65. The chart shows a comparison of our figures at the same point in 2018 and 2019:



66. As stated in the previous report, instead of a summer edition of Forest Focus Forest Focus is being updated via mail chimp monthly. This enables effective and more frequent communication to ensure visitors are updated with the most current news and guidance on visiting Epping Forest during the COVID-19 pandemic. These monthly updates have been distributed to date for April and May and were well received with positive feedback received. Work has begun on the June 2020 edition.
67. The Top Tweet for May 2020 with 36.8k impressions (exceptionally high) related to a reminder for all to please take their litter home with them. 'This ancient woodland is not a dustbin' and the Tweet was quoted in the national media (BBC and Daily Mail).
68. The top Facebook post for May was a request for essential information relating to reporting BBQs / fires / litter in Epping Forest following the very busy weekend due to slight easing of lockdown and the very fine weather. The post had a reach of 45,120 (exceptionally high), impressions of 7,457. The request was successful as the post was shared 359 times, which is extremely high.
69. The top Instagram post for May related to the filming of Countryfile in Epping Forest, in May – with 262 likes (very high indeed).
70. The #ThisWeekInTheWoods campaign on social media was very well received but we have been unable to post anything other than operational / functional material since the weekend of 30/31 May.
71. 30/31 May was the first weekend after a slight easing of lockdown and this coincided with very nice weather resulting in a very large number of visitors to the Forest, including large groups gathering in the evenings to socialise. Sadly, these visits led to a massive increase in litter, many reports of BBQ's and some very unfortunate incidents of affray. A large focus for such problems was Queen's Green in High Beach. Two incidents of affray, and the reports of excessive littering of open spaces, made the national press.

Major incidents – COVID-19 National Health Emergency

72. Specific responses to the national health emergency are included in the body of this report.

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