



Epping  
Forest

Registered Charity

# Epping Forest Consultation Policy

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# Introduction

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1. The Epping Forest Act (1878) entrusted the ownership and care of Epping Forest to the City of London Corporation as the Conservators of Epping Forest and its obligations still govern how the Forest is managed today.
2. As Trustees representatives of Epping Forest (Charity number 232990) the Conservators, staff and volunteers all work to safeguard the Forest from external pressures in an ever-evolving environment, and to enhance visitor access and experience.
3. We want to empower the beneficiaries of the charity, consisting of residents, Forest users, clubs, groups et al to have the opportunity to participate in decisions which affect the future of the Forest.
4. This document sets out the ways in which Epping Forest engages with the local community and other key stakeholders when preparing plans or projects which will affect the future of the Forest.
5. This document replaces the previous Epping Forest Statement of Community Involvement 2011.

## Planning and management at Epping Forest

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6. London's Great Forest – A strategy and management plan for Epping Forest 2020 – 2030 sets out plans and strategies for Epping Forest in the ten years from 2020 to 2030.
7. The plan lists a number of documents, strategies, policies and objectives, ranging from site specifically detailed Integrated Site Plans (ISP), Local Area Plans (LAP) Policy Development Notes (PDN) and Conservation Management Plans (CMP) through to more subject-specific policies and wide ranging Visitor strategies, financial and income generation plans, governance and charity reviews etc.
8. Documents at a higher level include the Open Spaces Business Plan and the City of London Corporate Plan. Together, all these documents, plans and policies are sometimes referred to as "the golden thread" to be considered in the context of organisational alignment.
9. By following the procedures contained within these documents, we ensure that our actions are fair, efficient and transparent for all, including members of staff, Forest visitors and local people.

## Decision Making and Governance

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10. Epping Forest is managed by the Epping Forest and Commons Committee (EF&CC), made up of twelve appointed Members of the City of London Court of Common Council, plus four Verderers, locally elected under the terms of the Epping Forest Act 1878 (Schedule 4). The Committee are also the Trustees representatives for the Epping Forest Charity. The Committee sits formally six times per year and also has many other local and project specific meetings.
11. Chairman, Deputy Chairman, Verderers and other members of the Epping Forest and Commons Committee attend local liaison meetings with Boroughs overlapping the to discuss shared issues and matters raised to Ward Councillors.
12. The Epping Forest and Commons Committee papers, minutes and agendas can be found here  
<http://democracy.cityoflondon.gov.uk/mgCommitteeDetails.aspx?ID=122>
13. A range of broader and strategic policy matters are considered by the Open Spaces Committee when necessary. A number of other Committees within the City of London have ultimate decision-making powers over financial management and budget setting, project management and other critical strategic factors. These are all overseen by the City of London Court of Common Council.
14. Further information on City of London Governance is here  
<http://democracy.cityoflondon.gov.uk/>

## Who we consult and when

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15. It is vital that the needs of our charity beneficiaries (visitors, Forest users, residents et al) are fully recognised and integrated with the ecological, and financial health of the Forest and its long-term management and conservation. We understand that the ability to influence decisions on these specific, special areas is important to those who use or enjoy them.
16. As demonstrated above, matters of policy or otherwise vary widely, in subject matter, geographical area and scope for change. When a project or plan is outside of, or a change to established policy or management protocols, and there is the scope for the views of charity beneficiaries to influence or change that project or plan, then we would seek to consult using processes explained herein.
17. Charity beneficiaries may be consulted on specific local policies. However, the majority of policies are implemented at a corporate or departmental level, based on best practice, legislative changes or

efficiency purposes. These policies would not usually be subject to consultation by Epping Forest

18. We are also very aware that our consultees, be they statutory bodies, stakeholder groups or individuals are likely to be different in each case. Individuals and groups are constantly changing and those involved in one project may not be interested, present or able to be involved in the next.
19. We will abide by the UK Government Consultation Principles 2018 [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/691383/Consultation\\_Principles\\_1\\_.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/691383/Consultation_Principles_1_.pdf)
20. Whenever we consult, we will as far as is possible ensure that:
  - a. Consultations are accessible and written or explained in plain English.
  - b. The timing of consultation is appropriate to as many potential consultees as possible.
  - c. Deadlines for responses from consultees are realistic and achievable
  - d. Project timescales are adequate to allow full consideration of consultation responses in the next stages of that project
  - e. The results of consultations, and reasoning for subsequent decisions are communicated in a timely manner (no more than 12 weeks from completion of consultation) and in an appropriate format (e.g. a similar route to the original consultation).
21. When we work in partnership other organisations, funders or statutory bodies, they may have their own consultation pathways which make take precedence or run in tandem.
22. The Forest itself crosses boundaries of multiple local authorities. We must ensure that our processes are complementary across the whole of the Epping Forest Estate.
23. Other than statutory consultation (where organisations and timescales are clearly defined) when it is important for us to provide advice and information about a plan or policy and to seek and hear the views of all of those interested in any individual area we will use the routes outlined below.

## **Routes for Consultation**

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24. There are four main routes for individuals and groups to engage with consultation processes at Epping Forest as outlined below

25. The use of these channels allows individuals and groups to choose when they wish to engage with us and on which issues.
26. Epping Forest may collate equalities data alongside some of our surveys or consultations in order to monitor the effectiveness of communication and to help us improve. Provision of this information is optional.
27. All data stored by us is kept, maintained and used in compliance with the City of London Data Protect Policy, the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and all other relevant legislation.

## **Epping Forest Consultative Committee**

28. The Epping Forest Consultative Committee (EFCC) was formed in late 2017 with its first meeting in January 2018. The full Terms of Reference of the Committee are available on the City of London Committee web pages.
29. The Epping Forest Consultative Committee considers and discusses areas of current concern or debate at Epping Forest. It receives public reports prior to their consideration by Epping Forest and Commons Committee and provides advice or opinion on those matters.
30. Minutes of meetings and outcomes of the Consultative Committee's discussions are considered by the Epping Forest and Commons Committee in a public report to inform decision making. Likewise, most recent minutes of the Epping Forest and Commons Committee are reviewed by the Consultative Committee.
31. The EFCC is not a formal decision-making body, but views will be noted in formal reports to the Epping Forest and Commons Committee.
32. Consultative Committee meetings are scheduled several weeks prior to each Epping Forest and Commons Committee to consider papers and matters arising, with sufficient time scheduled for revisions to papers to be made for Epping Forest Committee if necessary, or feedback to be noted.
33. The Consultative Committee is made up of approximately sixteen groups with local or national subject matter interest. They broadly represent the following themes of interest:

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| Conservation<br><i>Conservation groups in Forest, or with wider remit</i>                               | 3 |
| Friends/Voluntary<br><i>Formal working groups e.g. litter pickers groups, 'Friends of' etc.</i>         | 3 |
| Heritage<br><i>Historical societies, rural preservation etc.</i>  | 2 |
| Informal users<br><i>Schools, Youth groups, families associations, local forums and interest bodies</i> | 2 |
| Recreation  | 3 |

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| Recreational user groups – e.g. walkers, riders, cyclists                   |    |
| Sports  | 3  |
| Formal organised sports on Forest e.g. Golf, Football, cricket running etc. | 16 |

34. Membership is reviewed and renewed three-yearly and administered by City of London Town Clerks Department. Agendas, minutes and other details are here  
<http://democracy.cityoflondon.gov.uk/mgCommitteeDetails.aspx?ID=1253>
35. Individuals or groups who are not Consultative Committee Members may attend the meetings (although may not always be permitted to speak) or may approach members who represent their area of interest to express and share their views.

## The Forest Verderers

36. Verderers are locally elected every seven years under the terms of Schedule 4 of the Epping Forest Act 1878. Although historically they represent the Commoners of the Ancient Forest Parishes, they now fill a much broader local representation role, sitting on the Epping Forest and Commons Committee.
37. Two Verderers are elected in the southern parishes of the Forest, and two in the North, although the geographical split for elections is not necessarily carried through to their roles, and any or all may be involved in any matter across the length or breadth of the Forest.
38. All Verderers live locally and attend the Epping Forest and Commons Committee as full Members regarding Epping Forest business.
39. Contact details for the Verderers are on the City of London webpage <https://www.cityoflondon.gov.uk/things-to-do/green-spaces/epping-forest/how-we-manage-epping-forest> and they may be contacted for discussion on any matter concerning the management of Epping Forest. They may also proactively seek views of local organisations or individuals pertinent to projects or management themes.

## Digital Consultation Platforms

40. Epping Forest uses various digital platforms to carry out consultation, from short polls and surveys through to full complex consultation on wide ranging policies.
41. Epping Forest subscribes to an online consultation portal and database provided by Inovem, accessible via the City of London website when consultations are active.

42. This database is designed specifically for consultation and subsequent reporting on large and complex matters, for example the earlier stages of the Epping Forest Strategy and Management Plan.
43. Individuals and organisations are encouraged to register their contact details, and interests should they wish, to receive notification of relevant consultation processes they may want to contribute to.
44. Individuals or groups who 'sign up' to such platforms are responsible for updating and maintaining their own contact details and preferences through that account.
45. Brief snapshot surveys may also be carried out electronically through platforms such as Survey Monkey and publicised through our literature, signage or social media feeds as below.

## **Face-to-face**

46. In some circumstances it may be appropriate or necessary for Epping Forest representatives to consult face-to-face with individuals or groups regarding certain projects.
47. Such circumstances include new or unusual site-specific works or changes, where views of user groups and residents are critical to the planning and success of that project.
48. Face-to-face consultation events organised by us will be advertised in advance, particularly via social media or by local posters or leaflets where possible.

## **General Information and Notifications**

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49. Epping Forest share information about services, projects and important changes and events through a number of means. This may include notice of consultation surveys or meetings, Verderer elections and calls for expressions of interest for the Consultative Committee for example. These include but are not limited to:
  - a. Epping Forest pages on the City of London website.  
<https://www.cityoflondon.gov.uk/things-to-do/green-spaces/epping-forest>
  - b. The City of London Consultation web pages  
<https://www.cityoflondon.gov.uk/footer/consultations>
  - c. Epping Forest publications and literature, particularly Forest Focus.
  - d. Epping Forest news feed on Twitter @CoLEppingForest. This is staffed periodically through normal office hours.
  - e. Epping Forest on Facebook @EppingForest.

- f. Epping Forest on Instagram
- g. Site specific signage or leaflets.
- h. Local Press (especially if a legal requirement)

## Contacting us

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50. The postal address for Epping Forest office is:

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The Warren

Nursery Road

Loughton, Essex

IG10 4RW

51. Epping Forest central office 24hr telephone

020 8532 1010

52. Epping Forest email address

[epping.forest@cityoflondon.gov.uk](mailto:epping.forest@cityoflondon.gov.uk)