

<b>Committee(s)</b>	<b>Dated:</b>
Epping Forest Consultative Epping Forest and Commons	20/10/2021 15/11/2021
<b>Subject:</b> Proposals for possible Sesquicentennial celebrations of the City of London Corporation's protection of Epping Forest (SEF 48/21b)	<b>Public</b>
<b>Which outcomes in the City Corporation's Corporate Plan does this proposal aim to impact directly?</b>	
<b>Does this proposal require extra revenue and/or capital spending?</b>	<b>No</b>
<b>If so, how much?</b>	
<b>What is the source of Funding?</b>	
<b>Has this Funding Source been agreed with the Chamberlain's Department?</b>	
<b>Report of:</b> Juliemma McLoughlin – Executive Director, Environment Department	<b>For Decision</b>
<b>Report author:</b> Paul Thomson – Superintendent of Epping Forest	

### Summary

This report is necessary to consider potential preparations for sesquicentennial (150 year) commemorations celebrating the City of London Corporation's decisive intervention between 1871 – 1882 to save Epping Forest from further encroachment and development.

The report discusses the most appropriate date on which to stage possible activities, concluding 2028 to be the most fitting date, though there remain opportunities to celebrate other important milestones. The report also considers what form and purpose any celebrations might take, suggesting that the opportunity to fundraise around any celebration may offer an important opportunity to further the protection of the Forest.

### Recommendation(s)

Members are asked to:

#### Recommendations

- i. Approve the commemoration of sesquicentennial events centred on 2028, being 150 years from 1878, reflecting the focus of the previous Centenary celebration, though other important milestones could be celebrated as part of an associated narrative.

- ii. That an Epping Forest Working Group be inaugurated to plan the sesquicentennial celebrations.

## **Main Report**

### **Background**

1. Coinciding with the Bank Holidays Act 1871 and driven by the rapid expansion of London during the industrial revolution, the late Victorian period saw an intense period of activity with regard to campaigns seeking the protection of informal open spaces, mostly commons and manorial waste, which were being lost to agricultural improvement and residential development. In particular, following the sale by Government of Royal Forest Rights, the loss of large sections to felling of another Forest of Essex manorial waste remnant - Hainault Forest in 1850 - prompted concerns that Epping Forest might face a similar fate.
2. The City Corporation's purchase of Aldersbrook Farm, Manor Park in 1854 as the location for the construction of the City of London Cemetery and Crematorium bestowed the City with 'commoners rights' in the adjoining Epping Forest. These rights provided the City with the basis to support other individual commoners in challenging the progressive enclosure of the Forest by the Forest's then private landowners.
3. Following interventions by the City Corporation in creating a Commission of inquiry and in sponsoring legal determinations on Forest enclosures, Epping Forest was then secured for public benefit by the intervention of the City Corporation who purchased some 5,531 acres of Forest Land at a total cost of £256,275, the modern-day equivalent of £30.4 Million.
4. As indicated in Appendix 1 there was considerable activity beginning with the Metropolitan Commons Act 1866 that led to a range of commons and manorial waste being saved for public and environmental benefit.
5. In particular, Epping Forest experienced a range of notable interventions, which could be the subject of interpretation, promotion, and celebration.
  - i. 1849-50 Commission of Inquiry into rights or claims over the New Forest in the County of Southampton and Waltham Forest, Essex (of which Epping Forest was a part)
  - ii. 1850 Parliamentary Act approving the felling of the majority of Hainault Forest
  - iii. 1865 Thomas Willingale summoned before Epping bench for allegedly injuring trees belonging to the Lord of the Manor
  - iv. 1866 Samuel Willingale, Alfred Willingale & William Higgins jailed for allegedly injuring Trees belonging to the Lord of the Manor
  - v. 21 August 1871 Epping Forest Act 1871 sets up a Commission on Epping Forest
  - vi. 1871 City brings legal suit against 16 Lords of Forests Manors claiming enclosures impinged on grazing rights

- vii. 8 July 1871 Fence fence-breaking of Bushwood to Ridley Road enclosure at Wanstead Flats
  - viii. Epping Forest Act 1872
  - ix. 10 November 1874 Sir George Jessel Master of the Rolls ruled on intercommonage making all enclosures after 1851 illegal
  - x. 1876-1878 City Corporation buys 992 acres of Royal Forest rights and manor of Loughton
  - xi. 8 August 1878 - Epping Forest Act 1878 – confirming the City of London Corporation as the Conservators of Epping Forest, providing a statutory basis for the protection of the Forest in perpetuity, the management of the Forest for the natural aspect while maintaining access for public recreation and enjoyment.
  - xii. 6 August 1880 - Epping Forest Act 1880
  - xiii. Arbitrators Award
  - xiv. 6 May 1882 - Official Opening of Epping Forest by the Lord Mayor of London and the dedication of the Forest by Queen Victoria.
6. The centenary (100 years) celebrating the preservation of Epping Forest took place in 1978, 100 years since the passing of the third version of the Epping Forest Act 1878, which confirmed the City of London Corporation as the Conservators of Epping Forest.
  7. The Epping Forest Centenary Trust, now part of the Epping Forest Heritage Trust (EFHT), was inaugurated to plan and deliver a range of celebrations including the creation of the 15-mile centenary Walk and publication of an accompanying guide by Fred Matthews and Harry Bitten covering a route between Wanstead Flats and the market town of Epping. The EFHT also produced a range of memorial souvenirs for retail. Any plans for celebrating the sesquicentennial should include the EFHT is project planning.
  8. A copper medal 'The Dedication of Epping Forest' was also struck. The medal, by the sculptor Charles Wiener, with a bust of Queen Victoria on the face, on the reverse. the personification of London 'Londinia' faces the Queen within a forest setting. Only 400 specimens were struck in commemoration of the visit of the Queen to Epping Forest in 1882 and today command a collector's value of £300-800.
  9. A range of activities mainly based around specially sponsored competitions and commemorations, celebrating the centenary of the Epping Forest Act were conducted across 1978, see Appendix 2.

### **Current Position**

10. Planning for celebrations to commemorate potential sesquicentennial activities in 2021, such as the Wanstead Flats meetings, fence breaking, and establishment of the Forest Fund have been overtaken by the COVID-19 national health pandemic.
11. Major Public Open Spaces such as Epping Forest that were secured at the dawn of the Public Access; Nature Conservation, Civil Society and National

Landscapes movements were never formally recognised in subsequent legislation following the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949. Due to their nature conservation status some sites have received National Nature Reserve (NNR) and Site of Special Scientific Interest status. While Epping Forest was included on the Huxley Committee's 1945 list of NNRs, the City Corporation intervened to deter designation focused on research and education, that was considered not to reflect the broad role of the Forest's founding legislation.

12. Previously your Committee has sought additional protection such as National Park or Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) status for Epping Forest, hoping to combine an award at a significant anniversary celebration. The Glover Review (2019) does not promote the expansion of the existing National Park and AONB network. Both DEFRA and Natural England continues to promote the view that the balance of special landscape designations at 11% of the country is the correct balance. Natural England has indicated that boundary reviews of existing protected landscapes would be the priority for the forthcoming decade. Epping Forest's location within parts of London is considered problematic for designation and is also felt to be too small when compared to other national designations with Cannock Chase AONB at 26 square miles being England's smallest mainland AONB.
13. Epping Forest's role in hosting 55,000 veteran pollard trees, its role in a pivotal point in the Open Spaces movement and its inspiration for the creation of the National Trust; the Metropolitan Green Belt and Ebenezer Howard's Newtown 'Green Wedges' could provide the basis for World Heritage Site (WHS) status, awarded by The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO). WHS status confers valuable attributes including Local Plan recognition, statutory planning consultee status and protection through the creation of an official Buffer Zone. However, the long lead time of over 10 years and the £500,000 cost of achieving qualification is considered a major impediment to securing recognition. A further report on potential WHS application will be brought to your Committee for future consideration.
14. Previous Centenary celebration activities are detailed in Appendix 2. Potential Sesquicentennial activities might include:
  - Potential Forest rededication ceremony
  - Re-enactments of particular historical events recorded as video uploads
  - Essay podcasts which tell the background story of the saving of Epping Forest
  - TV documentary telling the story of EF's protection
  - Postage stamps possibly combined with other famous Open Spaces saved in the same period.
  - Commemorative souvenirs

While the celebration of the Sesquicentenary would be an important focus to any range of events, it is also considered that given the array of challenges that the Forest currently faces, the Sesquicentenary could also focus on a particular objective beyond celebration, that might help secure

future enhanced Forest protection such as further strategic land acquisition and Forest planting; a reconsideration of the role of Epping Forest Buffer Land or consolidating legislation following the completion of the Epping Forest charity review.

## Options

15. It should be noted that the decade also includes other significant anniversaries associated with Epping Forest
  - a. 2024 represents the centenary of the death of Verderer Edward North Buxton, who played a key role in securing Epping Forest, the remnants of Hainault Forest and the gift of Hatfield Forest to the National Trust
  - b. 2024 will also mark 50 years of the current Ranger's service to the Forest
  - c. The Friends of Wanstead Parkland are seeking to celebrate in 2022 the bicentennial (200 years) celebration of 10 June 1822 where the contents of Wanstead House and Grounds were sold in an auction lasting 32 days leading to the demolition of the house in 1825.
  - d. 2022 also marks the tercentenary (300 year) celebration of the completion of construction of Wanstead House 1722
  - e. 2032 will be the sesquicentennial of the Royal Opening of Epping Forest and Wanstead Park after its acquisition in 1880.
  
16. Your Committee can consider two options
  - a. To consider a planning exercise to celebrate the City of London Corporation's intervention to save Epping Forest through a sesquicentennial celebration based upon 2028, with careful planning of any event(s) considered through a newly formed Working Party. **This option is recommended.**
  - b. To avoid any sesquicentennial celebrations. **This option is not recommended**

## Proposal

17. To undertake a planning exercise to explore the potential to celebrate the City of London Corporation's intervention to save Epping Forest through a sesquicentennial celebration. The careful planning of any event(s) would be considered through a newly formed Working Party which would balance charity expenditure with public relations benefits, while also identifying the potential to seek public support for a suitable fundraising activity worthy of a sesquicentennial celebration.

## Corporate & Strategic Implications

### City of London Corporate Plan 2018-2023

18. **Our spaces are secure, resilient, and well-maintained** by building resilience into natural and man-made threats by strengthening, protecting, and adapting our infrastructure, directly and by influencing others.

## **Open Spaces Department Business Plan 2020-21**

19. The Business Plan states that we will protect the ecology, biodiversity and heritage of our sites and improve the health and wellbeing of our community through access to green space and recreation.

### **Financial implications**

20. There may be potential costs to the Epping Forest Local Risk budgets which will need to be carefully weighed against promotional benefits; sponsorship opportunities and potential partnerships with EFHT, alongside other Open Spaces that may be seeking to promote similar celebrations.

### **Resource implications**

21. There is a potentially significant resourcing implication to supporting the sesquicentennial celebrations which need to be balanced alongside the promotional benefits of the Sesquicentennial.

### **Legal implications**

22. There are no potential legal implications to this report.

### **Risk implications**

23. There are no immediate risk implications to this report.

### **Equalities implications**

24. All celebrations will seek to be inclusive, encouraging participation by all.

### **Climate implications**

25. The City's Climate Action Strategy, including Epping Forest's Carbon Recovery Project, are seeking to minimise the impact of the Charity's activities.

### **Security implications**

26. Any high-profile events associated with the celebrations will need to be subject to the appropriate security considerations.

### **Charity implications**

27. 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.

## **Epping Forest Consultative Committee**

28. The Consultative Committee welcomed proposals to celebrate the occasion of the Sesquicentennial of the City of London Corporation's involvement.

### **Conclusion**

29. The Sesquicentennial represents a unique opportunity to promote the pivotal role that the City Corporation played in saving Epping Forest and other public open spaces for public benefit. A celebration programme is proposed with specific events considered by a Working Party, alongside proposals to popularise the subject through a documentary or similar activity, such as podcast or weblog, to celebrate the Sesquicentennial achievement, bringing the City Corporation's actions to a wider audience.

30. The Sesquicentennial also presents the opportunity to identify a suitable achievement which might represent or facilitate the further protection of Epping Forest, through either a funding bid, land acquisition, building renovation or species reintroduction.

### **Report author**

Paul Thomson

E: [paul.thomson@cityoflondon.gov.uk](mailto:paul.thomson@cityoflondon.gov.uk)

T: 0208 532 1010

## **Appendix 1**

Metropolitan Commons Act 1866

Epping Forest Act 1871

Hampstead Heath Act 1871

(Acquired by the Metropolitan Board of Works in 1869)

Wimbledon & Putney Commons Act 1871

Tooting Bec Common 1873

(Acquired by the Metropolitan Board of Works in 1873)

Tooting Graveney Common 1875

(Acquired by the Metropolitan Board of Works in 1875)

Metropolitan Commons Act 1878

- Clapham Common
- Chislehurst Common

Hampstead Heath Enlargement Act 1876

Open Spaces Act 1878

- Burnham Beeches (acquired 1880)

Wormwood Scrubs Act 1879

Sheen Common Purchase 1880

Malvern Hills Act 1884

Ashdown Forest Conservancy 1885

Metropolitan Commons (Mitcham) Supplemental Act – 1891

Metropolitan Commons (Banstead) Supplemental Act 1893

Metropolitan Commons (Barnes) Supplemental Act 1898

## **Appendix 2 –Celebratory Epping Forest Centenary events held in 1978**

Epping Forest Retail Window Display competition (in cooperation with Epping Forest District Council and the Trustee Savings Bank)

Forest May Fayre, Forest Rise, Walthamstow

Chigwell Art Society Epping Forest Art Exhibition

'Epping Forest as it was' Display by London Borough of Waltham Forest Libraries & Arts Department.

Inter-Club Golf Competition

Epping Forest Centenary Games – Epping Forest District Council

Weekend Symposium 'Epping Forest: Its Natural History and Conservation' – Forest Conservation Centre

Epping Archers & Ascham Bowmen Archery Event

Inter-Club Cricket Tournament

Official visit of The Ranger - HRH the Duke of Gloucester

Waltham Forest Arts Council 'Amateur artists in Epping Forest'

An anthology of Poetry, Music and Prose – 'King's playground to Cockney paradise' Forest School

Poetry readings at Holy Innocents Church, High Beach

Willingale Memorial lecture, 'The Naturalist in Epping Forest' Gas demonstration Theatre, Walthamstow

Slides and Films 'Rambling in Epping Forest' Ramblers Association

Forest Festive occasion – Barbeque & Fair, Chingford Plain

Anthony Hopkins & Epping Forest Symphony Orchestra 'Centenary Concert' St John's Church. Epping

'Artists in Epping Forest' William Morris Gallery

Cross Country Ride, private driving marathon and gymkhana. Chingford Plain.

Epping Forest Riders Association

Private driving marathon – though Epping Forest - Kings Oak Horse Society

Cockney Bean feast with Music Hall – The King's Oak, High Beach

The Photographer in Epping Forest – Chingford Photographic Society

Centenary five-a-side football competition, Stonards Hill

Donkey Derby & Fete – White House, Woodford Green

Lecture Series Verderer Sir Wm Addison & Fred Speakman

Forest Festival – St Mary's Church, Theydon Bois

Litter Clearance, Woodford Green– British Naturalists Association

Buxton Exhibition Central Library Service

Centenary Walk – Friends of Epping Forest