

**Epping Forest Consultative Committee**  
**Wednesday 9 February 2022, 7.00pm**  
**Held via *Microsoft Teams***

**Present**

**Members:**

Graeme Doshi-Smith (Chairman)  
Benjamin Murphy (Deputy Chairman)  
Verderer Michael Chapman DL  
Verderer Paul Morris and Representative for Epping Forest Forum  
Verderer Nicholas Munday  
Judith Adams, Epping Forest Heritage Trust  
Francis Baker, Lee Valley Youth Cycling Club  
Peter Burden, Highams Park Planning Group (inc Snedders)  
Susan Creevy, Loughton Residents Association  
Matthew Frith, London Wildlife Trust  
Tim Harris, WREN Group  
Andy Irvine, Bushwood Area Residents Association  
Gill James, Friends of Wanstead Parklands  
Valerie Jones, West Essex Ramblers  
George Lund, Epping Forest Transport Action Group  
Carol Pummell, Epping Forest Riders Association  
Robert Smith, Butterfly Conservation Cambridgeshire and Essex Branch  
Steven Williamson, Royal Epping Forest Golf Club  
Tim Wright, Orion Harriers

**Officers:**

Paul Thomson, Superintendent of Epping Forest  
Jacqueline Eggleston, Head of Visitor Services  
Geoff Sinclair, Head of Operations  
Richard Holt, Town Clerk's Department

**Apologies:**

Verderer HH William Kennedy  
Elizabeth Burn, Theydon Bois & District Rural Preservation Society  
Louise Davies, Natural England  
Bruce Mackie, Lee Valley Youth Cycling Club  
Gordon Turpin, Highams Park Planning Group (inc Snedders)

**1. Apologies**

Apologies received as above.

**2. Governance Review & Future Management of Consultative Committee**

The Superintendent reported that the City of London Corporation (CoLC) is undergoing an extensive Governance Review and following recommendations made by Lord Lisvane, CoLC is moving towards these new arrangements. The Epping Forest Consultative Committee (EF-CC), which used to be administered by Town Clerks will now move to local management by

the Epping Forest Team. Further changes from the Governance Review are also planned and are awaiting sign off.

The Chairman added that elections are taking place in March and this will be his last meeting as Chairman of the EF&CC and EF-CC.

### **3. Last meeting minutes – 20 October 2022**

The minutes of the last meeting were agreed subject to the following amendments:

- Tim Harris change from Orion Harriers to Wren Group.
- Nick Owen, Forest Forum was present at the last meeting but not listed as an attendee.

### **4. Matters Arising from the last meeting minutes – 20 October 2022**

The following was raised:

#### Insurance Reimbursement update

An update from Peter Burden was requested regarding the reimbursement of insurance for volunteers.

*The Superintendent apologised for the delay and explained that following a review of grant giving in the CoLC, it was no longer possible to reimburse volunteers as previously. The Superintendent added that as volunteers provide a valuable resource, the Superintendent had been looking at alternative ways to be able to reimburse reasonable out of pocket costs for volunteering in the Forest. The Superintendent has now been able to confirm that if volunteer organisations submit invoices for any out-of-pocket costs for volunteering in Epping Forest, to send in for consideration.*

#### Public Transport

Peter Burden referred to the minutes which stated Epping Forest was well served by public transport, which is not true of High Beach. In addition, the car park opening and closing times limit those working during office hours to weekend use only as the car parks are closed too early in the day.

*The Head of Visitor Services responded that all these matters have been addressed within three public reports and an FAQ on Car Parking in Epping Forest. High Beach is over capacity and cannot cope either with parking, infrastructure or the environmental damage. There are a further 6,000 acres of accessible Forest land for Forest Users to visit and an Epping Forest Destination Strategy coming to Committee later this year will be reviewing how visitors can be managed and encouraged to visit alternative locations, not just High Beach. The Visitor Centre was moved to Chingford ten years ago for the very same reason.*

*The Chairman added that it is important to stress that public transport was not for CoLC to provide, however, CoLC did seek to influence local authorities to improve services where possible.*

*The Deputy Chairman added that the Local Authority Forest Transport Strategy is out of date and public transport is missing for some key areas. The local Authorities know where*

*CoLC is seeking improvements. CoLC are in early discussions on a new Forest Transport Strategy.*

#### Cattle

Paul Burden asked if it were possible to have cattle grazing at Higham's Park.

The Head of Operations replied, that following the successful trials at Wanstead Park, other locations including Highams Park are now being considered and added that strong community support was essential.

#### Red Routes

George Lund raised that there had been a long discussion on red routes through the Forest at the last meeting, yet the minutes appear to be much condensed.

Whilst George understood that each Member is encouraged to feed back directly to Essex County Council Highways on their own views on the red route, George felt that the purpose of this Committee meeting was to advise Epping Forest on what should be included within Epping Forest's response to the red route and the minutes did not capture these main outcomes.

*The Chairman responded that the minutes are limited due to the format the Town Clerk's department uses. However, now that the Epping Forest Charity is taking on clerking of the minutes, the minutes will be recorded differently. The Chairman also added that as the decision-making body for the Red Route is Essex County Council and it was therefore best that a number of views were given to ECC.*

Verderer Morris added that the Epping Forest Charity (EFC) were the authority that requested the Red Route in the first place and that is why the local community were giving their views to EFC. In addition, Verderer Morris added that the purpose of the Consultative Committee was to feed the views of the local community into the Epping Forest and Commons Committee.

#### **5. Epping Forest and Commons Committee meeting minutes**

The minutes from the last EF&CC meeting were noted.

#### **6. Superintendent's Update for August & September/October & November**

The Superintendent's updates were noted the following key points highlighted:

- Arable reversion works at Patmore's Field, Mott Street.
- Seeking damages from Thames Water
- 54 more cows born
- Consultancy underway on carbon recovery options for all open spaces
- A startling rise in fly tipping.
- New high risk DEFRA mapping for bird flu in the south of the Forest.

The following comments were noted:

Tim Harris

- Patmore's Field – Was the funding from a separate pot outside of EF main budgets?  
*Patmore's Field is a 5 year project of £3.6M grant funded from City's Resource Allocation Sub Committee (RASC) to realise the City's Climate Action Strategy.*
- Skylarks – following on from last year's breeding success will the fence be re-established. WREN would like to support the CoLC again with public communication.  
*The Skylark fencing only a temporary structure and was not designed for the long term and was kept up longer than planned to give the skylarks protection for longer. The fencing will be replaced where needed.*

Verderer Morris

- The fencing at Wanstead Park is a bad condition.
- Flytipping - The less people in the Forest the more crime will go up.

George Lund

- Very grateful for the new cycle racks but most have been installed on grass, which get very muddy in high use / weather conditions. Can consideration be given to put gravel down underneath the rack?  
*A further 63 cycle racks due to be delivered by end March for other parts of the London areas of the Forest. Some areas are more robust, but the ground condition will be assessed during that process.*

## **7. Epping Forest Staffing Arrangements**

The Superintendent gave an update that Epping Forest as part of the Open Spaces Department is now merging with the largest Department in the City of London to become the Environment Department. Colleagues from the City of London Cemetery and Crematorium and Tower Bridge are moving to other areas of the business. Epping Forest now sits in a new group called 'Natural Environment'.

Epping Forest and North London Open Spaces will undergo a major restructure 'phase 2' in June, with a staff consultation through the summer and implementation in the autumn.

## **8. Epping Forest Car Park Charging Review**

A report was brought to January EF&CC for information and is to give a review on the car park charging in Epping Forest since it began.

## **9. Epping Forest Car Park Charging - Phase 3**

A report on the Car Park Charging Phase 3 has been brought to this Committee to outline the options for implementing the third and final phase of the car park charging for comment.

The following was noted:

Valerie Jones

- The West Essex Ramblers group has older members who do not use smart phones and the use of RingGo is excluding those users. Could the payment arrangements be revisited and increase the use of cash machines?  
*Smartphones are the easiest method for payment; however, payments can be made by telephone. Cash is a limiting factor and there are many issues involved with cash machines. The car parking infrastructure will be improved gradually as car parking charging is embedded. Cash meters are not an option and are vulnerable to vandalism.*
- When do you need feedback from stakeholders for the annual review?  
*An annual review will take place EF&CC November 2022.*
- Proposals for phase 3 refers to the six-hour limit to be removed for five car parks and only four listed. *The Wood Yard was listed but was removed at the last moment when identified it was being used by visitors for St Margaret's Hospital parking.*
- The six-hour limit fixes the commuter problem so could consideration be given to remove the six-hour limit for all carparks where commuter parking is not an issue?  
*The principal behind the six-hour is a wider issue and not just due to displacement parking from commuters but also from residents where Local Authorities had implemented Controlled Parking Zones and local hospital visitors. The Head of Visitor Services has revisited every Forest Car park to see where feasible to remove the six-hour rule and has identified 4 car parks.*

#### Judy Adams

- No-one objected on the main principles of car parking charging.
- The six-hour limit loses the opportunity for families to spend the whole day in the Forest and could consideration be given to remove the six-hour limit for all carparks where commuter parking is not an issue? *The six-hour rule is also being used to encourage good turnover in the most popular car parks, such as Connaught Water and allow as more visitors as possible. For those visitors who wish to spend all day in the Forest, there are options to start their visit elsewhere.*
- Visitors on low incomes, on social credit but with cars are no longer able to visit the Forest anymore. *A number of anecdotes from Forest users who are no longer visiting have been reported, but this has now shown with the visitor numbers and surveys show parking is increasing.*
- Many would find the extension of debit card machines very useful.
- Concerned that with the loss of red route will have a big impact on roadside verges.

#### Verderer Morris

- There are a number of groups that would like to visit the Forest for over the six-hour limit.
- The red route is no longer enforced and allows for additional parking.
- High Beach is a key focal point and car parking charging is changing the area.
- Verderer Morris keen for CoLC to engage with Local Councillors to improve public transport.  
*Following the departure of the Head of Conservation, the Head of Visitor Services is working closely with Local Authorities, particular through the Transport Strategy which is being revisited to update.*
- The income has exceeded expectations.

*The Chairman added that the income received from car park charging has helped to recoup the expense for running Epping Forest.*

- Verderer Morris asked the Head of Visitor Services if Committee could be kept updated with any progress.

Sue Creevy

- Many people cannot walk a long way and do not have a blue badge.
- Has the red route gone? *The Chairman confirmed that NEPP are no longer enforcing the red route and it was up Essex Highways if the red route is enforced again.*
- There are many areas of Epping Forest not covered by public transport.

George Lund

- Concerned about the displacement effect of cars parking on verges, as car park charging is rolled out to the remaining car parks. Could yellow lines be considered?
- Could more cycle parking in the North of the Forest be considered?  
*In consultation with cyclists and cycle user groups, CoLC aims to place cycle racks near popular cycle routes rather than car pa.*
- A personal dislike of RingGo and its default for paid-for reminders.

*The Head of Visitor Services thanked Members for all the comments raised, they have been incorporated in the text above and a number of the comments mentioned are addressed within the FAQ's on the website and asked Committee Members to direct Members to the site.*

**ACTION:**

- ***The Head of Visitor Services to share a map of cycle rack locations for cycling in Epping Forest for EFTAG input.***
- ***The Head of Visitor Services to continue to keep EF-CC updated on progress.***

**10. Application To Natural England For Recognition As A National Nature Reserve**

Natural England (NE) has suggested CoLC apply for National Nature Reserve Status for Epping Forest. A report has been brought to this Committee to seek approval to continue discussion and fact finding prior to making any application.

The following comments were noted:

*Chairman confirmed that he agreed this would be good to explore further and consider if there are any implications.*

Verderer Morris raised his concern that, whilst CoLC should consider everything which could benefit Epping Forest, it could be too much work to undertake at this time. Verderer Morris added that if NE approached CoLC to make an application, that NE be invited to a future EF-CC to explain the process and benefit.

Verderer Munday added that, whilst there may be benefits, the status comes with requirements on governance, funding, maintenance etc. and it was important to know how

those requirements would affect the CoLC operations and structures and it would need to be considered by EF&CC in the round.

Sue Creevy wanted to know the pros and cons but understood that this could not yet be known. Volunteers often burn the vegetation cut down before clearing and would this no longer be possible.

Tim Harris had similar concerns to those of Verderers Morris and Munday. Tim was initially excited but then felt it raised a number of questions.

- Who would be managing and monitoring the land? Cuts to funding in NE have brought in many complaints about other NNR sites. Though, those run by RSPB and National Trust seem to be doing better.
- Would it give Epping Forest greater protection to EF? Tim felt some parts of EF, not covered by SSSI and SAC, would benefit from this designation. What land would be included and how would those discussions take place?
- A full understanding of the conservation and public amenity impacts would be required.

Gill James' main concern was the financial responsibility of CoLC. The latest budget shows a significant reduction over several years. Other comparable size NNRs get more budget.

- Where will the management sit?
- Will CoLC take better responsibility for everything else like investment, buildings etc?
- What would the local authority be expected to do?

*Chairman reiterated applying for this status was about designation and CoLC will continue to retain all management of Epping Forest.*

Mat Frith added that LWT supported this application and will await further information. There are other sites who have taken this designation recently in similar circumstances and it would be good to hear their experiences – the model is working well. Any additional responsibility or benefit must be clarified. This was first proposed in the 1940's and would be great to see it through! Mat Frith suggests inviting Royal Parks or London Borough of Hillingdon to a future EF-CC to share their experiences.

Judy Adams found the discussion fascinating. On the whole the EFHT are very supportive. More investigation would be very welcome. EF is a very special place and when EFHT talk to the public about the SAC and SSSI, these designations are often lost on them. However, the EF being a National Nature Reserve would be better understood and appreciated far more easily and ought to be taken into account.

Verderer Chapman raised his concern that the report to consider the NNR status was brought to the EF-CC first prior to being considered by the EF&CC and felt it should have been the other way round.

The Chairman did not agree with Verderer Chapman and reminded Verderer Chapman that the correct process was for reports to be brought to the EF-CC for consultation in first instance and the views of the EF-CC were then included in an updated report to be brought

to EF&CC for full consideration and decision. The Chairman added that the Superintendent had mentioned at the beginning of this item that this report was to seek approval to continue discussions and fact finding prior to making any application and understood from this Committee that the overall consensus was to do so. Once more information has been collated, a report will be brought back to this Committee for further consultation.

Verderer Morris sought clarification if this was now an agreement to go ahead with the proposal or to invite NE to come to CoLC with a proposal? Verderer Morris felt that there will need to be some management structure changes, with all the organisations involved. The Superintendent was grateful for the lively discussion and questions and confirmed the following:

- The NNR status was to be seen as additional and complimentary designation, but must indeed be balanced with EF's many other obligations.
- NE already monitor EF's performance against SSSI and SAC and this would not require as much monitoring.
- NNR status would also have the potential to involve other areas outside of EF existing designations.
- There is no intention to be in thrall to NE. NE are very impressed with EF's work here and what EF has achieved to date and NE wish to celebrate and be part of that.
- The financial report last time around was not particularly helpful as a large part of the CWP budget had not yet been approved. EF has achieved its 12% local efficiencies through income.
- EF is talking to other areas that have been through this process and these organisations have been very supportive.
- Normally new initiatives are brought to this Consultative Committee first – that is the usual and correct business route. Any final proposal will of course come back here and to EF&CC.
- It is a cooperative process and may also help to attract more funding for discrete projects.

Carol Pummel raised the concerns of the public Carol had met in the Forest that the public believed this status will change the Forest. Most had concerns that having this status was just about getting money and not about the management of the Forest or putting the Forest first. The public felt that this would increase the bureaucracy and also horse riders feedback that NE have not got a good reputation in particular in getting authorisation to repair tracks.

*Chairman confirmed there if the status meant that there would be any changes to the Forest, then the Chairman would not be supportive and stressed again that any implications of the status would need to be considered. The Chairman added that the budget is going down for EF and money does need to be made to maintain EF.*

Gill James mentioned that all other NNRs Gill had visited had been enclosed. Would this be something that would need to happen?

*Chairman confirmed that there will be no wish to change the Act but a note of this will be made to for consideration.*



Verderer Morris asked if there are any other comparative model to compare against? There will be a lot of hesitation for this idea because NE have always been seen to delay or put a stop to things.

*The Superintendent understood all the concerns and stressed the intention was to keep EF the way it is. Funding was necessary, but that was not the driver here. The Natural England consent process can be slow sometimes but for very good reasons. Consideration will also be made to consider the World Heritage Status.*

## **11. Platinum Jubilee Celebrations 1952-2022 Queen's Green Canopy - Proposed Tree Planting Projects**

As part of the Queen's Platinum Jubilee celebrations, Epping Forest has been nominated as part of the 70-strong Queen's Green Canopy (QGC) initiative, with successful woodland nominations being announced by the QGC Board in February 2022. Building on anticipated approval, this report outlines how CoLC could facilitate a wide range of QGC tree-planting activities across the Square Mile and wider Open Spaces across Greater London, engaging the Lord Mayor, school groups and wider communities.

It is proposed that the City Corporation take an active role in the QGC activities over the course of the next 14 months and align activities in numerous locations around supporting the QGC campaign. Supporting a range of tree-planting activities at Epping Forest for between 159-2,300 trees at 31 locations, is forecast to cost an estimated £40,000 between January 2022 and March 2023 which will require additional fund-raising activity.

This report has been brought to this Committee for comment on possible projects at Epping Forest to be taken forward to the EF&CC for consideration.

The following was raised:

Verderer Morris stressed this was a once in a lifetime event, which should be embraced and added if it was possible to pollard to revive some old trees rather than plant more trees?

Tim Harris said thought not against planting trees, these two options mentioned for Wanstead Flats both raise issues and it was important to take the species, type etc and the biodiversity, which can be fragile on semi-acid grassland, into consideration.

Verderer Chapman raised concern that as an executor organising a tree planting at Hatfield Forest, where the cost of a planting is £300 per tree that includes ongoing maintenance. It is important that the ongoing maintenance must be considered.

*The maintenance costs are factored in as well as a percentage cost for replacement for failures.*

Rob Smith raised his concern about any tree-planting on grassland particularly if the grassland is acid in character. If classified as a UKBAP lowland acid grassland Priority Habitat, then any loss would be unacceptable in planning terms. Of particular concern is the proposal to plant a copse of 50 to 2,300 trees on Wanstead Flats (Compartment 38) which is not part of the SSSI. Also Coopersale Common (Compartment 56) which is part of the

SSSI. There appears to be little grassland in this area and if anything, compartment 56 and the adjacent Compartment 3 should be opened up.

George Lund felt this was a great opportunity for community involvement. George added that the Scouts would be delighted to be involved and appealed that the opportunity to involve the community is advertised widely.

*There will most definitely be community planting. Community engagement costs are also factored into the cost for the plantings.*

Susan Creevy raised her concern that planting bigger trees was more costly and would require more maintenance and suggested planting smaller trees.

The Head of Operations thanked everyone and will take into consideration all feedback.

## **12. Natural Environment Forward Plan**

In order to help guide members expectations regarding the content of each Committee Agenda and to facilitate improved engagement with the Committee Report process, the Chairman had requested that an Epping Forest Agenda Plan covering the next six meetings of the Epping Forest and Commons Committee is published as part of each Committee Agenda.

A similar plan will be provided to the Epping Forest Consultative Committee with the intention of providing the potential for the Consultative Committee by agreement to request a report to each Committee on a subject not addressed through the forward Agenda Plan.

Verderer Morris responded that this was very necessary and long overdue and added that the dates of meetings were advertised well in advance of each Committee meeting to enable members to engage with its members.

George Lund appreciated the opportunity an advance agenda brings to be able to give written feedback on agenda items and to be able to do this would need the reports much earlier. George was very interested in the Sustainable Visitor Strategy and requested to see a copy as soon as was possible.

Chairman added that there was a need to caveat that the agenda plan will always be subject to change and there were limits to what can be known or written in advance.

## **13. Future Meeting Dates**

The dates of the 2022 meetings are as follows:

- 15 June 2022, 7pm
- 19 October 2022, 7pm

## **14. Questions**

Budget

Gill James noticed from previous notes the decline in budget and can see that Epping Forest is underfunded and has a growing backlog. Gill had not seen anything that adequately deals with this decreasing revenue and asked what could be done by the EF-CC to help.

*The Chairman replied that it was not possible for CoLC to provide more budget and finding funding from other sources was the only option. Engaging with all Members was essential. In the last year £440,000 was spent on waste alone! This is almost completely avoidable and could be invested in the Forest instead.*

*The Deputy Chairman added that there had been a decline in funding, however, there have been a number of significant successful bids made such the Climate Action Strategy at Patmore's Field mentioned earlier. The Chairman and Deputy Chairman frequently talk to Court of Common Council about the importance of Epping Forest. There is definitely a desire to look again at a strategy for Natural Environment.*

*The Deputy Chairman continued that the annual budgets and the annual review were presented at this meeting and are publicly available. There will also be a risk dashboard, starting in May, to come to this Committee which will help explain the budget more easily, what needs to be prioritised and how to justify bids for additional funding. The Deputy Chairman asked for Members to bear with CoLC and wait until the new Committee is established and the issues can be revisited and a way forward agreed.*

#### ParkLife

Tim Harris asked for an update on proposals for all-weather pitches?

*There has been no further update since this was raised at EF-CC. The Head of Visitor Services will be approaching the London Borough of Redbridge soon for planning advice. There is no point moving toward consultation until it is known if the project is viable.*

#### Horseriding Accident

Verderer Morris referred to the recent terrible horse accident where two horses were killed. There are a number of local groups working together with the police and there is an opportunity for much improved signage. Verderer Morris sought the support from Members to help keep up the on this.

### **15. Any Other Business**

#### Thank You

Verderer Morris wished to thank the Chairman, Deputy Chairman and Richard Holt for all the hard work and wished the Chairman and Deputy Chairman the best of luck in the elections.

Valerie Jones mentioned plans to be away for the next meeting and who to now arrange this cover with.

*The Superintendent confirmed this would now be Juliane Heinecke.*

*The Chairman added that substitutions were fine as long as these did not happen too often. Attendance and representation was key to maintain a line of communication.*

Verderer Chapman hoped the next meeting could be face to face.

Susan Creevy wished to thank the CoLC for the responses to the local plan, which the Loughton Resident's Association completely agreed with.

Gill James was very sorry to see Jeremy Dagley go and that there was not opportunity to thank him and to please pass on our thanks and best wishes.