

Committee(s)	Dated:
Epping Forest and Commons	11/07/2022
Epping Forest Consultative Group	19/10/2022
Subject: Epping Forest – Assistant Director’s Update for April – May 2022 (SEF 20/22)	Public
Which outcomes in the City Corporation’s Corporate Plan does this proposal aim to impact directly?	2, 5, 11 & 12
Does this proposal require extra revenue and/or capital spending?	No
If so, how much?	N/A
What is the source of Funding?	City’s Cash Local Risk
Has this Funding Source been agreed with the Chamberlain’s Department?	Y
Report of: Juliemma McLoughlin, Executive Director Environment Department	For Information
Report author: Paul Thomson – Superintendent of Epping Forest	

Summary

This purpose of this report is to summarise the Epping Forest Division’s activities across April and May 2022.

Of particular note was a successful experimental overwintering of grazing livestock on the Forest; positive discussions with Natural England over the future of the Tudor Square Pond at Copped Hall park; the publication of Inspectors advice on Epping Forest District Council and London Borough of Waltham Forest Local Plans; the completion of externally funded Phase I repairs to The Grotto’s landing stage; the award of a £280,000 contract to repair the Birch Hall Park small raised reservoir and the publication of an interactive guide to the Forest’s 68 new cycles stands.

Recommendation(s)

Members are asked to:

- Note the report

Main Report

Staff & volunteers

1. Staff continue to cover a range of vacancies associated with the Target Operating Model (TOM) recruitment restrictions with seventeen vacant posts, including eight posts fortunately covered by secondments and casual staff drawn from Epping Forest volunteers. The Head Forest Keeper and one of two Senior Forest keepers have resigned, leaving end July and August respectively. A new Support Services Team Leader has been successfully recruited and joined at the end of May, together with a new Senior Stockperson who starts work in July.

Budget

2. Expenditure two months into the financial year is on track at 16% of the budget profile. Income is slightly better than expected for this time of year, bolstered by recent filming receipts.

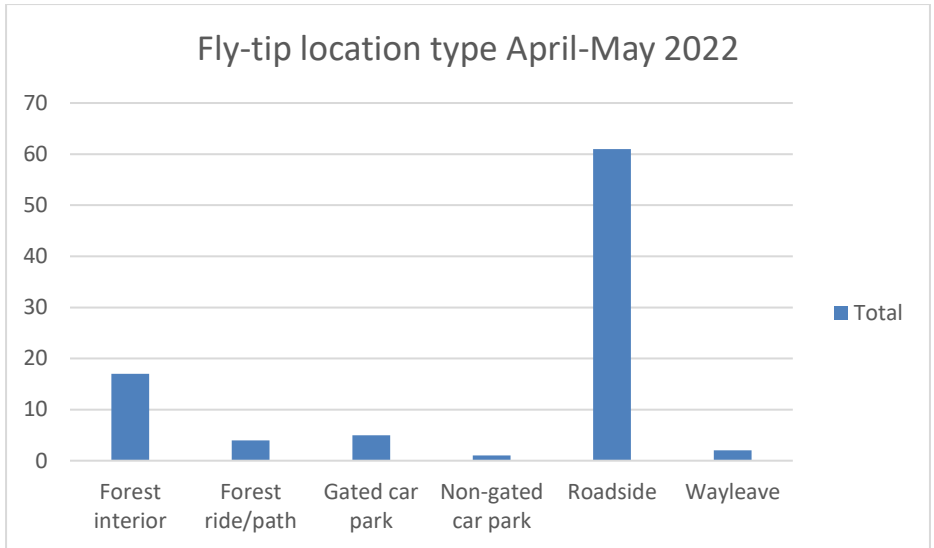
Weather

3. The average daily rainfall in April 2022 was 0.66 mm, with the most recorded on the 6 April with 10.8 mm. There were twenty-three days where no precipitation was logged and just seven days where it was. The total April rainfall of 18.6 mm puts the year 2022 under half the average totals recorded in the period of 1979 – 2009. In the period since 2010.
4. The average daily rainfall in May 2022 was 1.41 mm, with the most recorded on the 31 May with 6.2 mm. There were nineteen days where no precipitation was logged and twelve days where it was. The total May rainfall of 43.6 mm puts the year 2022 nearly on par with the average totals recorded in the period of 1979 – 2009.

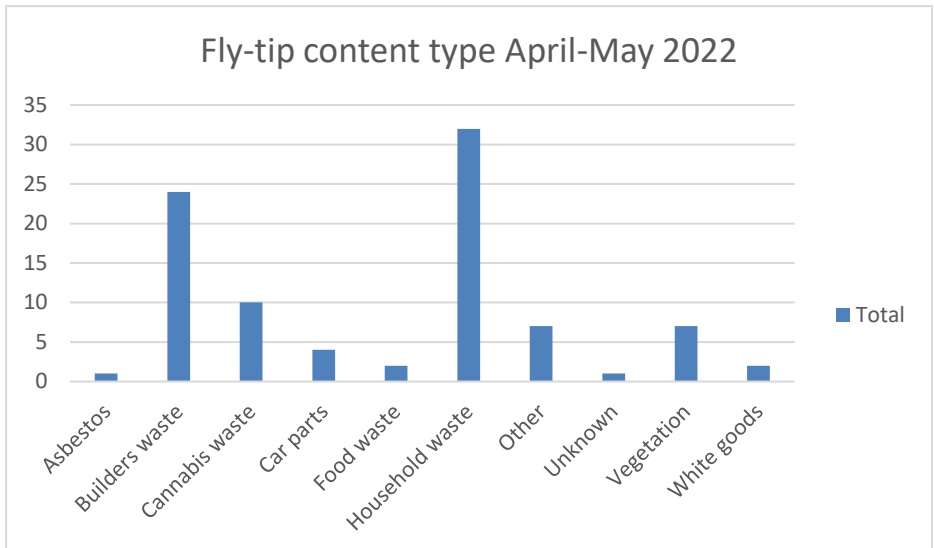
Forest Services

Fly-tipping

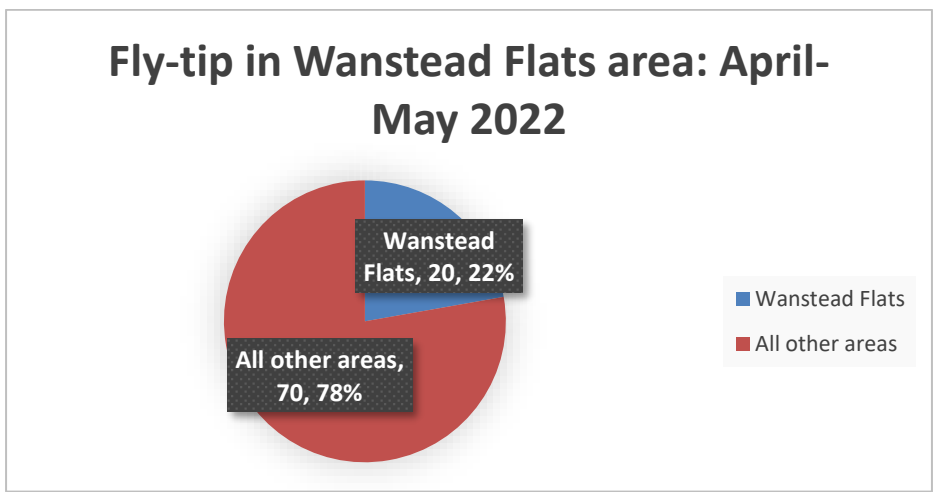
5. There was a total of 90 fly-tips recorded over the period of April – May 2022, this is a 11% increase over the same period in 2021.



6. Roadside locations represented 68% of the tip locations over the period.



7. Household waste represented the largest category of items tipped over the period at 32 (36%), while other waste (concrete, polystyrene, wires etc.) represented 7 tips (8%).



8. There were 20 fly-tips in the Wanstead Flats area over the period which represents 29% of all tips. 14 of these tips were on Forest Land adjacent to Highway Land on Capel Road.

Enforcement Activity

9. No Prosecutions were undertaken during the period under report. Three Reparative Cautions were issued totalling £700.

Licences

10. A total of 42 licences for events were issued during the months being reported, which yielded an income of £100,440.80 plus VAT, this was mainly due to 1 large film shoot. 47 licences were issued during the same period in 2021 yielding an income of £124,358.25.

Unexplained Deaths

11. There have been no unexplained deaths reported over this period.

Rough Sleepers

12. There have been five rough sleeper encampments located during the reporting period. All rough sleepers continue to be managed in partnership with Local Authorities through the No Second Night Out (NSNO) protocols.

- 20.04.2022 Leyton Flats
- 20.04.2022 Leyton Flats
- 21.04.2022 Barn Hoppitt
- 29.05.2022 Walthamstow Forest
- 31.05.2022 Oak Hill

13. In 2021, there were 45 reported cases of rough sleepers in comparison to 64 in 2020. Within this reporting period there have been five reports of rough sleepers in comparison to 2021 where there were fifteen reported cases over the same period.

Unauthorised Occupations

14. There have been no reports of traveller incursions during this reporting period.

15. There have been no reported Unlicensed Music Events (UMEs) on Forest Land.

Dog Incidents

16. There has been five recorded dog-related incident during this reporting period:

- 01.04.2022 2 x dog on dog attacks Wanstead Park investigation No PE550 reparative caution
- 21.04.2022 Dog bit person PE558 £200 reparative caution
- 27.04.2022 Dog chase deer Epping New Road
- 28.04.2022 PE 568 dog on dog Staples Road investigation ongoing
- 17.05.2022 PE 577 dog on dog Forest Glade, Wanstead Park

Deer Vehicle Collisions

17. Epping Forest staff dealt with a total of 5 deer vehicle collisions (DVC) during this reporting period:

- 21.04.2022 Woodredon Hill
- 25.04.2022 North of Robin Hood roundabout
- 07.05.2022 Theydon Bois
- 24.05.2022 Thornwood Road

Car Park Charging Scheme

18. Income from Phase I and II car parking charging schemes have continued to raise income for reinvestment in the Forest in line with projections.

	Hourly P&D Income** £	Permit Income £	Penalty Notices £
April	£42,216.91	£3,879.90	£2,151.72
May	Pending	Pending	Pending

** Hourly P&D income includes income from the RingGo systems and car payment machines at High Beach (collected by Horizon).

May figures pending clarification of contract charges agreed through City wide RingGo contract extension.

Cumulative net income 2022, from the scheme currently stands at £48,248.53 as of 31 May 2022.

Heritage; Landscape and Nature Conservation

Biodiversity

19. Lichen surveys were completed under a Natural England (NE) grant looking into the current status of the lichen communities which complements a survey of moss communities. These are part of the most sensitive elements of Epping Forest habitats and reflect environmental conditions. This survey is particularly looking at what the current status of these communities disclose about nitrogen pollution in the atmosphere. The reports will be published soon.

Climate Action Strategy

20. Further details have been developed for the Copped Hall project, these have been presented to the Copped Hall Trust and the Epping Forest Consultative Group (EFCG). The completion of the feasibility study for the whole of the Carbon Removals project will determine the scale of works that can be delivered at Copped Hall.

Agri-environment Schemes

21. Outline proposals for all three Countryside Stewardship applications (Wanstead Park, the second half of Epping Forest and the Buffer Lands) have been completed. The first phase of stakeholder engagement has been undertaken through the presentation of these proposals to the EFCG. The next phase is to

create detailed proposals subject to the Epping Forest and Commons Committee approval in July.

22. The Epping Forest Conservation Volunteers (EFCV) and Epping Forest Heritage Trust (EFHT) have been the main delivery bodies for work on the existing Countryside Stewardship agreement.
23. The Basic Payment Scheme for 2022 was submitted in May. The income will be lower compared to the previous year again as the government wind down this scheme, down from about around £102,000 in 2021 to £85,000 in 2022. Income will cease in 2027 and it is unlikely that the subsequent new agri-environment schemes income will replace this. The income was originally around £120,000.

Grazing

24. With spring arriving it heralds the success of winter grazing with 8 non-breeding cows in the 200Ha compartment that stretches from Chingford Plain (Butlers Retreat) to Hill Wood (south of Bradleys Tea Hut). Winter grazing pressure helps target young woody species that would grow up to secondary woodland to crowd out ancient trees and provides valuable food and habitat via dung for early emerging insects.
25. As reported at item 3, April was a very dry month, so the main cattle herd were kept in at Great Gregories until early May. This was to prevent overgrazing the grass before it had started its spring growth curve. Grazing too early can stress vegetation and encourage the grass to set seed early which reduces the productivity for the rest of the year.
26. Warren wood slope has been grazed for the first time with 4 cows grazing for 1 month using GPS collars. The site was not cut last year due to a Thames Water leak preventing machinery from accessing the site. The cows will return to the site later in the season once the flowering species have set seed. The slope in-bloom has a good display of Birds Foot Trefoil (*Lotus corniculatus*), Lady's Bedstraw (*Galium verum*) and Common Vetch (*Vicia sativa*).

Heritage

27. Officers from Epping Forest and the Built Environment Departments met with Historic England (HE) about poplar removal from across the Tudor Square Pond and later earthworks within Rookery Wood at Copped Hall Park. There will be a site visit with HE to look at onsite practicalities.

Forest Protection and planning matters Town & Country Planning – Local Plans

28. **Epping Forest District Council (EFDC) Local Plan:** Partnership Agreement for the delivery of Strategic Access Management and Monitoring measures for the Epping Forest Special Area of Conservation was approved by EFDC 11 April. The recently appointed replacement Local Plan Inspector issued an Inspector's

note to EFDC on 16 June. The note indicated that subject to the adequate demonstration of a five-year housing land supply, the Local Plan should be capable of adoption in Autumn 2022. The note confirmed that all relevant planning applications are required to be supported by a simplified Policy has been provided by the Inspector for Policy DM2 covering Protection of the Special Area of Conservation (SAC), alongside a policy correction fixing the boundary of the SAC Zone of Influence at 6.2km and the SAC Buffer boundary at 400 metres.

29. London Borough of Waltham Forest (LBWF) Local Plan: Inspectors made a written statement to LBWF on 27 May 2022. Key elements of the Inspector's advice for the Forest were a request for an updated version of the Air Quality Management Study (AQMS) in accordance with Natural England's requirements and continued liaison with Natural England and the Charity with regard to a redraft of the Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace Strategy (SANGS) proposals. LBWF have proposed in a published work programme that the above requirements will be completed by mid-August 2022.

30. London Borough of Enfield (LBE) Local Plan: No further update

Town & Country Planning – Development Control

31. In the EFDC area one objection was made, as follows:

- EPF0625 22 Netherhouse Farm – objection to installation of a crematorium. The site has already obtained planning permission for a burial ground in 2018, the Charity objected on grounds of increased use without further consideration of the EFSAC.

Land Registration, Access Audit & Wayleaves

32. No further Land Registrations were made during the period.

Operations

Risk Management

33. Arborist teams continue to work on reducing the back log of tree safety works. Following the completion of the Tree Safety Zone 2021/22 survey and the task remaining from the previous year there are around 2000 tree safety tasks pending for this year. Normally it is less than 800-900. As well as the backlog linked to the COVID 19 crisis increasing tree safety tasks have risen due to the impact of Dutch Elm Disease, which tends to run in cycles, and Sooty Bark disease of Sycamore following dry summers in previous years.

34. Specialist contractors undertook two pesticide sprays to control Oak Processionary Moth on trees in six priority control areas across the Forest. The pesticide used is a natural bacteria that targets caterpillars of all species but is not harmful to other species. With the agreement of the Forestry Commission the pesticide treatment is not undertaken within the Site of Special Scientific Interest areas of the Forest, to avoid impacting caterpillars of beneficial and desirable species. In addition to the six priority areas treatment was also undertaken in education areas of the Forest and the Theydon oak avenue.

Access Works

35. With thanks to Lady Clare Gifford five new finger posts have been installed in and around Gifford Wood. The finger posts are part of a series of works sponsored by Lady Clare that will help to encourage visitors to explore the wider Epping Forest from Gifford Wood
36. The new cycle racks installed courtesy of Transport for London in March have all received a grass cutting around them. At some locations the grass growth is vigorous and until the racks are more used, MOT Type 1 surfacing, or similar, around the cycle racks to better manage the grass, will be considered.
37. Contractors have completed a survey of 27km of path compiling details of works required to make good damage cause during the COVID 19 lockdown period. The information collated will be used to obtain Natural England Agreement for works and will also serve as the basis for a forthcoming works tender. Following RASC approval of £250,000 for possible path works at Epping Forest Gateway, reports are being prepared to hopefully allow this funding to be drawn upon.

Heritage

38. Works on the first phase of the Grotto landing stage repairs were completed. A tender for the second phase of works is being prepared in association with the COL Heritage Team.

Visitor Services

39. Arts Council England through Museum Development Officers London awarded the EFC a Measuring Up grant of £2000, to support a heritage-based exhibition and activities this summer. The grant also enrolls the EFC into an ACE visitor evaluation framework, access to museum development consultancy, museum peer assessment and the option of a further payment of £700. This grant was available to the EFC in its role as an accredited museum.
40. The grant supported an exhibition 'The Cow in the Woods' which runs May to September at Epping Forest Visitor Centre (EFVC), Chingford with a repeat smaller scale display at The Temple, Wanstead Park. The exhibition, promoting the important heritage and history of Forest cattle grazing and its current conservation benefits, includes museum objects and is supported by a programme of cattle walks and art activity workshops.
41. The Temple re-opened to the public in May with weekend opening on the second and fourth weekends of each month to September. New for 2022 is the Cow in the Woods exhibition and a display of freshly excavated stones from the Grotto with several themed activities targeted at family groups.
42. Prior to The Temple's formal opening, the public enjoyed the first outdoor exhibition hung on The Temple enclosure railings: Russell Boyce's 'A Portrait of the High Street', professional black and white photographs of local Wanstead

businesses and their proprietors, including Wanstead Park's tea kiosk, and their stories of their businesses under covid.

43. Peter Pan, the first of the summer season of plays in Wanstead Park, on 4 June, was attended by around 250 people. There are five plays to follow offered by three different theatre companies, making this the richest and most diverse theatrical season yet offered by the EFC.

Learning and Education

44. Schools have been participating in our facilitated learning programmes at Barn Hoppitt and Wanstead Flats. Our new Nature Wellbeing session, developed in response to concerns over students' mental health following the pandemic, has been particularly popular with schools local to Wanstead Flats.

45. In April and May, 312 students took part in the learning programme. Evaluation showed that students increased their understanding of the importance of green spaces and their wellbeing after taking part.

Field Studies Council

Month	Visitor Numbers - primary and secondary schools - community groups and activities - adult learning
April 2022	1,392
May 2022	2,257

46. Field Studies Council continue to deliver successful primary and secondary school geography and science trips, community activities for families and youth groups and a natural history programme for adults. Bookings are looking strong into the Summer and Autumn terms as schools return to normal school trips.

Chingford Golf Course

47. Total income generated from green fees and shop related sales amounted to £101,617.04 for April & May compared to £119,484.45 in 2021, a decrease of £17,867.41. This is because a discount was given to those renewing season tickets in April 2021 due to time lost in the final lockdown, so payments were made in full in April 2021. This no discounts have been given most season tickets holders choose to split their bill into 3 payments made in April, June & September.

48. Online bookings for April & May amounted to £41,404 compared to £61,547 the previous year, a decrease of £20,143 reflecting the record increase in demand in the previous year after coming out of the final lockdown. However, the golf course is still rated number two for online bookings on GolfNow within Essex - out of 53 courses.

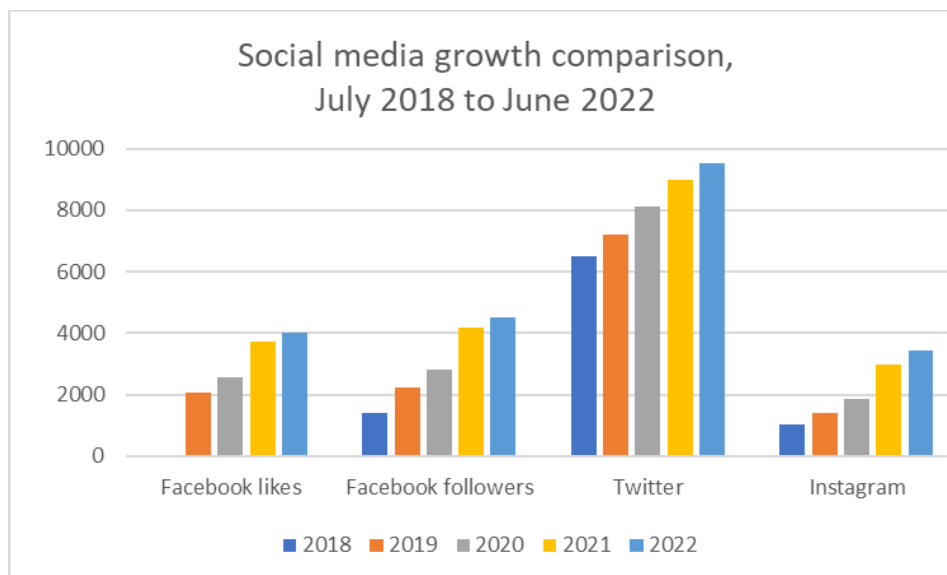
49. Grounds staff have been carrying out regular cutting requirements to tees, fairways, rough, aprons and greens in order to keep the course set up for play. Greens were sprayed with a wetting agent and feed 3 times. Large green renovation works were carried out using the new machinery purchased which allowed the job to be completed in one rather than two days.
50. This work also allowed the height of cut on greens to be lowered to 3.5mm which has not previously been possible, leading to improved quality of greens and positive feedback from visitors.
51. Worn walkways after the winter period were renovated and top-dressed to be ready for the summer. New tee plates were made and put out replacing the old broken ones. Ground staff had to carry out 2 repairs to the irrigation on holes 14 & 15 due to leaks. Tees were sprayed with a slow-release feed at the end of April which will help the grass growth over the hotter months over the summer.

Communications

52. As of 15 June 2022, Epping Forest social media following is:

- Twitter followers: 9,523 (an increase of 6%)
- Facebook likes: 3,997 (an increase of 7%)
- Facebook followers: 4,4494 (an increase of 8%)
- Instagram followers: 3,417 (an increase of 14%)

53. The chart shows a comparison of our social media followers at approximately the same point since 2018:



54. Top posts on social media for June 2022 (as at 15 June):

- Twitter (6,067 engagements) promotion of cow grazing in Epping Forest.
- Facebook: (1,791 reach) photographs of lily of the valley, the Queen's favourite flower, to celebrate the Platinum Jubilee.
- Instagram: (102 likes) an image of a beech tree in High Beach.

55. Top posts on social media for May 2022:

- Twitter (7,074 impressions): celebrating 140 years since Queen Victoria visited Epping Forest on 6 May 1882.
- Facebook: (Reach of 7,431) celebrating 140 years since Queen Victoria visited Epping Forest on 6 May 1882
- Instagram: (100 likes) cow parsley foreground to bluebells in Chalet Wood, Wanstead Park.

56. Forest Focus continues to be distributed digitally each month, with positive feedback received and the Epping Forest website continues to be reviewed.

57. Work has been completed on new orientation / interpretation signs for Higham's Park Lake, Goldings Hill, Staples Road and Giffords Wood. Awaiting production / installation.

Wanstead Flats

58. A total of 83 matches were played across the flats between April & May. Ground staff removed all goal posts at the end of April after the season completion. Deep goal mouth restoration works along with general pitch repairs and chain harrowing was carried to the pitches. Weekly deep cleaning of the pavilions was carried out ready for weekend visitors.

59. Parkrun attracted 1958 runners in April & May with an average of 11 volunteers helping each week.

Horse Riding

60. Total income from horse riding licences for April & May amounted to £9294.49 compared to £6585.53 the previous year. Last year's licences were discounted due to time lost due to the final lockdown which indicates why this year's figure is significantly higher.

Visitor Numbers

61. Visitor numbers for the period are shown in the Table below:

Visitor Numbers	QEHL 2022	QEHL 2021	EFVC View 2022	EFVC View 2021	Temple 2022	Temple 2021	High Beach 2021/ 2022
April	1170	0	2931	442	0	0	TBC
May	1038	20	2700	1170	467	0	TBC

Projects

Wanstead Park Ponds

62. The Grants Officer for the Mayor of London green Resilient Spaces funding was guided by officers around Wanstead Park where officers explained the history and issues with the water management of the lake cascade.
63. A visit to LB Enfield was undertaken by Epping Forest Officers to see Sustainable Urban Drainage Schemes (SuDS) and constructed wetlands at the historic Pymes Park and Firs Farm wetlands. This was led by Ian Russell from the local authority who is an expert in this area and very kindly hosted the event.
64. Requests for quotes have been sent out to consultancies for the SuDS feasibility piece of work at end of May. The deadline is 22 June for submissions.

Birch Hall Park Pond

65. The construction works contract has now been awarded to Kenson Highways. Works are estimated to start in early August, lasting approximately 8 weeks being completed by end of September. Enabling works are currently being planned to ensure safe construction vehicle access into the site.
66. At time of writing plans are underway to engage with the local residents through letter drops and site visit for local councillors. There will be a section of the Epping Forest website with a FAQ detailing the rationale for the construction works and timescales. Updates on project progress will be included here supported by notices at the local village hall with QR codes linking to the website.

Cycle Stand Installation

67. An interactive map has been created showing the locations of the TfL funded cycle stands. It can be viewed on the Epping Forest Cycling webpage ([Cycling in Epping Forest - City of London](#)) TfL were asked to fund gravel for the bases of new stand locations but this was not an eligible cost. Funding to gravel the bases, as grass growth is obscuring some of the stands, is being sought.

Major Incident

68. There were no major incidents during the period of reporting.

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