



Epping Forest

Registered Charity

Epping Forest Annual Review 2021-2022



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Cover: Photo by Chris Shepherd
 Left: Photo by Mark Powter

Chairman’s statement

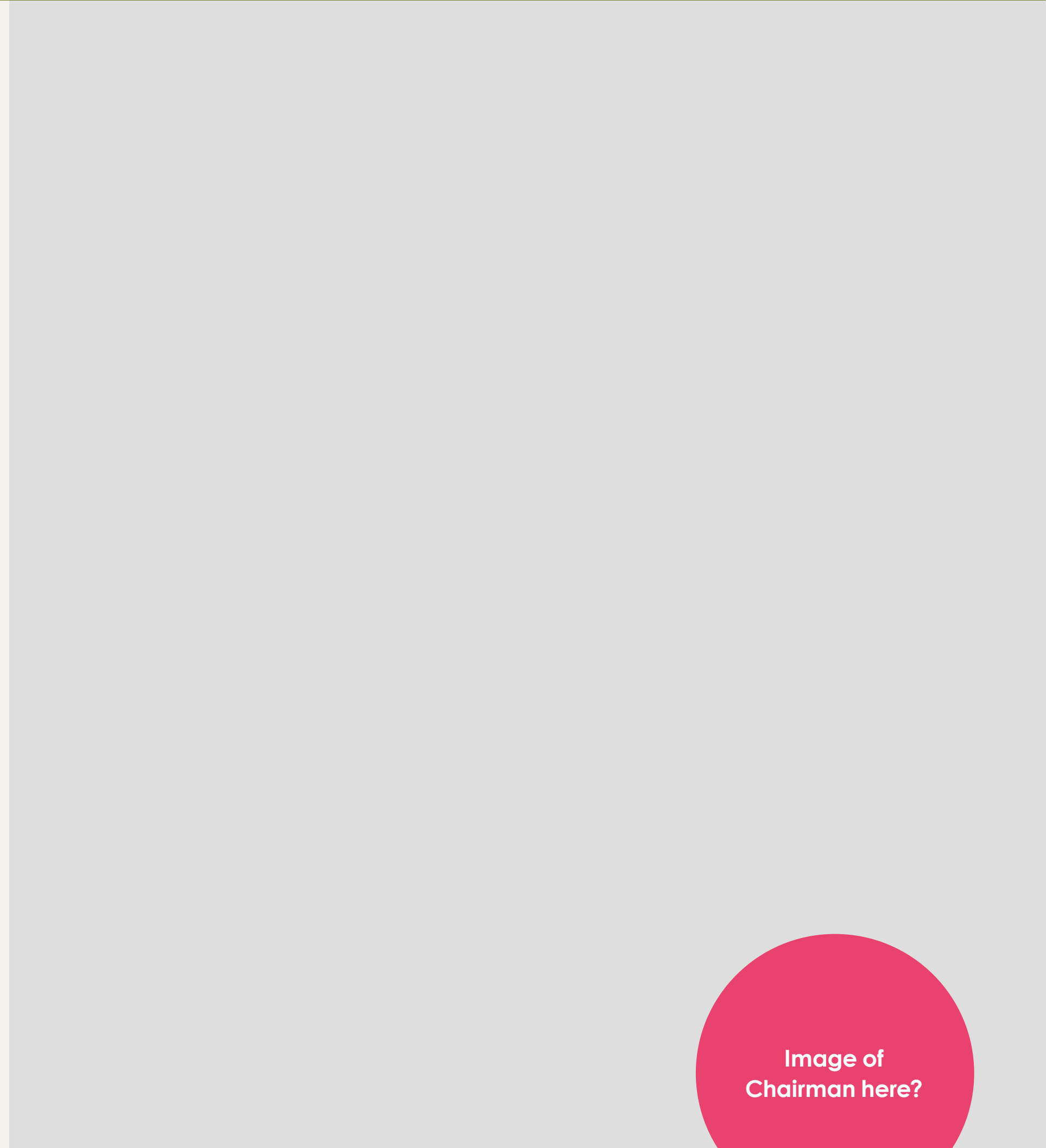
I was pleased to be elected as Chairman of the Epping Forest and Commons Committee in May 2022 and it gives me great pleasure to present this review of performance for Epping Forest from April 2021 to March 2022 during which period I was the Deputy Chairman.

The year was marked by a gradual easing of restrictions due to the pandemic and a return to normal life. Despite this return to normal, the legacy of the pandemic continued to have an impact on the Forest throughout the rest of the year. Routine maintenance and inspections had been delayed while staff reprioritised workloads to manage the increased visitor numbers and therefore there was a huge backlog of work to tackle. Another legacy of the pandemic was the damage to Forest paths due to the level of visitors, especially in wet weather. This will be ongoing work to tackle path improvements over the coming years.

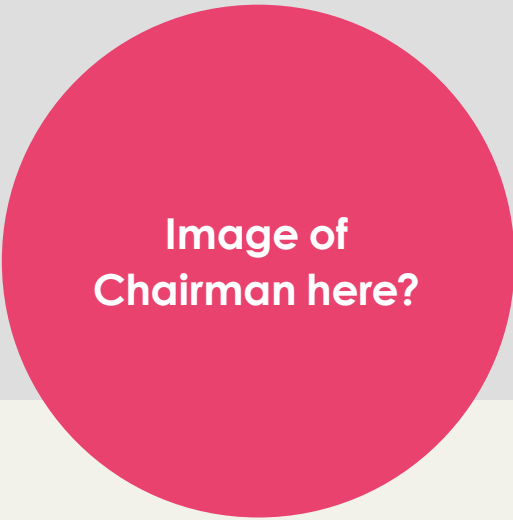
The City of London provided funding to create a new wildflower meadow in a field that was previously used for arable farming. This meadow will contribute to the City’s Carbon Action Strategy through carbon removals. As the plants grow they capture carbon and because the field will now remain undisturbed the carbon is locked in. A valuable additional benefit is the increase in biodiversity this flower-rich meadow will create. The Forest itself, of course, already plays its part in carbon removal but we hope in future to revert more of the arable areas of our Buffer Land to permanent planting that will further help with carbon removal.

The City of London also began a fundamental staffing review which meant a pause was placed on recruitment. At the same time a number of long-standing members of staff left the organisation leaving significant gaps in some areas of work. However, we continue to be grateful to receive the support of our tireless volunteers who do so much to help us care for and protect the Forest.

Despite the challenges of the pandemic legacy and staff shortages, I have been encouraged to see so much work progressing in the background to mobilise new projects and ways of working and I am looking forward to seeing some of these come to fruition over the next year in my first full year as Chairman.



Benjamin Murphy
Chairman of Epping Forest and Commons Committee



Charitable purpose

The purpose of the charity is the preservation of Epping Forest in perpetuity by the City of London Corporation as Conservators of Epping Forest, as an open space for the recreation and enjoyment of the public.

Our vision

Epping Forest is a thriving, biodiverse green space that benefits the City's communities and enhances the wider environment as part of a larger, interconnected landscape.

Our mission

To conserve and protect Epping Forest as London's largest biodiverse green space for the health, recreation and enjoyment of everyone.



Who we are

Epping Forest is managed as a charitable trust (charity number 232990), which is managed and funded by the City of London Corporations acting as the Conservators of Epping Forest under the Epping Forest Acts 1878 and 1880. Each year the City of London provides £4.2 million from its private investments, at no cost to local taxpayers, to support the management of 6,189 acres of Epping Forest and 1,820 acres

of Buffer Land which forms London's largest open space. The Epping Forest and Commons Committee is made up of twelve Members of the City of London Court of Common Council, and four Verderers, the latter elected locally by Epping Forest Commoners every seven years. Together they decide policy and strategy for the Forest, and act as the trustees for the charity.

Our history

Epping Forest was placed in jeopardy by the sale of Royal Forest Rights from 1820 onwards. Given the importance of the Forest to Londoners, the City Corporation supported and funded local opposition to the continuing loss of Epping Forest land to encroachment from residential and commercial development. In 1874, the City Corporation funded and won a landmark court case which prevented the further enclosure of the Forest, and then proceeded to purchase 5,350 acres of the privately-owned Forest for public benefit at a modern-day equivalent cost of £30.4 million.

The City Corporation sought legislation confirming them as the Conservators of Epping Forest in order to manage and regulate London's largest public open space for a range of public benefits including recreational access alongside nature, heritage and landscape conservation.

Epping Forest is now held in perpetuity by the Epping Forest charity to provide a wide range of public benefits from public recreation to nature conservation, with those benefiting from these services termed



Above: Taken from 'Gossiping Rambles in Surburban Essex, Epping Forest and Beyond' by C. W. B Burdett 1911

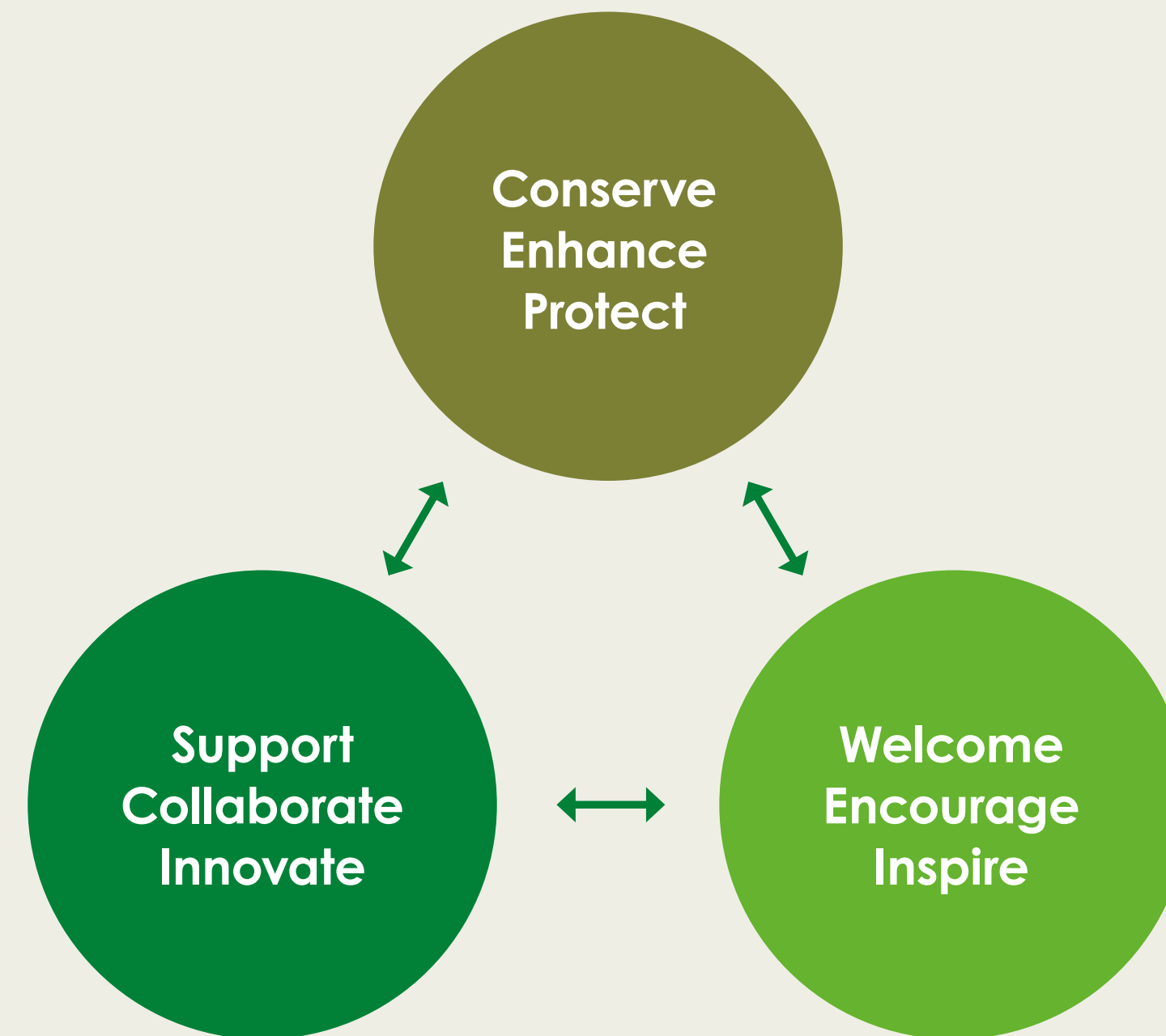
as the charity's beneficiaries. Many people have mistakenly interpreted Queen Victoria's public dedication celebrating the opening of the Forest as a Royal gift to the people, rather than the relinquishment of Royal Hunting Rights and Royal recognition of the City Corporation's purchase and commitment to the Forest. The Forest is therefore not publicly owned and administered but is held for public benefit reflecting both its founding and subsequent national legislation, while being jointly managed by City Corporation Aldermen, Common Councilmen and locally elected Verderers.

Our strategic aims

We aim to **conserve, enhance and protect** the Forest's special natural environment and its heritage.

We aim to **welcome, encourage and inspire** our visitors.

We aim to **support, collaborate and innovate**, sustainably managing the Forest for future generations.



Our key priorities



1. A welcoming destination for all
2. A beautiful forest, sustaining an internationally and nationally important mosaic of wildlife habitats
3. An inspiring space benefiting peoples' health and providing opportunities for recreation and enjoyment
4. A range of special heritage landscapes which are protected and celebrated
5. A resilient environment, where challenges are embraced and opportunities explored



Xxxxxx

Performance review of 2021–2022

Summary

The past year, April 2021 to March 2022, started with the country still operating under significant restrictions due to the ongoing pandemic. After restrictions were finally eased, we were able to welcome back larger participation events such as ParkRun, but visitors remained reticent about using indoor venues such as the visitor centres. Nevertheless after the initial attraction of being able to return to normal activities that had been closed, the open spaces attracted back the usual high levels of visitors by high summer.

Much of the year has been taken up with getting back to normal and addressing the backlog of works that had accumulated during the previous year of restrictions. Most notably this affected the works of our Operations Team. Due to being tasked with crowd management duties in 2020, this team had a huge backlog of routine inspection and maintenance works to catch up with – all vital to ensure the safety of visitors.

Our long-term plan of introducing charging in our Forest car parks went live in May. This was a huge operation involving all teams, from designing signs and installing them, to keepers and volunteers staffing car parks for the first few weeks to assist visitors with the process and to explain why charging had become a necessity.

By the year end the financial summary shows that earned income and external grants now make up 48% of income compared to the previous year's proportion of around 28%.



The charges were rolled out in three phases across all the car parks in the Forest and by the end of the year most car parks were charging or had other arrangements in place. This has created a step change in the way Epping Forest is funded and by the year end the financial summary shows that earned income and external grants now make up 48% of income compared to the previous year's proportion of around 28%. This was also due to other windfalls from wayleaves but the car park charges look set to continue to provide a sizeable contribution towards the management of the Forest and maintenance of the car parks.

One legacy of the pandemic appears to be the almost doubling of flytipping in the Forest. The cause of this is unknown but additional difficulties attending local waste sites, not least due to the length of queuing times, may have tempted homeowners to use disreputable companies and businesses to take short cuts. The cost of disposing of waste from the Forest including fly tips has increased to £66,326 (an additional £5,017).

On a happier note, it was a year of progress in Wanstead Park, where a series of small grants was obtained by working in partnership with other organisations to work towards some of the objectives in the Parkland Plan. The grotto landing stage had its stonework

preserved and during the works a stone torso was found. When the torso was added to the collection at The Temple it was found to match the head of Andromeda that had already been saved some years earlier.

Moving now into next year, we are looking forward to completion of some of the projects and workstreams that were quietly and steadily making progress in the background throughout 2021/22, some exciting 'firsts' for the Forest and the completion of the staffing restructure ensuring we continue to maintain our high standards.

Achievements towards strategic priorities

1. A welcoming destination for all
2. A beautiful forest, sustaining an internationally and nationally important mosaic of wildlife habitats
3. An inspiring space benefiting peoples' health and providing opportunities for recreation and enjoyment
4. A range of special heritage landscapes which are protected and celebrated
5. A resilient environment, where challenges are embraced and opportunities explored



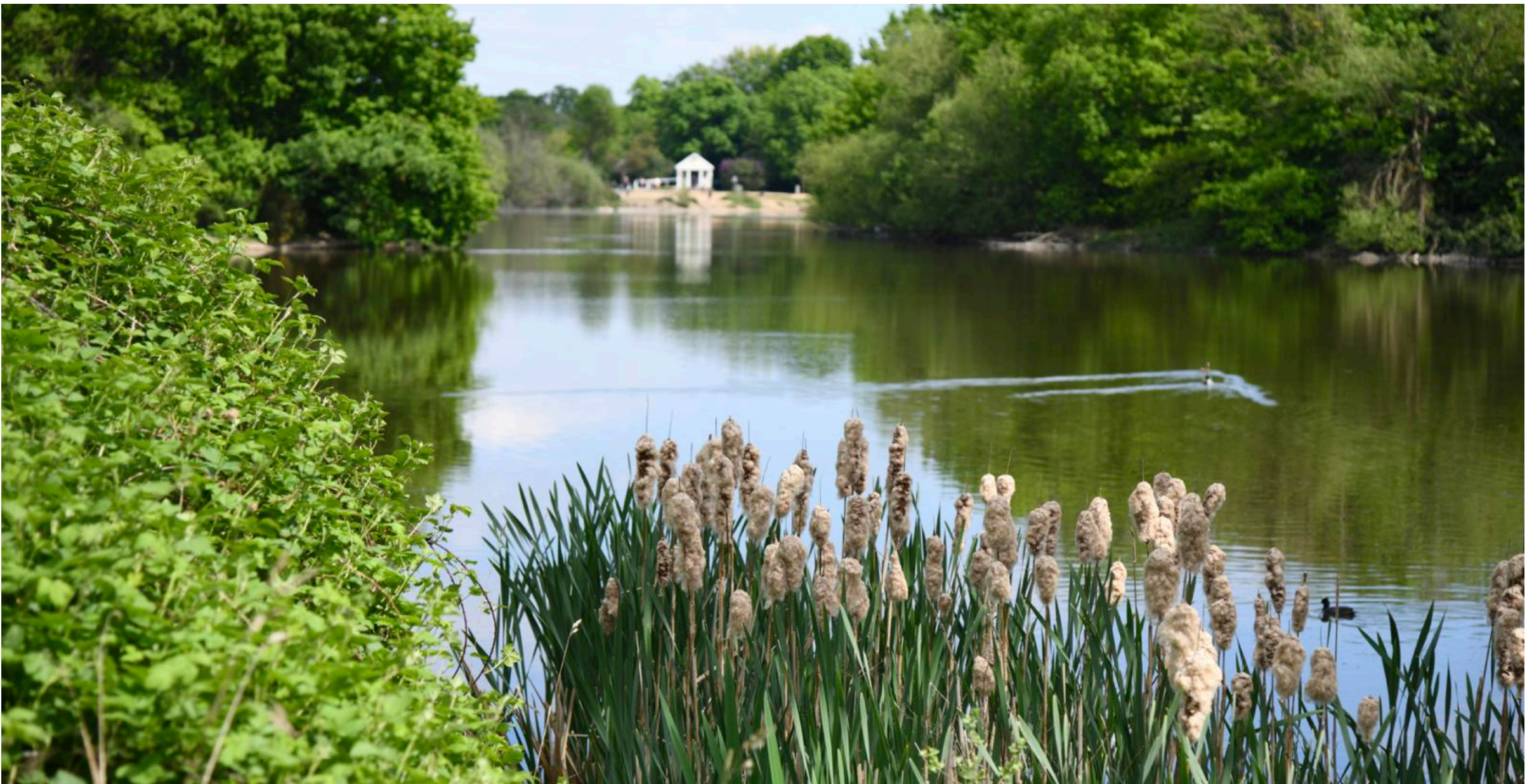
For further information about these priorities please refer to the **Epping Forest Management Strategy**

Strategic priorities	Achievements
1,5	A car park charging scheme was introduced in three phases across all car parks in the Forest.
1,3	Paths Strategy: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A review of the condition of the path network following exceptionally high use over the COVID 19 pandemic period was completed. • A detailed work programme to improve 59 paths with total length of 27,680 metres, or 14% of the total path network, has been prepared and funding is currently being confirmed to progress works.
1,3,4	Following consultation with key stakeholders and a review of past management, an Integrated Site Plan (ISP) was completed for the Chingford area. This identifies management issues impacting the different areas and outlines a ten-year management strategy.
1,2,5	£100,000 Suitable Alternative Natural Green Space agreement progressed with the London Borough of Redbridge for mitigation works at Wanstead Park.
2,4	Copped Hall Parkland Management Plan was completed and approved.

Strategic priorities	Achievements
1,3	Cycling in Wanstead Park consultation was completed and an extension to permissive cycling was approved.
2,4,5	City of London Corporation Carbon Action Strategy was supported by planting of former arable farmland at Netherhouse as a wildflower meadow.
4,5	Statement of common ground agreed with the London Borough of Waltham Forest for the Local Plan.
5	New staff welfare facilities built at Chingford Golf Course.
2	Grazing action plan agreed
1	Visitor management in Chalet Wood created for visits to bluebells, with log-lined paths and signs.
2	Grazing days on the Forest have doubled on the previous year back in line with pre-Covid-19 levels. Area grazed has increased by 177 hectares thanks to GPS collars which have now completely replaced the previous buried wire system. The collars allowed us to graze a number of previously un-grazed areas and expand on existing sites. This was also the first year of winter grazing with GPS collars with eight cows over a 200 hectare area from Chingford Plain to Almshouse Plain.
1,4	Epping Forest named as one of 70 ancient woodlands dedicated to the Queen's Green Canopy.
2	Arborists worked in partnership with Thames 21 to fell around 10 trees to create water flow diversity in the River Roding at Wanstead Park to improve habitats.
2,5	A grant of £40,000 was awarded from the Mayor of London Green Resilient Spaces Fund for a sustainable urban drainage wetlands study for Wanstead Park.
1,3,5	A grant of £9,000 from Transport for London paid for the installation of 73 cycle stands.
1,5	The City Bridge Trust awarded a grant of £4,100 for finger posts at Wanstead Park.
1,3	Three new entrance signs were installed at Wanstead Park and one new orientation sign was installed at Hollow Pond.

Projects

Strategic priorities	Achievements
1,3,4,5	<p>Wanstead Park, the Grotto</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New storage facilities were constructed to better protect stonework retrieved from the Grotto and to allow for enhanced curation. A secure store was also established for higher value stonework identified. • Additional fallen stonework from the Grotto was retrieved from the Ornamental Water, including the upper torso of an Andromeda statue that is now exhibited at The Temple. • Stonemasons from London Stone Conservation commenced works on phase one of the landing stage restoration on the lake side of The Grotto at Wanstead Park. These works were funded by a grant of £10,000 from the Heritage of London Trust.
4,5	<p>Ponds Projects:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wanstead Park - Ornamental Water and River Roding interaction study completed. • Birch Hall Pond - third tender exercise carried out.



Carbon removals project

A 42 acre wildflower meadow was sown on Epping Forest's Buffer Land at Netherhouse Farm in High Beach as part of a new City of London scheme to fight climate change.

This initiative is part of a new Carbon Removals Project which aims to remove carbon by creating new wildlife habitats across the City of London's open spaces.

Plants remove carbon dioxide (CO₂)

from the air through photosynthesis. In converting the CO₂ into plant matter they release oxygen into the air and lock CO₂ into the soil through their roots.

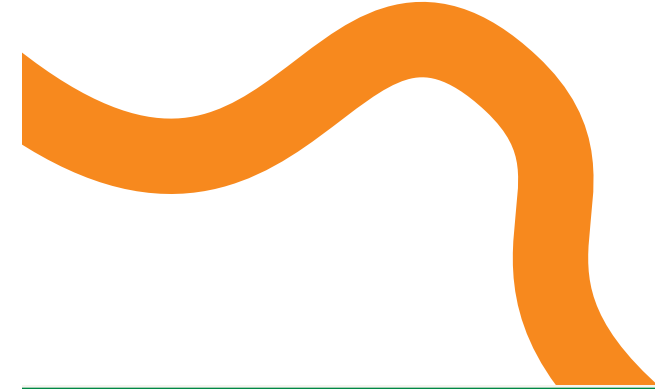
The Carbon Removals Project is part of the City of London Corporation's wider Climate Action Strategy which commits to achieve net zero carbon emissions for its own operations by 2027 and to support the achievement of net zero for the whole Square Mile by 2040.

The meadow has been planted on land which was previously arable. The carbon will become locked into the soil beneath this new, permanent green space. The meadow will help to improve biodiversity in the area, with new habitats created and the proximity of this meadow to other flower-rich grasslands in Epping Forest will provide 'corridors' for pollinators to use.

A year in numbers

30.5

kilometres of of path verges were cut across the Forest in high access areas



73

cycle racks installed

11

honeypot sites surveyed in the Forest for Oak Processionary Moth (OPM) and 130 trees identified and treated as required to control OPM



18

new finger posts were installed at Wanstead Park in partnership with The Friends of Wanstead Parklands



368

tree safety operations completed

215

hectares of. of amenity and conservation grassland cut



88

kilometres of of road verge cut as part of annual highway verge management



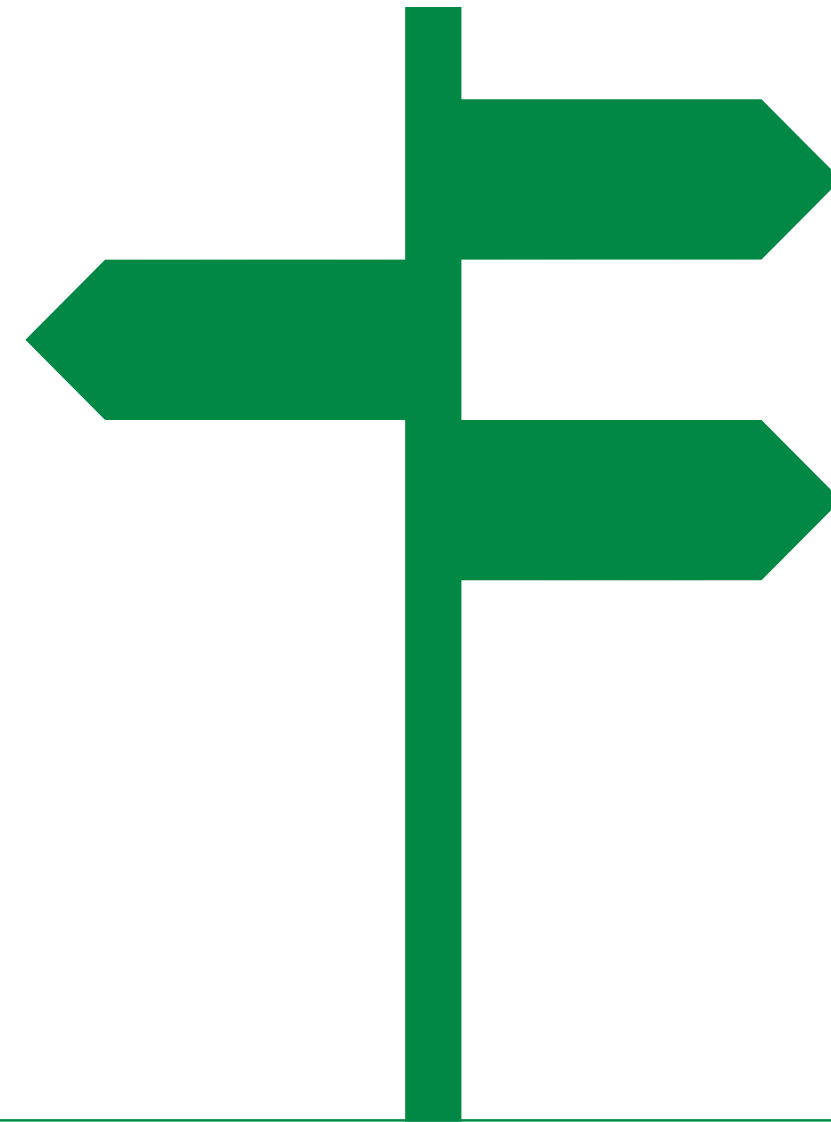
A year in numbers

6

new species of fungi discovered



1,411



new signs produced

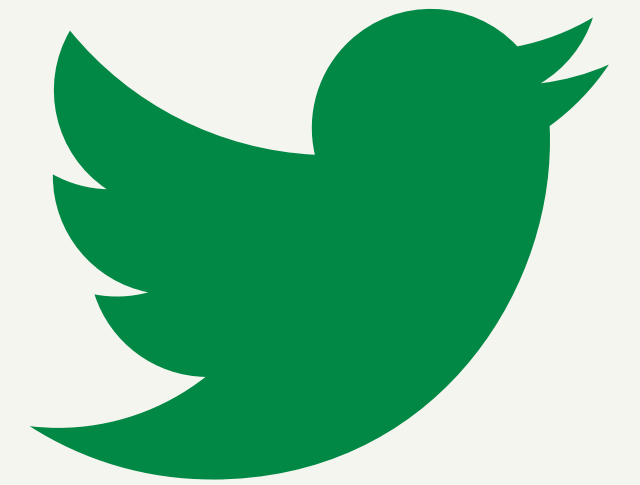
£73,000

of grants awarded for Wanstead Park



4,462

Facebook followers



232

hornbeam pollards re-pollarded



12

newsletters published



9,401

Twitter followers

Key Performance Indicators

For further information about these priorities please refer to the **Epping Forest Management Strategy**

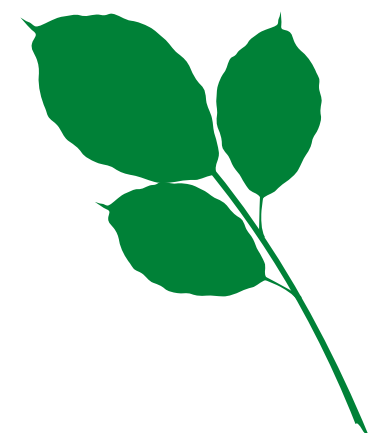
Business area	Measure	Strategic priorities and outcomes	Performance
Financial performance	External income generation as a percentage of total income	5a) A sustainable and responsive business model. 5b) Increased and diversified annual income sources and an increase in sponsorship opportunities and partnerships.	In 2021–22 external income was 49.2% compared with 28.5% in the previous year. This is due to a number of factors but the most significant is introduction of car parking charges.
Customer service	Calls to 24/7 phonenumber and external e-mail responses	5a) A sustainable and responsive business model.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Figure estimated at 1,000 external telephone calls per month. Introduction of CRM (Customer Relationship Management) system in 2022 will improve this data collection
Quality assurance	Quality of visitor experience – achievement of VAQAS (Visitor Attraction Quality Assurance Scheme) and Green Flag	1a) A high-quality visitor destination that is safe, clean and accessible. 3d) Epping Forest recognised as a consistently high-quality tourist and visitor attraction.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> VAQAS retained Green Flag Award and Green Heritage Site Award achieved



Queen's Green Canopy

During Commonwealth Week in March 2022 we were delighted to plant the first Queen's Green Canopy tree, a field maple, in Gifford Wood, to celebrate Her Majesty's Platinum Jubilee. There are exciting plans for further plantings in the ancient woodland to mark this special year, which we will be able to update on in the next Annual Review.

Epping Forest has a strong association with the Commonwealth. It was dedicated as a Queen's Commonwealth Canopy, a Commonwealth-wide association of protected woodlands. This was marked by a visit from Prince Harry in 2017 during which Prince Harry planted an oak tree close to one planted by Queen Victoria at Queens Green, High Beach.



Key Performance Indicators continued

Business area	Measure	Strategic priorities and outcomes	Performance								
Customer engagement	Web traffic and social media followers	<p>1a) An increased volunteer network with an actively and positively engaged wider community.</p> <p>3a) Visitors are well informed and directed to more sustainable locations in the Forest.</p>	<p>Facebook followers as at end of March 2022: 4,462</p> <p>Twitter followers as at end of March 2022: 9,401</p> <p>Instagram followers as at end of March 2022: 3,323</p> <p>Impressions for tweets April 2021 – March 2022: 970,800</p> <p>Increase in Twitter follows April 2021 – March 2022: 627</p> <p>Tweets sent April 2021 – March 2022: 560</p> <p>Likes on Instagram April 2021 – March 2022: 17,211</p> <p>Facebook reach April 2021 – March 2022: 94,701</p> <p>Website page views April 2021 – March 2022: 130,388</p>								
Conservation performance	Percentage SSSI/SAC in Favourable Condition and Unfavourable Condition recovering scores.	2a) Favourable conservation of SAC and favourable condition of SSSI secured.	<table border="0"> <tr> <td>Favourable Condition</td> <td>26%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Unfavourable recovering</td> <td>53%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Unfavourable no change</td> <td>18%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Unfavourable declining</td> <td>3%</td> </tr> </table> <p>No Favourable Condition surveys conducted by Natural England (NE) in 2020/21.</p>	Favourable Condition	26%	Unfavourable recovering	53%	Unfavourable no change	18%	Unfavourable declining	3%
	Favourable Condition	26%									
	Unfavourable recovering	53%									
Unfavourable no change	18%										
Unfavourable declining	3%										
Active management of our ancient trees as part of the Stewardship Schemes at Epping Forest		Work took place on 320 trees.									
Extent and distribution of rare species data	2e) Increased understanding and awareness of Forest's biodiversity importance.	No new surveys undertaken.									

Epping Forest is a special place...

The unique and special nature of Epping Forest means that much of it is protected as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) or a Special Area of Conservation (SAC). These designations are in place because of the many rare and important habitats and wildlife to be found in the ancient woodland.

There are 1,600 fungi species of fungi recorded in Epping Forest. The role fungi play in the health and ecology of the Forest is complex and is key to why Epping Forest is designated as a SSSI.

Fungi play an important role in creating the micro and deadwood habitats which support the rarest species to be found in the woodland, and it is these micro and deadwood habitats that form a large part of the SSSI designated areas within Epping Forest.

Epping Forest is home to all three species of tooth fungi which can be found in the UK, all of which are classed as rare or scarce. In addition, oak polypore fungi is a UK rarity and a legally protected species and this can be found on a small number of oak pollards throughout the woodland.

One of the tooth fungi, *Hericium coralloides* or coral tooth fungi, a saprotrophic fungus which grows on dead hardwood trees, was evident in Epping Forest in autumn of 2021. It is wonderful to find such an interesting fungi species thriving in Epping Forest.



Key Performance Indicators continued

Business area	Measure	Strategic priorities and outcomes	Performance
Grazing	Days per calendar year and hectare grazed	2b) Dynamic wood-pasture and scrub with greater structural diversity and edge habitats restored. d) Establish extensive grazing rotation across central and northern Forest and Buffer Lands.	Grazing days for 2021 calendar year: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Forest Land: 6,721 days across 488 hectares • Buffer Land: 26,996 days across 195 hectares
Forest protection	Number of planning applications screened and responded to	4a) Epping Forest recognised for its significant conservation and heritage landscape.	9,006 planning applications were received and screened 25 responses with objections were made. Two applications received permission Two applications are on hold pending review Significant: Next PLC Distribution Centre (EFDC) Wellington Hill (six houses) (EFDC) Epping Forest College Site (400+ homes) (EFDC) Fulbourne Road (565 units) (LBWF)
	Percentage of litter and waste recycled and number of fly tips	1e) Minimise environmental damage through effective litter and waste management.	Annual figure from financial records. 85% waste 15% recycle 745 fly tips
Health and Safety performance	Number and severity of reported accidents	1a) A high quality visitor destination that is safe, clean and accessible. 5a) A sustainable, responsive business model. Letters?	10 accidents and two RIDDOR reportable accidents.

Skylarks on Wanstead Flats

The nesting skylarks that can be found on Wanstead Flats and Wanstead Heath are surrounded by a very urban setting and are the nearest breeding population to central London. To help protect the skylarks temporary fencing was erected around two of the key grassland areas where the skylarks breed. This was to minimise human and canine disturbance to the nesting site.

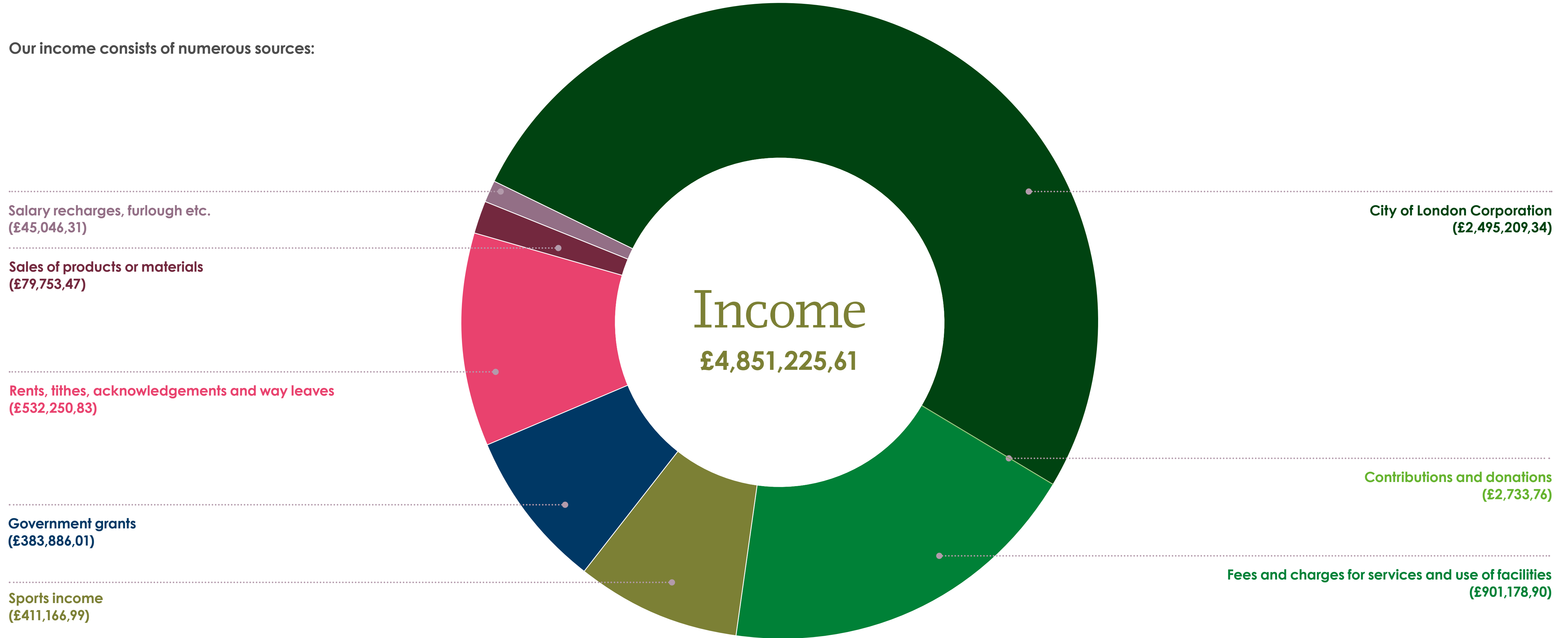
The hope was that the breeding productivity would increase and the population of these fascinating birds would build, preventing a further decline in the number of birds which had reduced from 11 singing males to just three or four in the space of a decade.

Reviewing the success of this project a year on, early indications are pleasing and the birds have been feeding happily, song-fighting and pair-bonding in the protected space. In addition, we have been delighted with the overwhelmingly positive response from visitors to this. It is too early to tell how successful the project is in terms of increasing the skylark population in this area of east London, but we are monitoring this closely.

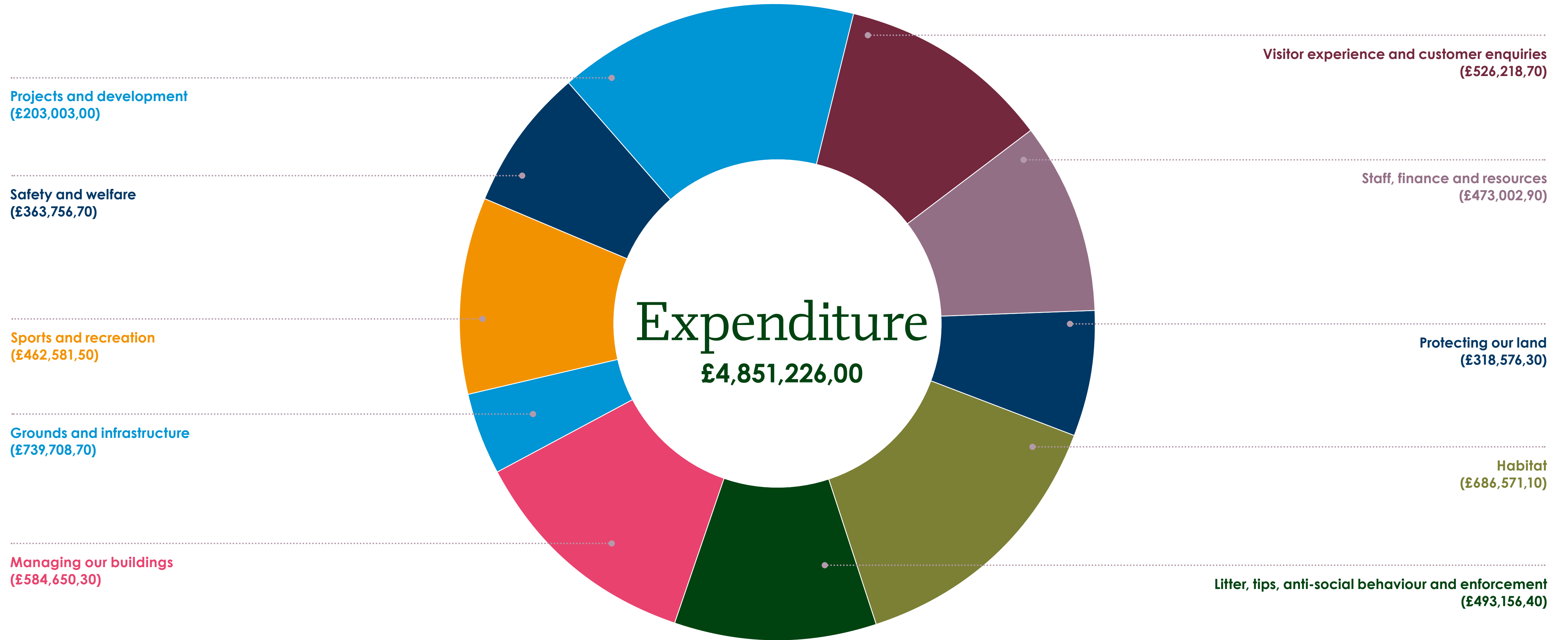


Financial statement

Our income consists of numerous sources:



Financial Statement continued





Key goals for 2022-2023

Key goals for 2021/2022

For further information about these priorities please refer to the **Epping Forest Management Strategy**



Strategic priorities	Strategic output	Completion date
1,2,4,5	Adopt the Sustainable Visitor Strategy, after consultation	March 2023
2,4,5	Adopt a Land Retention Policy and Acquisition Strategy	March 2023
1,2,4,5	All boroughs signed up to SAMM (Strategic Access Management and Mitigation) Strategy	October 2022
3,4	Village Greens Plans	March 2023
2,4,5	Countryside Stewardship application for remaining Forest Buffer Lands and Wanstead Park prepared	March 2023
1,2,3,4,5	Wanstead Park Heritage Lottery expression of interest submitted	December 2022
4	Baldwins Pond dam works commenced	March 2023
4	Birch Hall Pond dam works completed	March 2023
2,4	River Roding pumping works	December 2022
5	Rangers Road holiday let refurbishment completed	March 2023

Key goals for 2021/2022

Strategic priorities	Strategic output	Completion date
3,5	Wanstead Flats football facility improvement to Gateway 3	December 2022
3,5	Capel Road lease commenced	December 2022
1,3,5	Loughton Golf Course tender and lease completed	March 2023
1,4	Forest Transport Strategy draft for consultation	March 2023
5	Staffing review completion	March 2023
1,3,5	Goldings Hill Trail and entrance project	September 2022
1,3,5	Sustainable trails from Loughton and Epping stations completed	September 2022
1,3	Wanstead Park Play area completed and opened	October 2022
1,4,5	Jubilee Tree planting and events	December 2022
1, 3, 4, 5	Grotto landing stage repairs phase II completed	March 2023
4	Tudor square pond (Rookery Wood) submitted for scheduling by Historic England	March 2023
3,5	First major event	September 2022



Epping Forest Annual Review

Photographers: Clare Eastwood, Mark Powter,
Chris Shepherd and Yvette Woodhouse