

Committee(s)	Dated:
Epping Forest and Commons Committee	12/09/2022
Epping Forest Consultative Group	19/10/2022
Subject: Epping Forest – Assistant Director’s Update for June – July 2022 (SEF 26/22)	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 June and July 2022.

Of particular note was the cumulative lack of rainfall and very high summer temperatures which had activated the Epping Forest Wildfire Plan and impacted on Forest operations, increasing irrigation of the golf course; halting summer pollarding activity; reducing hay and silage productivity and changing the pattern of visiting reducing overall numbers and seeing more early morning and evening use of the Forest.

Also of note was the first flowering of the Patmores carbon sequestration scheme, a Rural Payments Agency grant of £120,000 towards capital works towards pollution management at the Great Gregories Overwintering site and the commencement of planning for Small Raised Reservoir works at Birch Hall Park.

Recommendation(s)

Members are asked to:

- Note the report

Main Report

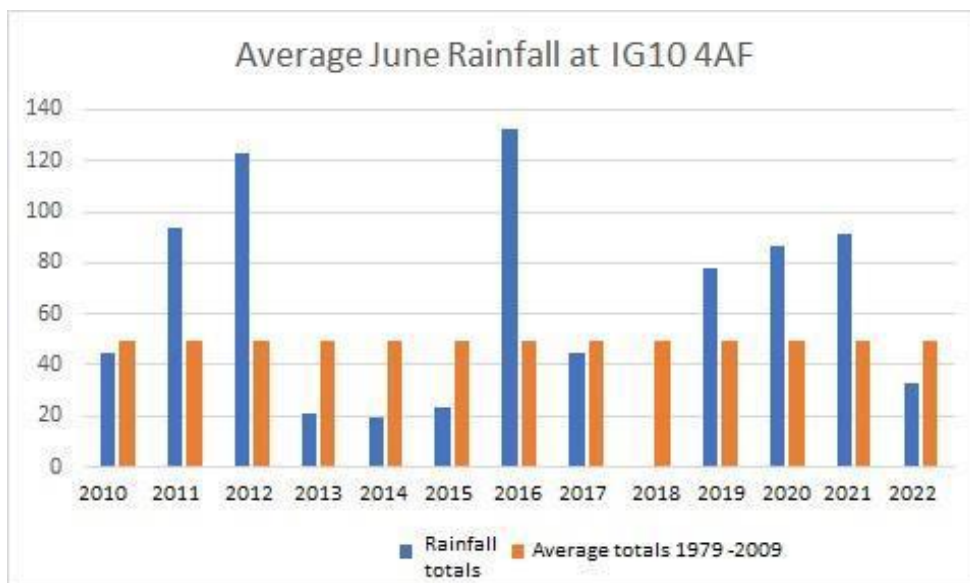
Staff & volunteers

1. Staff continue to cover a range of vacancies associated with the Target Operating Model (TOM) recruitment restrictions with 12 vacant posts and a further six posts fortunately covered by casual staff drawn from Epping Forest volunteers. A Senior Forest Keeper and the Head Forest Keeper have resigned, leaving end July and August respectively. A new Head Stockperson joined in July.

Budget

2. At the end of July, one third of the way through the financial year, overall budget is showing at 15%, (£358,870.16 against a net total annual budget of £2,416,000) in part due to income items due to be transferred to reserve, but also high vacancy levels. Income, particularly on car parking is doing well, with high confidence of achieving an on-budget outturn at year end.

Weather



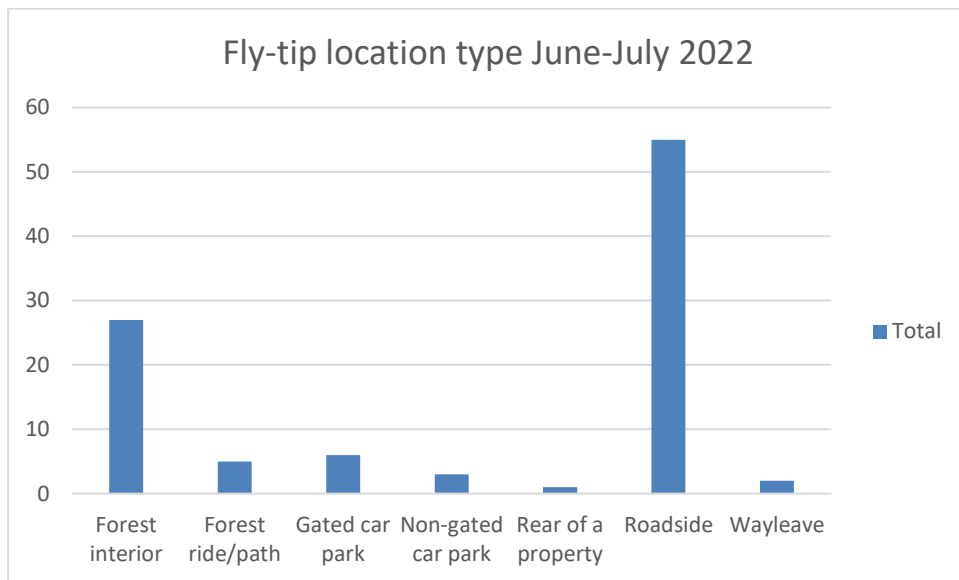
3. June 2022 saw a total of 32.6mm of rainfall with the most rain falling on the 5th of the month with 12.6mm. There was a total of 12 days throughout the month with precipitation.
4. Compared to the data from 1991-2020, this month only received 50% of normal rainfall and falls below the average rainfall totals from the period 1979 – 2009.
5. Data is not available for August from the Field Studies Council High Beach weather station. The Chelmsford weather station recorded 4.8mm of rainfall, just

9.6% of the average 49.9mm of rainfall. The Met Office records English July rainfall as the driest since 1935 and the driest ever in East Anglia.

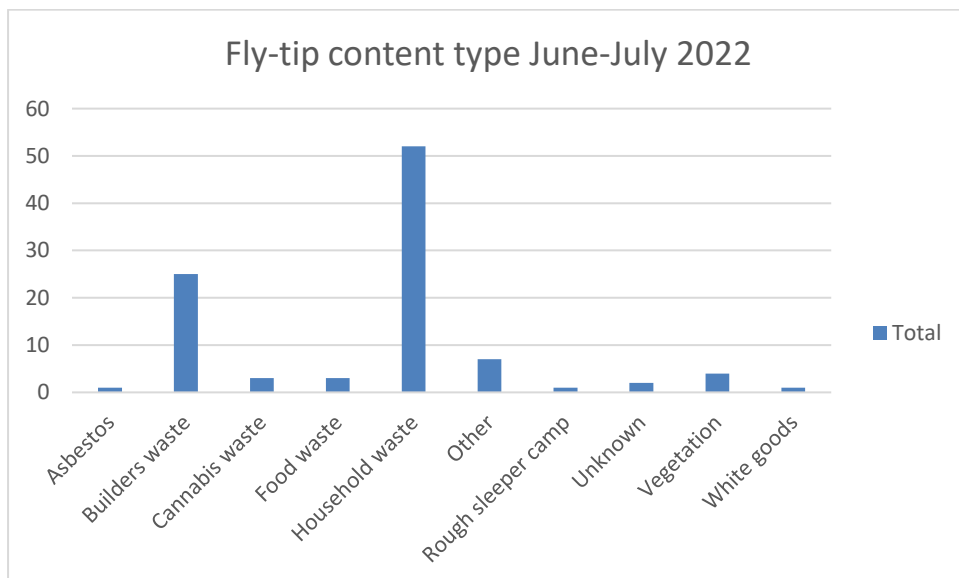
Forest Services

Fly-tipping

6. There was a total of 100 fly-tips recorded over the period of June – July 2022, this is a 49% decrease over the same period in 2021.

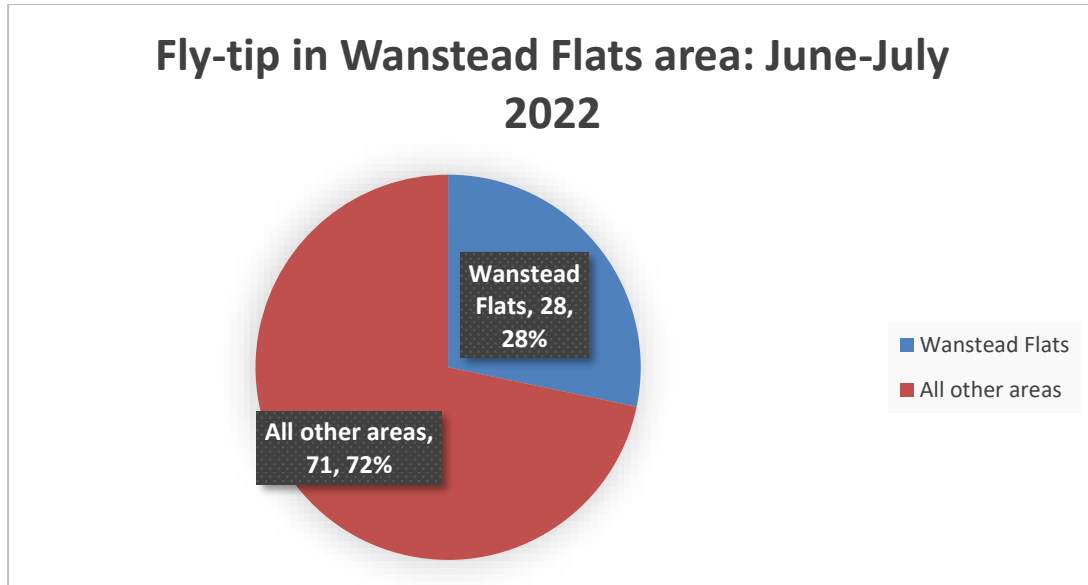


7. Roadside locations represented 56% of the tip locations over the period.



8. Household waste represented the largest category of items tipped over the period at 52 (53%), while 'Other waste' (concrete, polystyrene, wires etc.) represented 7 tips (8%).

Fly-tip in Wanstead Flats area: June-July 2022



9. There were 28 fly-tips in the Wanstead Flats area over the period which represents 28% of all tips. 14 of these tips were on Forest Land adjacent to Highway Land on Capel Road.

Magistrates Court Enforcement Activity

10. No prosecutions took place during the period under report. One conditional caution and one fixed penalty issued totalling £200.

Licences

11. A total of 48 licences for events were issued during the months being reported, which yielded an income of £46,370.90 plus VAT. 69 licences were issued during the same period in 2021 yielding an income of £55,275.80 plus VAT.

Unexplained Deaths

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

Rough Sleepers

13. There have been 7 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.

- 07/06/2022 Leyton Flats Vacated 09/07/2022
- 08/06/2022 Leyton Flats Vacated 15/07/2022
- 08/06/2022 Earls Path abandoned camp cleared by Keepers 06/07/2022
- 10/06/2022 Centre Rd Vacated 16/06/2022
- 30/06/2022 Wanstead Flats abandoned camp cleared by Keepers 06/07/2022
- 04/07/2022 Wanstead Flats still in situ
- 11/07/2022 Strawberry Pond abandoned camp cleared by Keepers 12/07/2022

14. In 2021, there were 45 reported cases of rough sleepers in comparison to 63 in 2020. Within this reporting period there have been 7 reports of rough sleepers in comparison to 2021 where there were 8 reported cases over the same period.

Unauthorised Occupations

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

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

Dog Incidents

17. There has been no recorded dog-related incident during this reporting period:

Deer Vehicle Collisions

18. There were no reported deer vehicle collisions (DVC) during this reporting period.

Car Park Charging Scheme

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

2022	Hourly P&D Income** £	Permit Income £	Penalty Notices £
June	£ 36,046.71	£ 4,234.97	£ 2,295.72
July	£ 35,349.47	£ 2,550.77	£ 2,016.72

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

Cumulative net income 2022, from the scheme currently stands at £183,523.87 as of 12 August 2022.

Wildfires

20. The Epping Forest Wildfire Plan agreed with Fire Brigades and Emergency Planning Officers was implemented from June following consistent High Fire Severity ratings. A total of 76 fires reported between 26 June and 16 August. and some significant burns have been quickly brought under control by the fire brigades. Additional signage and fire patrols by Forest Services staff have engaged the public on the additional risks posed by the drought conditions.

Heritage; Landscape and Nature Conservation

Biodiversity

21. During heathland monitoring as part of the obligations under the Countryside Stewardship agreement, the lichen species *Cladonia portentosa* was recorded on the area that was scraped in 2003 to restore heathland flora. This lichen species is rare on the Forest and this colony is the biggest one known on the Forest.

Climate Action Strategy

22. The first wildflowers have bloomed on Patmore's Field, the first site of the Carbon Removals project. Skylarks, goldfishes, dragonflies, bees, grasshoppers have all been recorded along with a variety of butterflies including Marble White which is scarce on the Forest and Buffer Lands.
23. There have been delays of the completion of a consultancy report on the feasibility of other opportunities across the Natural Environment sites, this will be completed in August for consideration by the Carbon Removals Project Board. The report on the proposals for Copped Hall were warmly received by the Epping Forest & Commons Committee, and external funding sources are being explored to support project delivery.

Agri-environment Schemes

24. Proposals for funding through the Countryside Stewardship Scheme were well received Epping Forest & Commons Committee and cover habitat works, new access infrastructure and historic feature conservation. Following Committee approval preparation by Epping Forest officers of information for the application has begun.
25. Part of the planned veteran tree surgery, funded through the existing Countryside Stewardship agreement has been delivered, but was halted early due to the ongoing drought which poses a threat to post-surgery survival of trees. The severity of the drought will require a reconsideration of planned veteran tree surgery from November to February, it may be considered that trees need time to recover.

Grazing

26. Great Gregories countryside stewardship grant agreement has been ratified by the Rural Payments Agency (RPA). This grant of £120,000 funds habitat works to the grasslands and hedges around the farm as well as capital items to improve water and air quality.
27. Contractors have been cutting silage and hay from various sites for winter feed. Yields are significantly down from previous years due to the absence of rainfall since March which has caused vegetation to set seed early before developing significant leaf biomass. With over two hundred bales carried over from last winter there will be enough winter feed to ensure the herd is fed through to spring next year.

Heritage

28. Historic England officers met Epping Forest officers to visit Rookery Wood at Copped Hall on site along with a land management contractor to examine practicalities of removing poplar trees off site. An outline plan was developed, and it was determined that extraction is possible. During the same visit a brief inspection of the ha-ha in relation to a possible bid to the Countryside Stewardship scheme towards repairs to this historic structure.

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

Epping Forest District Council (EFDC) Local Plan:

29. New EFDC inspector has made suggestion that each development should be responsible for creating SANGS, this fragmented approach is likely to cause issue, as without an overarching approach NE and Conservators will have to object as in-combination effects on SAC will be more difficult to assess.

London Borough of Waltham Forest (LBWF) Local Plan:

30. LBWF have been in direct discussions with the Executive Director regarding the Inspectors initial responses to the Local Plan and have employed Footprint Ecology to resurvey recreational use. LBWF have indicated a wish to complete a new 'Duty to Cooperate'.

London Borough of Enfield (LBE) Local Plan:

31. Enfield lawyers are seeking wording changes in the Governance Agreement, which is creating a challenge for Natural England as other authorities have already signed up to the earlier wording through Committee or delegated authority.

32. LBR have delayed SAMMS payments (originally due to start August), due to the delay in signing to the Governance Agreement by Enfield.

Town & Country Planning – Development Control

33. No planning objections were made during this reporting

Land Registration, Access Audit & Wayleaves

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

Visitor Services

35. The Temple offered weekend public opening on the second and fourth weekends of June and July. Visitor numbers across the four afternoons were around 30-50 people each session. Wanstead Park itself was very quiet on account of high temperatures. Visitors were grateful for the comparative cool of The Temple, its child-centred drop-in activities and gave feedback via social media that a lively retelling of the Wanstead story focussing on early 19th century satirical cartoons was appreciated.

36. Wanstead Park was the venue for ever popular open air theatre performances. Crowds were delighted by productions of *Pirates of Penzance*, *Twelfth Night*, *Peter Pan* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

37. The View hosted exhibitions by local artists as part of the summer show, with 30 local artists exhibiting works. A solo show by Robert Ingram, ran into early June which also proved popular with visitors.

38. The View also continued to host an exhibition on the history and ongoing work that Forest officers do to maintain and preserve the Forest through cattle grazing.

To compliment this, officers also ran a number of *Cattle Walks*, taking members of the public to meet the cattle grazing in the Forest and educate them on how vital they are to the Forest's ecosystems.

Learning and Education Field Studies Council

Month	Visitor Numbers - primary and secondary schools - community groups and activities - adult learning
June 2022	2463
July 2022	1980

39. The Field Studies Council Centre in High Beach delivers a wide programme of courses. June and July 2022 learner numbers are back to pre-pandemic levels. The summer months are a mix of A-level Biology students and GCSE Geography students at the end of their first year of study. It is also a popular time for primary school trips taking advantage of the good weather.

Learning Team

40. It has been a busy period for learning at Epping Forest. Despite some cancellations due to the heatwave in July, over 1,500 school students participated in the learning programme in June and July. 1,055 students participated at Barn Hoppitt and Connaught Water, enjoying a variety of activities which developed their understanding of local history, habitats and biodiversity. 480 students participated at Wanstead Flats, taking part in activities designed to boost wellbeing, with teachers keen to boost mental health after the Covid pandemic.

41. In the June half term, a group of ten children from 'Ambition, Aspire, Achieve' (AAA) in Newham visited The View to take part in orienteering and eco-art sessions. The learning team have been working with AAA to facilitate sessions at West Ham Park for Newham children who are growing up in poverty within an urban environment. The team have built on this relationship to begin organising Epping Forest visits for the AAA groups. The children were amazed by Barn Hoppitt and Chingford Plain, with all of them visiting for the first time. The activities enabled them to explore the area, develop team working skills and be creative. The learning team are working with AAA to organise more facilitated visits during school holidays.

Chingford Golf Course

42. Total income generated from green fees and shop related sales amounted to £85,042.37 for June & July compared to £51,767.35 in 2021, an increase of £33,275.02. 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. No discounts have been given this year so most

season tickets holders choose to split their bill into 3 payments made in April, June & September, meaning in these 3 months there will be spikes compared to last year.

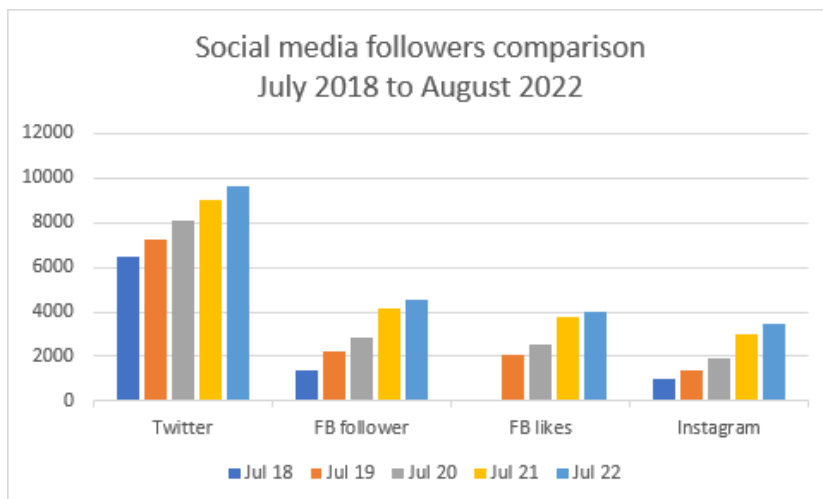
- 43. Online bookings for June & July amounted to £45,620.03 compared to £41,287.50 the previous year, an increase of £4,332.53. This increase has helped the golf course improve its position withing the county moving back into number one spot for online bookings on GolfNow within Essex - out of 53 courses.
- 44. Grounds staff have been carrying out regular cutting requirements to tees, fairways, rough, aprons and greens to keep the course set up for play. Greens were star slit and verti-cut 7 times over June and July to help improve speed of play and were sprayed with a wetting agent and feed 4 times.
- 45. Ground staff carried out fortnightly irrigation and soil moisture checks to ensure the irrigation system was being utilised in its best form. A total of 15 pop ups were upgraded to a new and improved design reducing leaks and ensuring a better delivery of water to greens and tees.
- 46. Tees were sprayed twice with fertiliser to help improve playing surfaces; this is the first time the course has introduced a fertiliser programme to these areas in the last 10 years. These areas were also spiked and dressed on a weekly basis to help repair damage from wear and tear usage.

Communications

47. As of 17 August 2022, Epping Forest social media following is:

- Twitter followers: 9,609 (an increase of 7% since July 2021)
- Facebook likes: 4,035 (an increase of 8% since July 2021)
- Facebook followers: 4,551 (an increase of 9% since July 2021)
- Instagram followers: 3,478 (an increase of 16% since July 2021)

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



49. Top posts on social media for July 2022:

- Twitter (5,985 impressions engagements) high risk of fire warning.
- Facebook: (3,225 reach) photographs of dog in daisies with message re. keeping dogs away from / drinking from ponds / rivers as not monitored.
- Instagram: (115 likes) an image of a hornbeams in the Forest at Chingford, with a message re. heatwave / fire risk and keeping dogs safe in the heat.

50. Fire risk messaging, as well as water safety and dog safety messaging was paramount throughout the month of July and into August due to the extreme drought / heatwave we experienced. Other general messaging was reduced to ensure this vital and key messaging around the fire risk was paramount from all channels of communication.

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

52. Signs now received for Higham's Park Lake, Goldings Hill, Staples Road and Giffords Wood.

53. We are grateful to the Communications Volunteer who has returned to the office to assist with event promotion by listing Epping Forest events on external websites.

Wanstead Flats

54. Staff were preparing pitches for the Inner-City World Cup which was held on Wanstead Flats in June for a second year running. The event went down well with over 1200 visitors attending over the 2-day event.

55. A total of 6 school sports day's events were held on the Flats with a total of over 1000 children attending.

56. Staff have been carrying out increased daily litter picking duties and pitch repairs from the increased social use of the flats over the warmer months. More cover up work to the building at Capel Road was carried out due to more graffiti damage. End of season deep cleaning was carried out to both pavilions.

57. Parkrun attracted 1654 runners in June and July with an average of 9 volunteers helping each week.

Horse Riding

58. Total income from horse riding licences for June and July amounted to £847 compared to £677 the previous year.

Visitor Numbers

59. 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 2022	High Beach 2021
June	732	0	2272	1331	271	0	776	156
July	711	0	2173	1456	156	0	957	182

*Temple figures do not include attendance at outdoor theatre events.

Projects

Wanstead Park Ponds

60. Pond water levels – Ornamental Water began drying out in areas towards the end of June. The borehole which filled the Heronry was diverted in early July into Perch with the hope that this would then fill parts of Ornamental Water, which it has but not fully. The canal is currently empty. There was some loss of wildlife including fish and European eels as we were unable to safely reach the eels due to the depth of silt levels in the lake. The borehole was switched back to fill the Heronry in early August.

61. Wanstead Park Ponds Project. Quotes were sought for a water balance assessment to model water needed to keep the lakes full avoiding anything longer than an 18-month dry spell. A longer dry spell could cause the Ornamental Water dams clay to dry and potentially crack.

62. Wanstead Park Sustainable Urban Drainage (SuDs) constructed wetlands feasibility commission was sent out to quote. This is funded by a £40,000 grant from the Mayor of London through the Green Resilient Spaces Funding programme. Three quotes were received. The commission has been awarded to McCloy Consulting. They are leaders in SuDs development and have carried out several schemes across London.

Birch Hall Park Pond

63. Engagement with the neighbouring residents that live on the private road (being used for access into the site) has taken place and any concerns raised addressed. Permission for safety works to the protected trees on the road to allow for construction vehicle access from Epping Forest DC was sought and granted. The works were carried out by Epping Forest arborists and completed at the end of July.

64. A FAQ page has been created about the project on Epping Forest website, and article produced in the August edition of Forest Focus.

65. Briefings and a site tour have been provided for the local parish councillors and some ward councillors to explain the project and the rationale for the works. Information posters have been put up in notice boards around Theydon Bois and on the deer sanctuary entrance.
66. Letter drops have been completed to neighbouring residents along Coppice Row and Loughton Lane giving information about the works and ditch clearance along the lane.
67. A road survey has been completed with the contractor and the project engineer to record the condition prior to any construction works starting.
68. This was all completed ready for the start of the works on 1 August 2022. The works are scheduled to be completed by end of September.

Major Incident

69. There were no major incidents during the period of reporting, though the High Fire Severity element of the Epping Forest Wildfire Plan was active across much of the reporting period

Paul Thomson

Superintendent of Epping Forest

T: 0208 532 1010

E: paul.thomson@cityoflondon.gov.uk