

<b>Committee(s):</b> <b>Epping Forest and Commons – For Information</b>	<b>Dated:</b> 15/06/2023
<b>Subject:</b> Natural Environment Learning Programme at Epping Forest	<b>Public</b>
<b>Which outcomes in the City Corporation’s Corporate Plan does this proposal aim to impact directly?</b>	2, 3, 8
<b>Does this proposal require extra revenue and/or capital spending?</b>	<b>N</b>
<b>If so, how much?</b>	<b>n/a</b>
<b>What is the source of Funding?</b>	<b>n/a</b>
<b>Has this Funding Source been agreed with the Chamberlain’s Department?</b>	<b>n/a</b>
<b>Report of:</b> Juliemma McLoughlin	<b>For Information</b>
<b>Report author:</b> Abigail Tinkler, Environment Department	

### Summary

#### Epping Forest Learning Programme 2022-23:

- 3,381 students participated in the 2022-23 learning programme at Epping Forest
- The programme has engaged schools in some of London’s most deprived boroughs, including Tower Hamlets, Newham, Hackney and Waltham Forest.
- The programme has included Epping Forest holiday sessions for Newham children and facilitated sessions for a local pupil referral unit.
- The programme has had a positive impact on participants’ sense of wellbeing, nature connection and confidence to explore.
- The learning team are leading a new alliance - ‘Climate Action Pathways in Education’ (CAPE) - bringing together teachers and researchers to develop best practice in climate education. The alliance will work together to change today's education for tomorrow's climate, equipping people with the knowledge and skills to take climate action and protect the environment.

### Main Report

#### Background

1. The learning programme was developed in response to:
  - a growing consensus that spending time in nature is beneficial to health and wellbeing, whilst contact with nature is becoming more infrequent.
  - an understanding that access to green space is not equal, with people in deprived areas of London facing more barriers than most to accessing nature, which can impact on physical activity levels and mental health.
  - a concern that visitors to our Open Spaces are not always representative of the local communities, with Black, Asian and minority ethnic groups (BAME) and deprived communities under-represented.

- a recognition that barriers to accessing green spaces exist for local communities, including fear of getting lost, a lack of confidence in the outdoors, a lack of understanding of the activities available, and a feeling that our spaces are 'not for them' (highlighted through consultation with communities adjacent to our Open Spaces)
  - a concern about the attainment gap between disadvantaged school students and their peers
  - a recognition of the value of play in young people's development, with natural play having a lasting impact on the development of children's connection, understanding and appreciation for the natural environment.
2. The programme provides a key method for the City of London to contribute to the health and wellbeing of residents of some of London's most deprived communities through connecting them more powerfully to their local green spaces.
  3. The current learning programme engages schools and communities in three sites: Hampstead Heath, Epping Forest (including Wanstead Flats) and West Ham Park. The programme consists of the following workstreams:
    - Schools service at Epping Forest, Hampstead Heath, West Ham Park
    - Youth programme working with 13 – 25 year olds struggling in education and/or furthest from the job market
    - Play activities at Hampstead Heath (two play centres) engaging children, parents and carers.
    - Volunteer development and community outreach work engaging families, children and adults.
    - Pilot programmes for children with autism and other special educational needs and disabilities
  4. This report covers the learning programmes at Epping Forest.

## **Current Position**

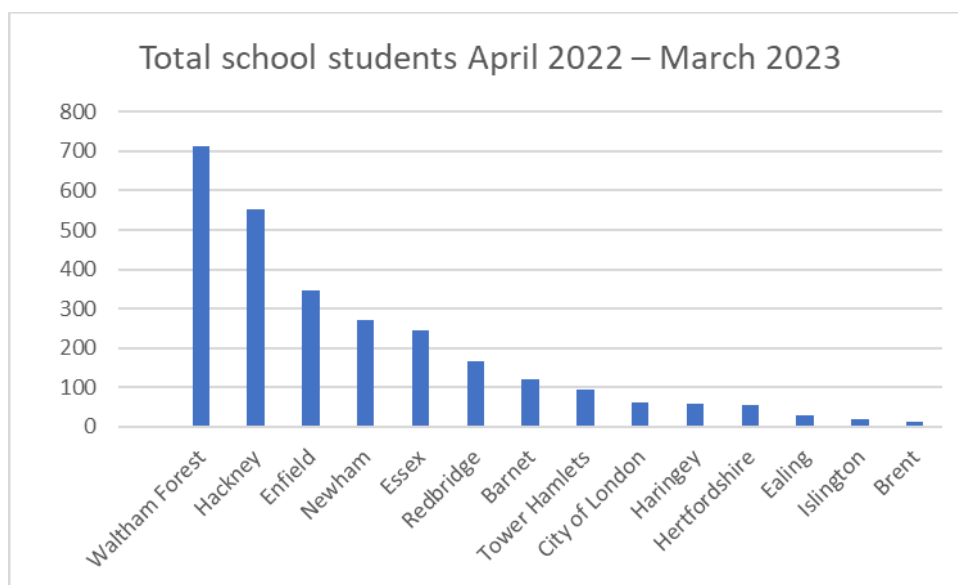
### **Epping Forest Learning Programme 2022-23**

5. 3,381 students participated in the 2022-23 Epping Forest Learning Programme. Children learned through active engagement with nature and heritage, with activities supporting the National Curriculum, skill development, wellbeing and nature connection.
6. Based on the unique features of the sites and the needs of schools, the programme provided rich opportunities to:
  - Learn through first hand observation e.g. exploring habitats, life cycles, seasons
  - Stimulate the imagination e.g. creating stories inspired by nature, creating art work using natural materials
  - Give children an active role e.g. pond dipping, orienteering, field work
  - Explore local history e.g. Tudor Hunting Lodge visits and activities

- Develop team working skills e.g. team den building and orienteering.
7. The Epping Forest programme is based at The View visitor centre near Chingford, with sessions delivered in the adjacent forest and Tudor hunting lodge.

### Reaching disadvantaged school students

8. There is a wide recognition and concern over the attainment gap between disadvantaged school students and their peers. The Epping Forest learning programme has engaged schools in some of London's most deprived boroughs, including four of the five boroughs with highest levels of child poverty: Tower Hamlets, Newham, Hackney and Waltham Forest (Trust for London). The chart below shows the Epping Forest school programme reach:



9. Children living in areas of deprivation suffered the greatest loss of learning during lockdown, and our programme is one of the ways in which opportunities for these young people can be increased, enriching their learning.
10. The learning team also provided Epping Forest holiday sessions for Newham children, working in partnership with 'Ambition, Aspire, Achieve', a Newham based charity who work with families-in-need, and facilitated sessions for a local pupil referral unit.
11. The Epping Forest Learning Programme has had a positive impact on participants' sense of wellbeing, nature connection and confidence to explore.

### Climate Education

12. The learning team are leading a new alliance - 'Climate Action Pathways in Education' (CAPE) - bringing together teachers and researchers to develop best practice in climate education. The alliance will work together to change today's education for tomorrow's climate, equipping people with the knowledge and skills to take climate action and protect the environment.

### Key Data

13. 3,381 people took part in learning sessions at Epping Forest (22/23)
14. The average pupil premium rate was 30%, compared to a national average of 25%. (Pupil premium is an indicator of disadvantage as it is allocated to children who have been in receipt of free school meals, looked after or adopted from care.)
15. The programme is building its audience: 2533 students are booked in for learning sessions from April 23 – July 23, compared to 812 in April – July 2022.

### **Corporate & Strategic Implications**

16. The learning team are leading a UK network of researchers and educators to develop best practice in climate education. They are collaborating with Col Climate Action and Education Strategy teams to develop a shared, strategic approach to climate education.
17. The Learning programme contributes to the delivery of all three of the 2018 – 2023 Corporate Plan's overarching aims and seven of the 12 outcomes:
  - ***Contribute to a flourishing society:***
    1. People are safe and feel safe.
    2. People enjoy good health and wellbeing.
    3. People have equal opportunities to enrich their lives and reach their full potential.
    4. Communities are cohesive and have the facilities they need.
  - ***Support a thriving economy:***
    8. We have access to the skills and talent we need.
  - ***Shape outstanding environments:***
    10. We inspire enterprise, excellence, creativity and collaboration.
    12. Our spaces are secure, resilient and well-maintained.

### **Conclusion**

18. The learning programme has reached people in London's most deprived boroughs, enabling participants to improve their wellbeing, confidence, skills and knowledge.
19. The learning team are leading a UK network of researchers and educators to develop best practice in climate education. They are collaborating with Col Climate Action and Education Strategy teams to develop a shared, strategic approach to climate education.

### **Appendices**

None

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