

Authors: Jo Hurst & Paul Thomson  
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Epping  
Forest

Registered Charity

# Epping Forest Consultative Group – Terms of Reference

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## **Purpose of Group**

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1. The Epping Forest Consultative Group (EFCG) considers and discusses areas of current concern or debate at Epping Forest. EFCG receives public reports following initial consideration by Epping Forest and Commons Committee (EF&CC) and provides advice or opinion on those matters.
2. Members of the EFCG will be in attendance to listen to views expressed by consultees, and to represent them back to the EF&CC where necessary and appropriate.
3. Action Logs from EFCG meetings and the outcomes of the EFCG's discussions will be considered by the subsequent EF&CC in a public report to inform decision making. Likewise, the most recent minutes and action logs of the EF&CC are to be reviewed by the EFCG.
4. The EF&CC acts as the Trustee representatives for the City of London Corporation and is mandated to make management policy and spending decisions in relation to deficit grant arrangements. The EFCG is not a formal decision-making body, however, EFCG's views will be noted and considered in formal reports to the EF&CC.
5. EFCG meetings are to be scheduled several weeks prior to alternate EF&CC meetings to consider papers and matters arising, with sufficient time scheduled for revisions to papers to be made for EF&CC, and action points to be included in documentation.
6. Information regarding the agenda and reports presented to the alternate EF&CC meetings, not preceded by the EFCG, will be shared with standing members of the EFCG.

## **Conduct, attendance and other principles**

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7. The City of London Member's Code of Conduct 2018, associated guidance, declarations appendices establish the principles of behaviour and conduct expected by Members of this Group.
8. Should an attendee fail to attend 2 or more out of four consecutive meetings, their place may be forfeited. The Epping Forest and Commons Committee may choose to reallocate this space to an alternative interested organisation.
9. Although not a decision-making Committee, deliberations should be sufficiently well attended for advice to the Epping Forest and Commons

Committee to be considered representative. For those reasons, minimum attendance of four representatives of locally interested organisations is required.

10. EFCG Members are representatives of their organisation, affiliates and theme of interest, but Code of Conduct and other legal and administrative requirements apply to individuals. Every effort will be made to accommodate attendance by nominated proxy in unavoidable circumstances, but such substitutions may not always be possible and must not be considered routine.

## **Scheduling, location and public access**

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11. EFCG Meetings will retain the hybrid format of virtual Microsoft Teams™ meetings and physical representation introduced in 2021 in the aftermath of COVID-19 public health restrictions. Meetings will be scheduled at The Warren Loughton (as far as is possible), as the geographic centre of Epping Forest. Alternative venues may be considered by agreement, including wholly or partially 'virtually hosted' meetings using suitable internet communications technology.
12. Meetings are on a weekday evening, avoiding school and public holidays.
13. There will be a minimum of three meetings a year, reducing to two meetings subject to an Epping Forest Charity Review recommendation to introduce an Annual Review meeting to bring the total number of EFCG meetings back to a total of three annual meetings.
14. Should a change of frequency or location, including peripatetic meetings be preferred by this forum, that request must be made to the Epping Forest and Commons Committee.
15. Meetings will be held in public (numbers subject to venue capacity) and will be shared for 12 months as recording held for public access on YouTube® online video sharing and social media platform. Public questions are at the discretion of the Chairman.

## **Allocation of positions**

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16. The EFCG has representation from Members of the EF&CC including Verderers. The Chairman and Deputy Chairman may attend according to availability and agenda.

17. Meetings are to be chaired by an Epping Forest Verderer nominated by the EF&CC Chairman on a trial basis, or another EF&CC Member or other nominated Officer in their absence.
18. Other City of London officers will attend as required.
19. The meetings are administered by the Environment Department's Stakeholder Engagement Officer or in their absence a nominated City of London Environment Officer.
20. Attendants are nominated members of groups that hold a specified interest in Epping Forest, and that have a comparably large membership, and/or a broad geographically spread membership from across the Forest and with knowledge or interest in the themes of heritage; recreation/sport; conservation; general/informal use or voluntary and friends' groups.
21. Tenants, business partners or other organisations with commercial interest in Epping Forest (or wider City of London Open Spaces) are not invited to attend as other routes exist for such input. Local authorities of all tiers also have access to direct liaison forums and are not invited to attend.
22. In the interests of impartiality and equality, political parties and religious groups are not invited to attend.
23. Organisations with or supportive of extremist policies or views including supporting, planning or carrying out criminal activity motivated by a political or ideological viewpoint are prohibited
24. Groups nominating a representative must be formal, constituted organisations. This may include rule books, articles of association, standing orders or other formal agreement to which members sign-up to and adhere. This must include their own definitions of formal membership and their subscription terms, meetings and voting rights.
25. Groups must also ensure that their constitution (or equivalent) includes or makes reference to that groups Equality Statement or policy, which must be provided to the City of London on request.
26. Invitations to express interest and to nominate representatives are advertised through press release, social media, email and direct correspondence by City of London.
27. Applications require details of how the nominating organisation meets the above criteria and must include:
  - The theme of interest the organisation wishes its application to be considered under.

- A brief (maximum 150 words) explanation of the purposes and aims of the organisation.
- Number of members at time of application (see definition at 30 below)
- Name and contact details of nominated representative.
- Copies of Constitution, Equality Statement and other relevant documentation.
- Any other relevant and necessary information requested by Officers at the time of application.

28. A balance of themes of interest is ideally met as follows:

Nature Conservation <i>Conservation groups in Forest, or with wider remit</i>	3
Friends/Voluntary <i>Formal working groups e.g., litter pickers groups, 'Friends of' etc.</i>	3
Heritage <i>Historical societies, rural preservation etc.</i>	2
Informal users <i>Schools, Youth groups, families' associations, local forums and interest bodies</i>	2
Recreation <i>Recreational user groups – e.g., walkers, riders, cyclists</i>	3
Sports <i>Formal organised sports on Forest e.g., Golf, Football, cricket running etc.</i>	3
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29. Should more expressions of interest be received than can logistically be accommodated, selection will be made by members of the Epping Forest and Commons Committee by the following (not in order of importance):

- Size of membership
- Geographical area of interest (i.e., area of Forest covered)
- Theme of interest
- Record of attendance (if existing attendee)

30. Where membership numbers are declared by an applying organisation or group, these must be active members – i.e. those who have actively subscribed or joined providing full name and contact details; agree to a constitution or similar as aforementioned, including invitation to attend and vote at annual general meetings; and requirement to renew periodically (typically annually), most usually with an associated fee. Members must be counted as individuals subject to such terms, and not households or groups. 'Membership', for the purposes of this definition

does not include customers paying for goods or services or 'passive' subscriptions or sign ups to mailing lists either electronic or hard copy, or followers or group members to social media broadcasts, chats and communications.

31. Work planning will be undertaken to report on improvements to the diversity and inclusion of the membership of the EFCG.
32. Epping Forest and Commons Committee may appoint further members or co-opt representatives (for example subject matter experts) to attend where it deems appropriate.
33. The Consultative Group serves as established for three years (starting in 2018), after which the invitation and nomination process outlined above is repeated.

## **Requirements and responsibilities**

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34. Nominated representatives must meet criteria similar to those set out by the Electoral Commission for eligibility for local government election:
  - At least 18 years old
  - Not employed by the City of London, or another organisation holding a commercial interest in Epping Forest or other CoL open spaces.
  - Have not been sentenced to a term of imprisonment of three months or more (including suspended sentences), without the option of a fine, during the five years before nominations close.
  - Not disqualified under the terms of the Representation of the People Act 1983 (which covers corrupt or illegal electoral practices and offences relating to donations).
35. Representatives must commit to representing the views of their organisation and members. Organisations that have applied but could not be accommodated will be advised to communicate with members representing their theme of interest either formally (e.g., affiliation) or informally and such communication is encouraged.
36. Representatives must share agenda and documentation internally within their organisation (subject to confidentiality) as well as minutes and outcomes of discussions.

37. Any representative or organisation found to contravene any of the terms herein may be excluded from the Consultative Group permanently and without notice by order of the Chairman of the Epping Forest and Commons Committee.
38. A regular skills audit of group members will be undertaken to allow the experience and skills of individual members and organisations to be fully leveraged by the Charity.