

Committee(s)	Dated:
Epping Forest and Commons Epping Forest Consultative Group	18/07/2024 16/10/2024
Subject: Epping Forest – Assistant Director’s Update (SEF 13/24)	Public
Which outcomes in the City Corporation’s Corporate Plan does this proposal aim to impact directly?	All 6 outcomes
Does this proposal require extra revenue and/or capital spending?	No
If so, how much?	N/A
What is the source of Funding?	N/A
Has this Funding Source been agreed with the Chamberlain’s Department?	N/A
Report of: Emily Brennan, Director Natural Environment Department	For Information
Report author: Jacqueline Eggleston – Superintendent/ Assistant Director of Epping Forest	

Summary

The purpose of this report is to summarise Epping Forest’s progress against business plan objectives since your last committee along with end of year performance indicator summaries for 2023/ 24 financial year.

Of particular note, a long-standing problem with a drug taking encampment at Wanstead Flats has been addressed through joint action. An annual summary of the work of partner organisation Field Studies Council is presented.

Recommendation(s)

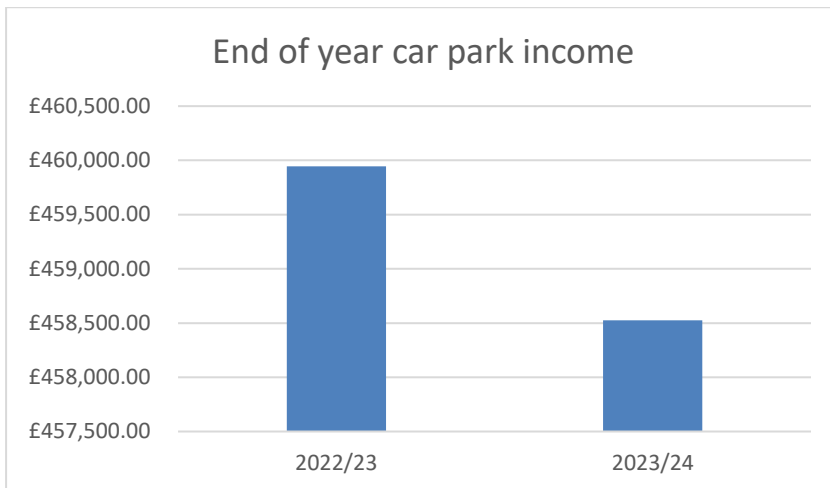
Members are asked to:

- Note the report.

Main Report

Key performance measures

1. This report reports on end of year performance figures in line with the financial reporting quarters.
2. Monthly income for car parking in Financial Year 2023/24 is approximately the same as that received in the previous financial year totalling £458,850 net surplus.



Licensing



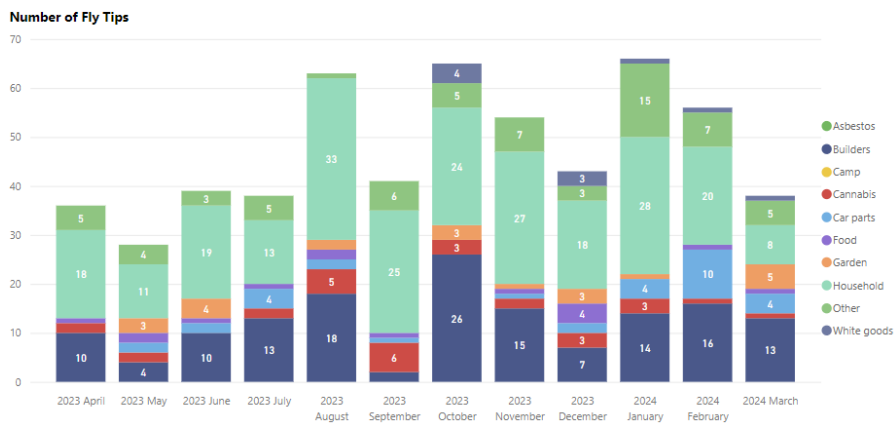
3. The largest proportion of income from licences continues to be from sport and wellbeing – this includes sponsored runs, major charity walks and the like. Filming continues to provide a healthy income, totalling £81,804 in the last financial year.

Golf



#

Fly tipping
 4. General household waste continues to dominate the fly tips experienced across Epping Forest followed by builder's waste.

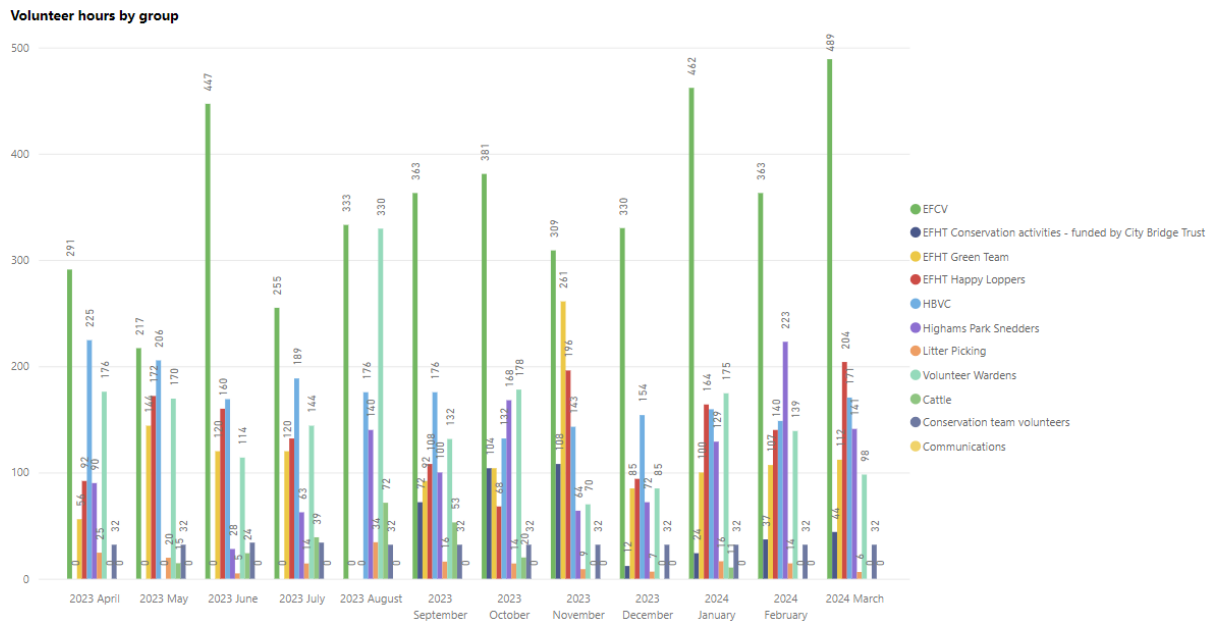


Waste Disposal costs

5. Costs of disposal of litter and fly tips. All waste is recycled.



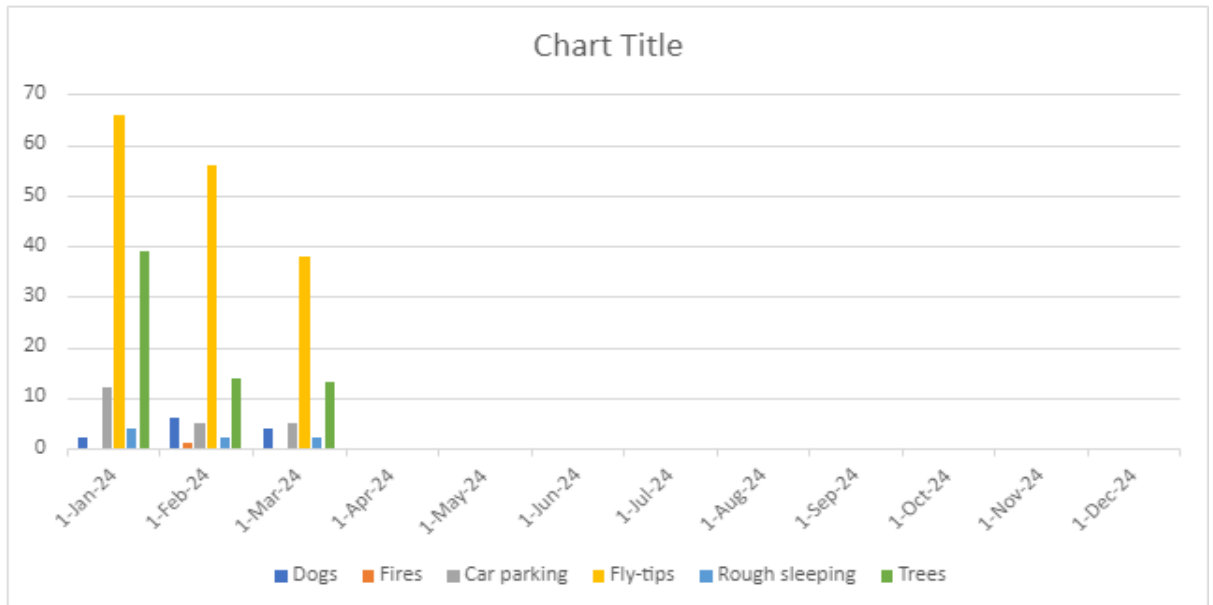
Volunteering



- Our new Engagement and Volunteering Officer, Joanna Stokes, joined the team on 1 May and has made excellent progress already reviewing volunteering and establishing great links with our volunteering partners.

Complaint and enquiries trends

- A new performance measure has started to be collected with the results below so far:



Annual Summary from the Field Studies Council based at High Beach.

FSC Education – annual summary

8. The City of London Corporation supported Field Studies Council (FSC) service, engaged with over 200 different schools and 16,700 students at the Epping Forest Field Centre, consisting of primary, secondary, and A-Level students studying curriculum science and geography in outdoor classrooms and learning locations throughout Epping Forest. Learner numbers are back in-line with pre pandemic levels; however, cost of living is impacting on customers.
9. They welcomed over 150 attendees to their Family Eco Adventures during the school holidays, where children could take part in nature-based games and activities and over 50 adults attended the Field Studies Council Biodiversity courses at Epping Forest.
10. Through the City of London Educational Trust grant funding, the FSC delivered Young-Naturalist courses to young people aged 11-16 in Wanstead Park, bringing those with an interest in ecology together. This grant also included Teacher Training delivered by an expert tutor, designed to introduce non-specialists to the ecology of Wanstead Park to increase teacher confidence in delivering curriculum ecology.
11. Through the Adventures Away from Home Fund, the FSC reached out to those who are under-represented in the outdoor sector and welcomed 30 SEND young people at Epping Forest where they took part in outdoor nature-based games and activities to promote good mental health and local community.

12. The FSC continue to promote and participate in the Signs of Spring campaign in partnership with The Royal Society of Biology (as featured on The One Show in January 2024).

13. Summary statistics for FSC EF delivery:

- Over 2180 primary school students in curriculum Science and Geography in our outdoor classrooms and learning locations throughout Epping Forest.
- Over 12,700 secondary school students predominantly carrying out Geography GSCE Rivers fieldwork at Loughton and Debden Brook.
- Over 1,700 A-level students studying Biology (Ecology and Ecosystems) at Rushey Plain and Paul's Nursery.

Updates and progress against business plan objectives (April, May, June)

Unauthorised Occupations

14. There was 1 traveller incursion on Monday 13 May when 12 vehicles and 12 caravans entered Forest Land at George Green. They were quickly moved on without Police assistance.

Enforcement

15. Epping Forest Enforcement Officers have investigated a total of 22 matters between 1 April and 31 May 2024, comprising the following types -

- Fly tips – 19
- Byelaw breaches – 1
- Anti-social behaviour (all matters relate to the use of Quad / motorcycle) – 1
- Dog related incidents – 1
- Poaching – 0

16. The team currently manage 24 on-going investigations. 3 matters resulted in an FPN for parking byelaw breaches. 1 Fly tip matter has been referred for prosecution / summons.

17. Quad / Motorcycle ASB in the Forest – Joint working with Essex police / EFDC continues under the operation title 'Spring action'. The one current EF investigation arises from a total of 23 separate reported incidents notified to Epping Forest between the relevant dates. This matter has been referred to CoL lawyers for advice on civil prosecution options after the police declined to take any further action. Police have increased patrols in the hotspot areas and the number of reports has seen a decrease during May compared to the previous month of April which in turn is lower than the high point in March (28 reports). Consideration to restrict access (to pedestrians) next to an identified gate within Copped Hall, being used by electric powered motorcycles to enter and return from the wider forest has been referred to Tris and then John Phillips.

18. Rough sleeper / drug use encampment at Wanstead Flats - On Wednesday 5 June 2024, a joint working initiative was undertaken with neighbourhood officers from the Met police. An area opposite the CoL cemetery beside Aldersbrook Road, was cleared of waste, with a longer-term aim of discouraging drinking and drug taking. Numerous complaints from Forest users and residents have been received due to the large amounts of rubbish, alcohol containers and drug paraphernalia littering as well as several makeshift shelters. Epping Forest officers along with the police and external waste clearance contractors undertook this hazardous task to clear the area. Daily keeper and police patrols are actively preventing a return to the previous poor condition.

Before and after



Skylark Fencing Wanstead Flats

19. The frequency and extent of vandalism to the skylark fencing at Wanstead Flats has continued to fall. No incidents reported since 8 May. Monitoring continues. Wren Group members observed seven adult skylarks including two breeding pairs and nesting activity."

Golf

20. Golf Course income rose for April & May 2024/25 compared to the previous year by £1,873.14 (1.15%) which considering the intermittent weather conditions is promising for the remainder of the season. Staff completed chainsaw & woodchipper training allowing more versatility across the grounds team when carrying out tree clearance work for better playability on the golf course. Outdoor machinery is better secured and protected under the newly constructed lean-too on the building which was ready for use at start of April.

Volunteer's Week



21. Every opportunity was taken to celebrate the outstanding contribution volunteers make towards taking care of the protected ancient woodland during national Volunteer's Week. The Epping Forest Guide to volunteering <https://bit.ly/EFvolunteers> was revised and promoted and all the various volunteers, from City of London official volunteers, volunteer partner organisations and volunteering individuals received thanks and promotion on Epping Forest's social media throughout the week. A new monthly 'Volunteering Information Session' was launched at the Epping Forest Visitor Centre, to recruit new volunteers for specific City of London volunteering roles. In addition a series of volunteer activities targeting youth volunteering was developed and will be promoted to take place throughout the summer holidays.

Grazing & Grasslands

22. The Grazing and Landscape Manager hosted a visit with The Essex Wildlife Trust and Bird Life Cyprus to look at the use of NoFence Technology for managing cattle and general conservation management.
23. The Grazing and Landscape Manager also hosted a visit with the RSPCA and Nofence to look at the history of collar-based animal containment in the UK and how we manage the technology to ensure high animal welfare and considerations for its use case on other sites.
24. Due to the wet spring and cold temperatures the cattle were delayed going out to pasture. This was to protect the soil and prevent vegetation getting grazed to low to quickly which would impact on the plant's growth for the rest of the year.
25. Lousewort has been discovered on Ludgate Plain by the Biodiversity officer. This is the first time it has been recorded there and shows how the transposition of plants can occur through cattle grazing.

26. A Longhorn herd TB test was completed, this 3rd clear test in 18 months takes us out of TB radial restrictions which had been imposed due to a TB breakdown in a local Goat herd.
27. Grassland cutting was delayed due to ground conditions remaining very wet. The grassland team is a 3-person team with 2 new members, this year they will be reviewing sites as they work and incorporating reactive works into longer term work programmes.
28. Earlier overseeding at Chingford has produced successful results in early summer including :_Red Clover, yellow rattle, buttercup, bird foot trefoil and knapweed



Conservation and Arboricultural

29. A new air pollution monitoring network has been installed across Epping Forest spanning sites from the Lower Forest to Leyton Flats. This is being funded through Natural England's Shared Nitrogen Action Plan programme which is targeted at issues of nitrogen pollution on Special Area of Conservation. Each site measures concentrations of nitrogen dioxide and ammonia in the air. This will continue until April 2025.
30. The Conservation and Arboricultural Team hosted 17 Institute of Chartered Foresters (ICF) members on the afternoon of 5 June 2024. They were given a tour to Bury Wood to see the re-pollarding work, use of NoFence and conservation cattle grazing, and Barn Hoppit to view ancient oak trees and their management. Followed by a tour of QEHL.
31. A re-prioritisation exercise of tree work identified through existing and most recent surveys is taking place to help to streamline and consolidate the 'jobs'. Three new arborists will be starting in July 2024 and a new team and task

structure is being implemented to tackle the backlog of works as rapidly and efficiently as possible.

32. Oak processionary moth (OPM) numbers are significantly down compared to 2023 (as of 10 June 2024, only one nest was recorded adjacent to Butlers Retreat), this is likely down to weather conditions. Epping Forest Arborist team supported the Forestry Commission with a OPM Awareness Day on 10 June 2024. This year the team will be undertaking the annual OPM survey and bringing this inhouse rather than contracting out as an internal member of staff will be available temporarily to perform light duties at work.

Recruitment

33. Since your last committee, the following appointments have been made with start dates due in the next couple of months:

Arborist – three appointments
Estate Manager
Countryside Manager (Forest Keeper Team Leader) – two appointments
Waste and Recycling Manager

34. The Conservation Manager post will be readvertised as interviews in May 2024 unfortunately resulted in no appointment.
35. Forest Keeper posts are currently advertised (4.5FTE). Posts shortly to be advertised include Estate Supervisor, Conservation Assistant and Assistant Forest Keepers.
36. Further recruitment is taking place once line managers have completed induction or when project timetables require. At the time of writing this report vacancies stand at 30%. Recruitment of the keepers will reduce this to 15%.

Education

NE Learning Team

37. The Natural Environment Learning Team has worked with 770 school students during April and May 2024. School students have enjoyed exploring the forest and taking part in activities including tree studies, eco art, orienteering and pond dipping.
38. The team also facilitated a session for unaccompanied asylum seekers, working in partnership with the City of London Virtual School.

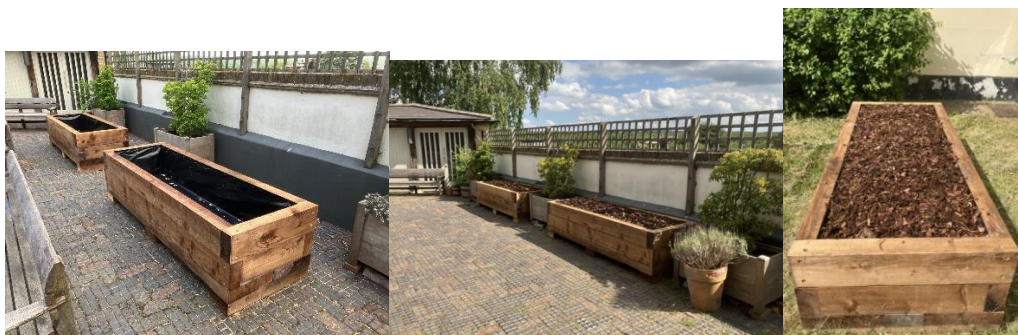
Field Studies Centre High Beach

39. In partnership with The City of London, Field Studies Council engaged with 50 different schools and approximately 2750 students at the Epping Forest Field Centre in April and May 2024.
40. School Programme summary statistics for curriculum geography and science:
- Over 280 primary school and early years students
 - Over 2180 secondary school students
 - Over 285 A-level students
41. Many families attended the Eco Adventures during school holidays to enjoy nature-based activities and a group of adults attended a Biodiversity workshop on Wildflowers using Epping Forest as their outdoor classroom.
42. The Field Centre also welcomed approximately 200 participants of the Muslim Hikers event, organised by the Epping Forest Heritage Trust. Walkers were able to use the facilities and learn about the Field Studies Council's environmental education programmes and its partnership with The City of London as part of their hike.
43. In April and May 2024, the Field Centre welcomed over 3,300 visitors equating to over 18,100 learner hours in total across all programmes.

Estates

Car Park Improvements

44. The Estates Team have made considerable progress with improvements to car parks including at Snaresbrook, Hill Wood and the Boating Lake



45. The Estates Team constructed new planters for the Visitor Centre in Chingford, these are now being planted up.

46. The popular deer sculptures at the Visitor Centre have been restored, giving them a new lease of life.



Projects

River Roding Pump house

47. City Surveyors have appointed a consultant Spaflo who are designing and specifying the new pumphouse and filtration system that will be required to reinstate the up-cascade pumping system from the River Roding whilst it is in spate in winter months. The aim of this project is to help to reduce or eliminate the need for abstraction that currently takes place from the aquifer to the Heronry Pond.

Countryside Stewardship Grant Scheme

48. A grant of £2.37m has been offered by DEFRA for the second Countryside Stewardship grant, the Environmental Stewardship Officer is working with the RPA to receive their final corrected versions and SSSI consent for these works will be submitted in early June 2024. Tender submissions for the first of the contracted works have been reviewed and a contractor will be selected wc 17th June 2024. Work to deliver the first Countryside Stewardship agreement will continue this year through a combination of in-house and contractor delivery. This will include large scale habitat restoration at the north of Leyton Flats, as well as notable works at Highams Park, Woodbury Hollow, the Lops next to Woodford Golf Course, and around the glades next to Oak Hill in Woodford Green.

Great Gregories Yard – Roofing improvement and Barn Project

49. The new attenuation pond, slurry store tank and new pad prep works are complete.

Climate Action Strategy – Carbon Removals Project

50. Interviews were held in May 2024 for a dedicated project manager and a project officer in June 2024. The new project manager has been selected and will start in July 2024 and an offer to a project officer will be made wc 17 June 2024.

Deer Sanctuary Fencing Repairs

51. Repairs will start to a section of deer fencing in the deer sanctuary this summer following appointment of a contractor in June 2024. This is being

coordinated by the Wildlife Management Officer and City Surveyors under City Bow-wave funding for Forest infrastructure.

Deer Enclosure Plots (SEF 18/23)

52. Thirty deer enclosure plots will be installed in Epping Forest and Buffer Lands this summer 2024. Monitored over a period of a few years, in combination with deer counts and regular vegetation damage assessments, the plots will provide an indication of the impact of deer grazing on the Forest understorey and tree regeneration. The Conservation team are undertaking a site visit in June 2024 to select the locations and signage to inform the public on the purpose of these plots has been prepared.

Highams Park Lake Bank Restoration Works

53. City Surveyors are planning restoration works to embankments of Highams Park Lake. Sections of the embankment have improvements and wharfing of timber, however, in places these have deteriorated, and restoration works are proposed. Proposals cover eight locations and include new post and planks with coir rolls (that will be planted) which will be reviewed by Epping Forest Officers. City Surveyors plan to have this work carried out in Autumn 2024.

Events

Worshipful Company of Information Technologists

54. On 11 May we welcomed the Worshipful Company of Information Technologists to the Epping Forest Visitor Centre at Chingford. The group enjoyed a tour of the Visitor Centre and Queen Elizabeth's Hunting Lodge as well as a talk on the grazing programme, focussing particularly on the pioneering use of the 'No Fence' technology. The visit was a great success and we hope it will lead to future collaboration.

Epping Forest Visitor Centre Exhibitions

55. Interpreting Epping Forest an exhibition by Judith Whitehouse, Jenny Blanchard and Linda Simmonds is at the Epping Forest Gallery from 14 May to 7 July.

56. Nick Bowman's exhibition The Longhorn Cattle of Epping Forest, which opened on 19 March, continues to run in the Lower Gallery at the Visitor Centre until 15 September and is receiving great feedback from visitors. Nick Bowman will be launching his book to accompany the exhibition at an event on Sunday 30 June, 1 – 5pm.

Staff Conference

57. The first of a new style staff conference took place in June as the first in a series of presentations and activities for the induction of new team members as well as a refresher for existing staff or those that have joined in the last few

years and not received the full induction.



58. The History of Epping Forest was presented as a quiz and there were three educational walks explaining the work of the arborists and tree protection; conservation, grazing and wood pasture management; and managing visitors



59. in the Forest. The day concluded with 8 teams challenged to complete their section of a jigsaw of Epping Forest. We then collated all the completed jigsaws together to create the entire map of Epping Forest, demonstrating how we are all individually pieces in the jigsaw taking care of Epping Forest and how much we can achieve when we work together collaboratively as one team, Team Epping Forest!



60. Further sessions like this are planned for new staff in the Autumn and video presentations for other areas of work have also been created and will be made more widely available.

Jacqueline Eggleston
T: 0208 532 1010
E: jacqueline.eggleston@cityoflondon.gov.uk