

**Progress against the Natural Environment Strategy Action Plans and Business Plan objectives
Quarter Two (July- Sept) 2024-25**

Epping Forest

Nature Conservation and Resilience			
	Action/Objective	Progress update (Quarter Two 2024-25)	Also contributes to:
	Theme 1	To protect and enhance the biodiversity of our open spaces	
1.2	SSSI condition improvement and Species Recovery plans are in place for all our sites	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Major habitat restoration under Countryside Stewardship was undertaken at Gilberts Slade & Canada Plain, Highams Park, Woodbury Hollow, The Lops (non-SSSI), Hatch Forest, Oak Hill (Woodford). These were wood pasture and grassland restoration sites. High rainfall in September made working conditions difficult at Oak Hill and Hatch Forest. July: EF Officers met with Natural England’s Enforcement Officer to prepare an Enforcement Undertaking (EU) letter to a neighbouring landowner who had encroached into Forest SSSI land. The EU included payment to EF for damage and to ensure remediation and monitoring. August: Online meeting with Natural England to discuss SAMMs mitigation for Chingford Plain. August: EF Conservation Team hosted Natural England’s SSSI Officer for Epping Forest and Lead Advisor for CSS (who was retiring) for a site visit and thanks. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Access and Recreation
1.3	Species records and other biological data are regularly gathered and professionally managed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Contracted an ecological consultant to undertake a habitat baseline survey using UKHab and MoRPH of land at Copped Hall to complete a Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment for the nature restoration proposals. Surveys completed in August, report to be submitted in early October. Additional baseline surveys for Copped Hall completed including soil sampling (in house via CAS team and sent off to a lab), earthworm surveys (in house via CAS team), invertebrate and bird surveys (volunteers). Month six completed for Natural England’s SNAPs air quality monitoring surveys. 	

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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deer enclosure zone plotting site visits undertaken in August to identify locations for installation. • Reptile surveys by local volunteers (adders) at Long Running to inform CSS capital works methodology 	
1.4	Community support and engagement in the conservation of our open spaces is increased	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • WREN group volunteer hours = 199 hours • EFCV volunteer hours = 1107 hours • EFHT volunteer hours= 416 (including 169 volunteer hours at HBVC and 128 volunteer hours with Happy Loppers) • Highams Park Snedders volunteer hours=439 • Friends of Wanstead Parklands – 107 hours • Grazing and Landscape officer gave a talk @ EFCV Wanstead AGM meeting. • Continued engagement with River Ching Action Plan Group. • Working with Thames21 around the Wanstead Park Lost Spur Project, where a new reedbed was proposed (through external funding and support from CAS). Following survey work and timeline it was agreed that a reedbed creation project would be unsuitable. The proposal is now to create floating islands through Thames21 external funding. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community Engagement
Theme 2: To increase the resilience of our open spaces within a wider, interconnected natural landscape			
2.1	Greater and more effective engagement with the planning system to influence the protection of our open spaces in the most relevant way	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Head of Conservation and Head of Business Development responded to EF South Masterplan. • Head of Conservation and Head of Business Development inputted into the consultation document for the proposed National Planning Policy Framework reform. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •
2.2	Landscape connectivity around our open spaces is	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attendance at River Roding Beam and Ingrebourne Catchment Partnership meeting • September: Collaboration with Nattergal. Green Hay spreading at Nattergal's Harold's Park Farm from Patmore's field. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community Engagement • Income Generation

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	enhanced through collaboration with other organisations and stakeholders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • August: EF Conservation Team met with Essex Forest Initiative team and The Conservation Volunteer representative to discuss free trees (which could be used at Copped Hall for hedgerow planting) and tree seed collection as part of their community tree nursery. • Head of Conservation met online with Rebalance Earth Head of Nature Partnerships to learn more about their nature investable asset programme. 	
2.3	Reduced visitor impact on priority habitats and other important sites through sustainable visitor and mitigation strategies being in place and implemented	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Skylark conservation project at Wanstead Flats continued throughout the summer months. To mark the removal of the temporary fencing on 1 September, a 'Skylark Send-off' event was held, in partnership with the Wren Conservation Group and the local RSPB team. The City of London Education Team helped to deliver some family activities. • EF team site visit to discuss cycling/footfall and negative impact on Ambresbury Banks and proposals for improved and new signage. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community Engagement
2.4	Damaging introduced species monitored and kept under control	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oak Processionary Moth surveys completed in June with 20 sites being inspected. This year has seen a particularly low population of OPM across Europe. A small number of nests were removed for research purposes, and nature-based solutions for controlling OPM in the future are being explored. 	
2.5	The City of London Corporation's Climate Action Strategy goals are met for the open spaces	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • August meeting led by CAS team and Resilience officer on natural flood management/leaky dams. Phase 3 and funding bid. • Arable reversion project began in September at Copped Hall. Eight fields re-seeded with a grass and wildflower mix. A Habitat Management and Monitoring Plan will be developed to oversee the establishment and long-term management and monitoring of the grassland/meadow. • Meeting with Wilder Carbon/Kent Wildlife Trust to discuss Wilder Carbon opportunities. • Carbon Removals Project Manager and Head of Conservation met online with Baker Consultants to discuss the Defra funded ecoacoustics research project on monitoring soil health and whether Copped Hall could be used as a pilot. Baker Consultants offered to complete a site visit and take samples/recordings, site visit TBC. 	

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	<p>EF Management Strategy Conservation objectives</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work at Great Gregories is nearly complete. Attenuation Pond created Gt Gregories • EF Conservation Team hosted colleagues from Burnham Beeches for a site visit in August to view areas of heathland and wood pasture. • EF Head of Conservation prepared tender scope for wider Natural Environment/Open Spaces BNG Assessment and Opportunity RFQ. Submitted to five consultants. <p>Arboriculture:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Re-prioritisation – Approximately 45% of all outstanding tree works were re-prioritised from July-September 2024 in order to streamline works and consolidate the number of ‘jobs’. • Outstanding works -The total number of outstanding (incomplete) ‘tree safety’ works completed from July-September was 380. All outstanding tree works are expected to be completed by August 2025. • Overdue works - Overdue tree safety works have reduced by 32% from July-September. All overdue works are expected to be completed by January 2025. • Ongoing survey - This year’s tree survey has been organised and is due to begin on the 1 November 2024 and expected to be completed in February 2025. 	
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Community Engagement			
	Action/Objective	Progress update (Quarter Two 2024-25)	Also contributes to:
	Theme 1	Partnership	
1.1	Build and sustain meaningful and lasting partnerships with the communities we serve	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 8 Voluntary Organisations engaged. • Volunteer database created. • Skylark conservation campaign in partnership with the Wren Wildlife and Conservation Group. • Partnership working with Love North Chingford / Chingford Ward re. funding for and scoping of Epping Forest signage from Chingford Station. Awaiting funding update from Chingford Ward. • Liaised with local community groups at the locations where Countryside Stewardship work was going to be undertaken in 2024, such as The 	

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Community Engagement			
	Action/Objective	Progress update (Quarter Two 2024-25)	Also contributes to:
		Snedders at Highams Park, the Highams Park Society, the Highams Park Residents Association, Owl Snaresbrook, the fabulous litter picking group, and Forest Residents Association at Leyton Flats.	
1.2	Implement a holistic approach to community engagement that encourages active participation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Volunteer programme for youth volunteering – created and promoted in this period, activities took place in July / August 2024, with two youth litter picks held on 29 July (Chingford) and 16 August (High Beach). A youth conservation task was held in partnership with the Highams Park Snedders in August. A repeat of these activities is planned for October. • Launch of 50 for 50 volunteering campaign to encourage active participation. 	
1.3	Cultivate and support successful partner organisations that support us in mission delivery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategy Plan review meeting held with EFHT. • Skylark campaign with WREN was a success this year, and culminated in the inaugural 'Skylark Send-off' event on 1 September, also including the local branch of RSPB and the CoL education team. • Heartwood Collection re. Royal Forest development. • Improved joint working has culminated with a joint EFDC, Police & Epping Forest bid into the Essex Safer Streets funding (Essex Police and Fire Commissioners) for improved mobile covert cameras and an installation of static CCTV and ANPR in the Pillow Mounds, High Beach. This will offer overt prevention features, improved investigative opportunities and a fast, flexible deployment to tackle emerging offending trends. 	
	Theme 2	Removing Barriers	
2.1	Ensure diverse and representative participation in our work and spaces)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Funding application in for Brambly Hedge trail with inclusivity for visually impaired. We consulted with the local EFDC access group to scope this. 	

Community Engagement			
	Action/Objective	Progress update (Quarter Two 2024-25)	Also contributes to:
2.2	Create physical spaces that are as accessible as possible to as many people as possible	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Through effective joint working with Local Authorities and Met police to tackle ASB issues of alcohol / drug abuse and widespread littering on Wanstead Flats, making the area safer, improving community confidence and returning area to its natural state to encourage the return of Forest Users. • Consulted with EFDC access group to inform decision re. inclusivity features to be incorporated in the Brambly Hedge figures as part of the new Trail to be installed at the Epping Forest Visitor Centre at Chingford and Connaught Water. 	
Theme 3		Ownership	
3.1	Facilitate a deep sense of pride in and attachment to our open spaces among user groups and communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A new programme of youth litter pick events for families created, the first of which were held in July and August. • Celebrate successes via social media. 	
3.2	Create opportunities for user groups and communities to provide additional resource to the Corporation to support mission delivery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Youth volunteer initiatives (litter picks and conservation task in partnership with HP Snedders) introduced and very well received by the local community. • Loughton Camera Club – have two new Volunteer Photographers who have come forward from the Loughton Camera Club, who are helping with recording the Habitat Restoration Programme, among other things. Currently scoping potential to link these volunteers with a new Youth Volunteer Photographer scheme. 	
Theme 4		Thriving Spaces	
4.3	Provide a diverse mix of opportunities for enrichment at our open spaces	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Art exhibitions regularly curated at the Epping Forest Visitor Centre at Chingford. Across the summer months the Epping Forest Summer Show took place in the Upper Gallery and 'Four Seasons with the Longhorn Cattle of Epping Forest' by Nicholas Bowman was held in the Lower Gallery until September 2024. 	

Community Engagement			
	Action/Objective	Progress update (Quarter Two 2024-25)	Also contributes to:
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A heritage exhibition celebrating the Walk and photographs of Brimble was displayed in the Visitor Centre at Chingford, in partnership with the Chingford Historical Society. 	
	Theme 5	Knowledge Transfer	
5.1	Ensure easy access to information about the Corporation, its open spaces, and our management practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Website updated regularly. Forest Focus, free, digital newsletter, circulated monthly. Social media channels updated frequently (on average at least daily) to promote management messages of Epping Forest. 	
5.2	Catalyse improved behaviours in our spaces where needed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regular communication via website, Forest Focus and social media to encourage desired visitor behaviour (i.e. no fires and barbecues, no littering throughout the summer months). 	
5.3	Ensure greater understanding among members of the public of the Corporation's efforts to preserve and care for our spaces	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Extensive communications went out across the period ahead of the Countryside Stewardship works with signs on site, social media posts and the creation of a StoryMap site to provide greater depth of information on the habitat works being undertaken through this grant. Epping Forest Enforcement staff continue to support local Met police in community engagement ward panel meetings to improve joint working / problem sharing planning & action to tackle local issues of concern. 	
5.4	Improve service delivery by the Corporation at its open spaces	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Visitor Engagement meets regularly with colleagues within communications at other Natural Environments. 	

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Community Engagement		
Action/Objective	Progress update (Quarter Two 2024-25)	Also contributes to:
through information exchange		

Access and Recreation		
Action/Objective	Progress update (Quarter One 2024-25)	Also contributes to:
Theme 1	Balance	
1.3	<p>Reduced visitor impact on priority habitats and other important sites through sustainable visitor and mitigation strategies being in place and implemented</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • August: Online meeting with Natural England to discuss SAMMs mitigation for Chingford Plain. 	
Theme 2	Excellence	
2.2	<p>Provide easily accessible, clear and exemplary pre visit information through digital platforms</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social media posts informed of the closure of Oak Hill site at Woodford Green for safety whilst works were undertaken and trackway installed, these were backed up with on-site signage and barriers. • Social media /website / Forest Focus updates visitors of pre-visit information. All CSS Habitat Restoration Programme works were notified via these channels. 	
2.3	<p>Provide on site infrastructure and welcome facilities to create exemplary world class sites that are renowned for the</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Epping Forest Visitor Centre, Queen Elizabeth's Hunting Lodge and The Temple providing excellent visitor experience at Chingford and Wanstead. • Open Air Theatre Events organised across the summer were to engage local communities with Epping Forest at Wanstead Park. • Events held at Chingford and High Beach were a tool to engage young people and families with Epping Forest. 	

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Access and Recreation		
Action/Objective	Progress update (Quarter One 2024-25)	Also contributes to:
highest quality visitor experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Green Flag Award and Green Heritage Site Award were received once again for Epping Forest. Social media engagement continues to grow and output is of a high standard to encourage new sign-ups and engagement with posts. 	
2.4 Make improvements to both informal and formal recreational facilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improved events offer at the Epping Forest Visitor Centre and The Temple was well received throughout the summer months. 	
Theme 3	Equal Access	
3.2 Work with partners to develop outreach to ensure wider audiences or are aware of and able to access sites	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to work with education partners at The Hive, FSC and CoL learning team, as well as volunteering organisations, to promote Epping Forest engagement and advocacy. 	
Theme 4	Inform	
4.2 Respectful use of facilities and sites will be encouraged through engagement and instruction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communication channels continue to promote the need to visit Epping Forest responsibly and sensitively (i.e. through no litter, no fires and barbecues messages). 	
Learning and Heritage		
Action/Objective	Progress update (Quarter One 2024-25)	Also contributes to:
Theme 3	Opportunities in education and employment	

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3.3	Provide bespoke learning sessions for children and young people with additional needs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education at Field Studies Centre. • 12 young naturalist day courses in Wanstead Park for those aged 11 – 16, funded by CoL Educational Trust, were delivered. • Over 110 parents and children attended the FSC’s Eco Adventure family events and booked children’s birthday parties. Over 1790 visitors were welcomed equating to over 10500 learner hours in total across all summer holiday programmes. • In partnership with The City of London, Field Studies Council engaged with 79 different schools and over 5,250 school attendees. Geography and Science curriculum learning reached over 410 primary school and early years attendees, over 3,250 secondary school attendees and over 910 A-Level attendees. • In addition, Field Studies Council Biodiversity tutors delivered a Discovering Veteran Trees workshop to a group of adult learners. Local scout / beaver groups visited throughout the summer. 	
3.4	Provide opportunities for apprenticeships and traineeships leading to skills and career development.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Apprentice Arborist role advertised 	
	Theme 4	Engagement, confidence and enjoyment	
4.1	Engage participants in our learning, heritage and cultural activities which provide opportunities to explore, enjoy and feel safe in our spaces.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exhibitions at the Epping Forest Visitor Centre at Chingford: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Art exhibition – Summer Show, 18 July to 8 Sept 2024 ○ Open Air Theatre – 21 July, 3 August, 13 August and 24 August. 	
	Theme 5	Care, management and promotion	

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5.1	Conserve and enhance our heritage assets in accordance with statutory requirements, sector guidance and best practice.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Historic England started an analysis of the LiDAR data of the Forest and Buffer Lands to understand our existing historic features better and identify any new features. This will lead to on-site assessments of key features, and will involve the local community. 	
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Income Generation			
	Action/Objective	Progress update (Quarter One 2024-25)	Also contributes to:
1.1	Licences and Car Park		
1.2	Filming	Filming income for this reporting period was £10,287 due to summer holiday season.	
1.3	RPA	A second CS grant was secured from Defra. The £2.35m funding over 10 years grant builds on the first CS grant of £2.027m, thus providing £4.377m in total.	

People Management			
	Action/Objective	Progress update (Quarter One 2024-25)	Also contributes to:
1.1	Recruitment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conservation Manager appointed due to start November. Arborist role advertised. Forest Keeper posts interviewed with 4.5FTE appointments offered. 	