

# City of London Corporation Committee Report

<b>Committee(s):</b> Epping Forest and Commons Committee	<b>Dated:</b> 23.01.2025
<b>Subject:</b> Summary of media coverage for Epping Forest and The Commons (2024)	<b>Public report:</b> For Information
<b>This proposal:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>delivers Corporate Plan 2024-29 outcomes</li></ul>	Vibrant Thriving Destination Providing Excellent Services Flourishing Public Spaces
<b>Does this proposal require extra revenue and/or capital spending?</b>	No
<b>If so, how much?</b>	£
<b>What is the source of Funding?</b>	
<b>Has this Funding Source been agreed with the Chamberlain's Department?</b>	No
<b>Report of:</b>	Dionne Corradine, Chief Strategy Officer
<b>Report author:</b>	Joseph Smith Media Officer

## Summary

This report gives a summary of media coverage for Epping Forest and The Commons (EF&C), achieved by the corporate Media Team, for the period January to December 2024, as well as a forward look for 2025.

## Recommendation(s)

Members are asked to:

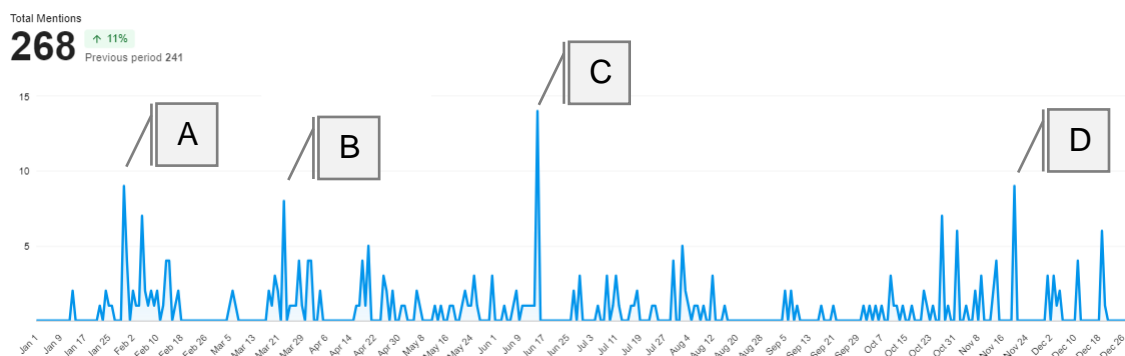
- Note the report.

## Main Report

### Background

1. The City Corporation's corporate Media Team sits within the Town Clerk and Chief Executive's department.
2. It is this team's role to secure positive media coverage of the City of London Corporation and its services; promote policy decisions agreed by elected Members at Committee; manage any reputational risks in the media; and handle media on-site at significant events and activities.
3. As part of this, the Media Team works to support the strategies and business plans of EF&C. A total of 16 EF&C-specific press releases (see Appendix 1) were issued between January and December 2024. Whilst these were focussed purely on policies and projects relating to EF&C only, the Media Team also issued several other releases mentioning these sites in relation to the City Corporation's Climate Action and Natural Environment divisions.
4. The Media Team generated 268 mentions of Epping Forest and/or The Commons – an increase in 11% from the previous period. This includes a combination of 253 print and online news items, and 15 television and radio items. Key outlets for coverage included *BBC News* (both TV and Radio for London and Essex), *TimeOut*, and *The Standard*.

#### Mentions Trend



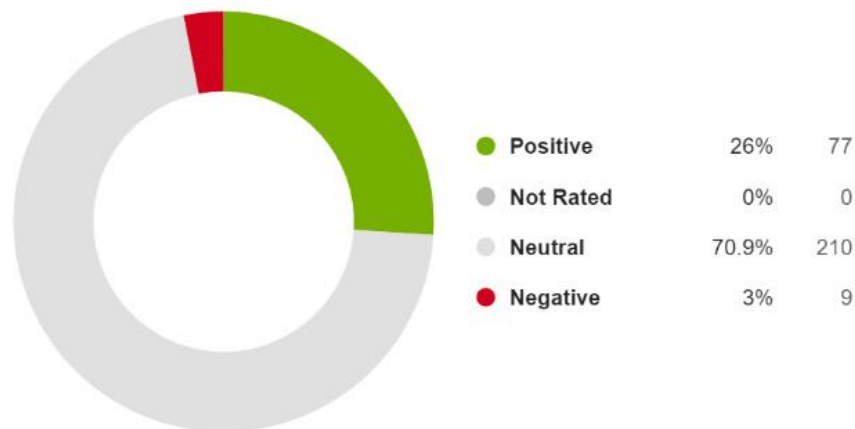
*An overview of overall mention activity across all news platforms.*

5. During the course of the year, there were three distinct spikes in coverage. These were the findings of the Natural Capital Baseline Report (A); the skylark protection measures on Wanstead Flats (B), and the reintroduction of Bell heather to part of Epping Forest (D). The spike in engagement, seen at point C marks a *Financial Times Weekend Magazine* long-read on the role and uniqueness of the City of London Corporation<sup>1</sup>. Several steps were taken to ensure a positive outcome from the piece, ensuring that the increasingly important role of the City Corporation's open spaces.

#### Sentiment analysis

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.ft.com/content/2b96763f-5cb2-475b-b20c-7c2d0205074a>

6. The below illustration shows that overall sentiment of coverage remains largely positive with a very small percentage of negative stories and a majority being classed as 'neutral'.



### Summary of media coverage – January to December 2024

7. In February 2024, the City Corporation's Natural Environment Division launched a new set of strategies along with the Natural Capital report, which calculated the value of the benefits that all City Corporation-owned open spaces deliver to the public.
8. Following the Media Team's proactive campaign which encompassed all open spaces, there was significant national, international<sup>2</sup>, and London and Essex-wide coverage for EF&C including: *BBC Radio London*, *BBC Essex*<sup>3</sup>, the *Evening Standard*<sup>4</sup>, *Evening Standard Podcast*<sup>5</sup> and *Time Out*<sup>6</sup>, as well as leading UK trade magazines *Horticulture Week* (£)<sup>7</sup> and *ProLandscape*<sup>8</sup>. Journalists were invited to the launch event at Guildhall taking up on interview opportunities and a video was produced for the City Corporations corporate YouTube channel.<sup>9</sup>
9. In March, the Media Team issued a press release urging visitors to stay out of cordoned off areas of Wanstead Park to protect its nesting skylark population. Following a pro-active pitch, the Chairman of the Committee was interviewed

<sup>2</sup> *Yahoo!* Titles across the USA, Singapore and Canada.

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-essex-68188536>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.standard.co.uk/news/london/epping-forest-hampstead-heath-london-value-green-spaces-b1135864.html>

<sup>5</sup> [from 11min] <https://player.fm/series/the-standard/train-strikes-tube-fare-cuts-londons-ps8-billion-lungs>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.timeout.com/london/news/londons-most-valuable-green-spaces-have-been-revealed-013124>

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.hortweek.com/epping-forest-valued-19-billion-society/arboriculture/article/1860152>

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.prolandscapemagazine.com/englands-iconic-southern-spaces-worth-billions-to-society-says-new-report/>

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LOxi25IRCMo>

on site by *BBC Radio London* with a supporting written piece online<sup>10</sup>.

10. March also saw coverage of the City Corporation's annual message to protect native bluebells across areas of Epping Forest. This story was picked up by several trade and local press outlets including *Horticulture Week* (£)<sup>11</sup>, *MyLondon*<sup>12</sup>, *London Reviews*<sup>13</sup>, *MyLondon*<sup>14</sup>, *Epping Forest Guardian*<sup>15</sup>, and *InYourArea*<sup>16</sup>.
11. In July, Epping Forest staff took part in a multi-agency training exercise on Wanstead Flats with Thames Water and the London Fire Brigade which simulated a wildfire. Working with these agencies, the Media Team took the opportunity to remind visitors take extra precautions in hot weather, following the warmest May and spring on record. The Chairman was interviewed by *BBC London* (TV) and *ITV News London* (TV), reaching an estimated 8.7m broadcast viewers.
12. In July, targeted news releases were issued to local media outlets on another successful year of Green Flag Award wins. This was most noticeable for The Commons, appearing in both Sutton and Croydon *Guardian*<sup>17</sup>, *London Reviews*<sup>18</sup>, *Epping Forest Guardian*<sup>19</sup>, *City Matters*<sup>20</sup>, *Epsom and Ewell Talking Newspaper*<sup>21</sup> and *This Is Local London*<sup>22</sup>.
13. Towards the end of the year, the Epping Forest team was involved in a project to reintroduce Bell heather back to some parts of the site . This attracted the attention of BBC news which carried a feature on the evening news (also available on *BBC Sounds*<sup>23</sup>) as well as an online article<sup>24</sup>. The release was issued by the Essex Wildlife Trust and the Chairman of the Committee was quoted.

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<sup>10</sup> <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-london-68626457>

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.hortweek.com/epping-forest-urges-visitors-avoid-trampling-bluebells/parks-and-gardens/article/1866638>

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.mylondon.news/whats-on/whats-on-news/spectacular-woodland-edge-london-thats-28888082>

<sup>13</sup> <https://londonreviews.co.uk/visitors-urged-to-help-protect-native-bluebells/>

<sup>14</sup> <https://www.mylondon.news/whats-on/whats-on-news/spectacular-woodland-edge-london-thats-28888082>

<sup>15</sup> <https://www.guardian-series.co.uk/news/24184434.ben-murphy-impact-climate-change-epping-forest/>

<sup>16</sup> <sup>16</sup> <https://www.inyourarea.co.uk/news/warning-woodland-walkers-photographers-visiting-epping-forest>

<sup>17</sup> <https://www.yourlocalguardian.co.uk/news/24490811.four-parks-croydon-win-prestigious-green-flag-award/>

<sup>18</sup> <https://londonreviews.co.uk/ashtead-common-celebrates-prestigious-green-flag-win/>

<sup>19</sup> <https://www.guardian-series.co.uk/news/24477231.ben-murphy-epping-forest-green-flag-award-fire-safety/>

<sup>20</sup> <https://www.citymatters.london/chris-hayward-on-green-spaces/>

<sup>21</sup> <https://eetn.org.uk/local-news-week-of-8th-august-2024/>

<sup>22</sup> <https://www.thisislocallondon.co.uk/news/24490811.four-parks-croydon-win-prestigious-green-flag-award/>

<sup>23</sup> <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p0k1r7tt>

<sup>24</sup> <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/cwy4pq63qpgo>

## Social media highlights

14. The Media Team is also responsible for the City Corporation’s corporate social media channels<sup>25</sup>. These are separate to the satellite social media channels for specific open spaces, including EF&C, which are run by local open spaces teams. The corporate social media profiles are used to amplify press releases, run high-level campaigns, and carry corporate key messages.
15. When evaluating EF&C content on the corporate social media channels, LinkedIn and Facebook are the most popular in terms of engagement. Engagement refers to the collective number of reactions, comments, shares, clicks and impressions.
16. In total, the number of EF&C social media posts in 2024 (posted by the Corporate Media Team) was 65 with 3.63k post engagements. This means the number of times a user engaged with the post by liking, sharing, commenting or clicking. The total number of impressions was 92.5k, meaning the total number of times a post appeared on someone’s screen.
17. The top posts on LinkedIn and Facebook were on the Green Flag Award results, the World Urban Parks Legacy Award and the collaborative post with LFB and TW on the training exercise on Wanstead Flats.
18. On Instagram, the top posts were on the new species of mushroom discovered at Burnham Beeches and the appointment of the first female superintendent to Epping Forest.
19. On X (formerly Twitter) the top posts in terms of engagement were the posts on pollarded trees for National Tree Week, and the Green Flag Awards.

## Regular columns

20. It is worth noting that the Chairman’s monthly column includes project updates and key information in the local *Epping Forest Guardian*, reaching an estimated 11k readers across print and online platforms. These columns are amplified on social media and on the City Corporation’s website. Content is also provided to hyperlocal outlets including the Wanstead Village Directory.

## Forward look

Date / 2025	Topic
TBC	Farthing Downs inclusion in Surrey Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty – consultation currently underway

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<sup>25</sup> <https://www.cityoflondon.gov.uk/footer/social-media>

TBC	Carbon Removals Project to install several Leaky dams across Epping Forest to enhance resilience against drought and protect sequestration rates
TBC	National broadcast coverage on BBC following an interview with the Chairman and Head of Conversation regarding ancient trees – social media collaboration
January	Joint press release in collaboration with Thames 21 on a project to install a floating reedbed in Wanstead Park.
January	Joint press release in collaboration with Epping Forest District Council on the successful safer streets funding to reduce fly-tipping across the District
February	Epping Forest Ranger Golden Jubilee celebrations including 50 for 50 volunteering campaign.
February	National Apprenticeship Week – media and social media opportunity.
March	Warning against the risk of damaging Bluebells across Epping Forest – also applies to other open spaces.
March	Awareness on the protection of Skylarks on Wanstead Flats during ground-nesting bird season.
April	Launch of new Brambley Hedge walking trail near Chingford Visitors Centre.
June	Arborist appreciation day – social media opportunity and potential broadcast opportunity.
July	TBC joint emergency response exercise on Wanstead Flats with London Fire Brigade and Thames Water.
July	Green Flag Award wins across all EF&C sites.
October	Warning against Fungi foraging across City Corporation's open spaces. Bespoke release for Epping Forest and Commons.
November 2025	National Tree Week – social media opportunity and potential broadcast media opportunity.

## Conclusion

21. The City Corporation's proactive and strategic media engagement throughout 2024 has supported the strategies and business plans of Epping Forest and The Commons. With notable spikes in coverage around key stories, the Media Team has effectively supported the promotion of conservation efforts, policy updates, and public awareness campaigns.
22. Looking ahead to 2025, planned initiatives and collaborations aim to further enhance public engagement and reinforce the City Corporation's commitment to preserving these vital open spaces for future generations.

## Appendices

- Appendix 1 – list of all EF&C press releases

Report author

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## Appendix 1

1. 30 January - London and southeast England's most iconic open spaces are worth billions to society - <https://news.cityoflondon.gov.uk/london-and-southeast-englands-most-iconic-open-spaces-are-worth-billions-to-society/>
2. 2 February - New report: Epping Forest valued at £1.9 billion to society - <https://news.cityoflondon.gov.uk/new-report-epping-forest-valued-at-19-billion-to-society/>
3. 9 February - New report: Network of Commons worth millions to society - <https://news.cityoflondon.gov.uk/new-report-network-of-commons-worth-millions-to-society/>
4. 18 March - Epping Forest visitors urged to help protect skylarks on Wanstead Flats - <https://news.cityoflondon.gov.uk/epping-forest-visitors-urged-to-help-protect-skylarks-on-wanstead-flats/>
5. 26 March - Epping Forest: Visitors urged to help protect native bluebells - <https://news.cityoflondon.gov.uk/epping-forest-visitors-urged-to-help-protect-native-bluebells/>
6. 21 May - City of London Corporation appoints new Executive Director for Environment - <https://news.cityoflondon.gov.uk/city-of-london-corporation-appoints-new-executive-director-for-environment/>
7. 3 June - Volunteers hailed as the "lifeblood" of London's parks, gardens, and open spaces - <https://news.cityoflondon.gov.uk/volunteers-hailed-as-the-lifeblood-of-londons-parks-gardens-and-open-spaces/>
8. 12 July - London's open spaces chiefs urge visitors not to use barbeques or light fires - <https://news.cityoflondon.gov.uk/londons-open-spaces-chiefs-urge-visitors-not-to-use-barbeques-or-light-fires/>
9. 18 July - City Corporation takes home 15 Green Flag wins - <https://news.cityoflondon.gov.uk/city-corporation-takes-home-15-green-flag-wins/>
10. 18 July - Outdoor theatre returns to Wanstead Park this summer - <https://news.cityoflondon.gov.uk/outdoor-theatre-returns-to-wanstead-park-this-summer/>
11. 30 July - Epping Forest celebrates prestigious Green Flag win - <https://news.cityoflondon.gov.uk/epping-forest-celebrates-prestigious-green-flag-win/>
12. 30 July - Burnham Beeches celebrates prestigious Green Flag win - <https://news.cityoflondon.gov.uk/burnham-beeches-celebrates-prestigious->



[green-flag-win/](#)

13. 30 July - Ashted Common celebrates prestigious Green Flag win - <https://news.cityoflondon.gov.uk/ashted-common-celebrates-prestigious-green-flag-win/>
  14. 30 July - South London open spaces celebrate prestigious Green Flag award - <https://news.cityoflondon.gov.uk/south-london-open-spaces-celebrate-prestigious-green-flag-award/>
  15. 7 October - City Corporation takes home World Urban Parks Legacy Award for London - <https://news.cityoflondon.gov.uk/city-corporation-takes-home-world-urban-parks-legacy-award-for-london/>
  16. 13 November - Species of mushroom “new to science” discovered at Burnham Beeches - <https://news.cityoflondon.gov.uk/species-of-mushroom-new-to-science-discovered-at-burnham-beeches/>
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