

Assistant Director's Update Appendix A

Updates on actions taken to deliver Epping Forest charity objectives and Natural Environment strategies for the period May-June 2025.

1. A Welcoming Destination for all (Access and Recreation)

1.1 Estate Improvements

1.2 The Gloucester Ride new surfaced path is being installed at Chingford linking the visitor centre to Connaught Water. This path was included in the SAMMS strategy agreement and has been funded from SAMMS payments. A new method of 'no dig' has been used and proved successful. An archaeological consultancy oversaw the excavation due to the location being an archaeological priority zone. A further phase is out for tender currently, which will link the path to Bury Road.



1.3 Play area works at Wanstead Park are in progress with the space due to reopen Friday 27 June.

1.4 The Grotto vegetation clearance was completed to high standards with the benefit of new equipment, ready for conservation work to start.



1.5 Connaught Water boardwalk repairs – 2 days spent repairing the structure and surfacing to maintain safe access.

1.6 Car park improvements – Claypit Hill, Rushey Plain, Rushey Plain Turnaround, Honey Lane have all been regraded and levelled. The team is working alongside the City Surveyors contractors at Rushey Plain, Claypit Hill and Genesis Slade where new tar mac entrances have been installed. Connaught Water, Bury Road and Barn Hoppitt car parks have been cleaned and re-lined.

1.7 The team have undertaken grounds maintenance at car parks and visitor attractions to tie in with the programme of events.

2. Keepers and Enforcement

2.1 Essex Police have finished their camera survey of Ambresbury Banks and have found no further quad/e-bike/enduro bikes being cycled over the southern part of the ramps and no further digging.

2.2 The Inspector of Monuments visited Ambresbury Banks and will be working with the Heritage Crime Officer to work with Essex Police to do seek a prosecution. Our signage is being altered to specify that damaging it is an offence. Minor tree removal works have commenced allowing brash to be used as dead hedging as a physical deterrent to using the desire lines over the banks.

2.3 The Conservation Team are considering next steps for the jumps that have been built at Rifle Butts as solitary bees or wasps may be nesting in mounds. Keepers have been engaging with young people using the mounds and signs erected to say the ramps will be removed.

2.4 Keepers supported a Keep Britain Tidy week event in partnership with London Borough of Waltham Forest. Lots of families attended to join in with the litter picking.



2.5 Jubilee Pond is attracting complaints due to the littering. The Keeper team and volunteers have attended in waders to remove a lot of the rubbish and are continuing to monitor the site, engaging with local retailers and with the users generating the litter.



2.6 Complaints have been received from residents in Epping regarding rats surrounding their property on Epping Forest land. Keepers have engaged pest control and are in communication with the property management company, noting that while the Forest is habitat for rats as well as other animals, they do require a food source which is generally supplied from the residential areas.

3. Access

3.1 Officers have worked with Public Rights of Way officers but there is no short-term solution to the degraded footpath that links Theydon Bois to the Oak Trail. It has therefore been decided to cease publicising this route which is reliant on connections out of our officer's control.

3.2 The Beech Trail is also no longer to be proactively promoted due to the level of visitor impact at Kates Cellar, Loughton Brook and Loughton Camp where the trail crosses.

4. A beautiful Forest, sustaining an internationally and nationally important mosaic of wildlife habitats (Nature Conservation and Resilience)

- 4.1 The Arborist team spent a day with Epping Forest Conservation Volunteers to share knowledge – further sessions are planned with Higham's Park Snedders and Epping Forest Heritage Trust.
- 4.2 Woodland Management Plans (WMP) –Consultants have been contacted to help write the WMP which is expected to take from 18-24 months. A representative from the Forestry Commission is due to visit to discuss the WMP and available grants.
- 4.3 Cattle have returned to the Forest. Keepers have supported with this task and volunteers and keepers have been trained in animal welfare checks to support the grazing team with regular checks.
- 4.4 The grassland team are on top of works which include fire break cutting, amenity mowing and cut and collect. The lack of rain has severely reduced the grass growth, resulting in some repeat monthly cuts not being required. Lack of grass growth is impacting silage & hay yields; North Farm reported an average reduction of 30% and Woodredon North 50% due to low rainfall in Spring and high temperatures in June. Despite this, 180 bales extra have been cut from newly sown herbal lays at Copped Hall, it is hoped that further cutting at Copped Hall later in the summer will provide sufficient winter feed to make up for a shortfall on already established hay fields.



Slow worm recorded as part of the reptile transect surveys

- 4.5 Moth trapping surveys led by the Assistant Conservation Officer has commenced to undertake a census of species present at The Warren orchard.

4.6 Countryside Stewardship Scheme (CSS) monitoring surveys for positive indicator plant species are underway.

4.7 CSS work on Ambresbury Banks and Purlieu Bank was undertaken in June to continue our work to protect these heritage features. Representatives from the London Bat Group visited Epping Forest to discuss potential collaboration on bat monitoring surveys for 2025 onwards.

5. Carbon Action Strategy/ Carbon Removals Project

5.1 Wildfire management training took place in June with keepers, grassland officers and arborists bringing the total to 70 trained officers across the Natural Environment teams.

5.2 Proposed leaky dam locations have been assessed by the hydrological consultant and agreed as suitable, final reports are expected end of June 2025. Consents will be required before the project can commence, approximate timeline proposed is for installation to start end of August 2025 and run to March 2027.

5.3 Feasibility studies are commencing into the future potential of pine marten and beaver introduction.

5.4 The following ecological monitoring surveys at the Copped Hall arable reversion project are well underway: Bird transect surveys, bird and bat static detector surveys, reptile surveys, butterfly surveys, and earthworm surveys. The bird and bat static detector surveys were undertaken in collaboration with Imperial College, London.

5.5 Tree moisture stress monitors are being trialled to monitor tree response to leaky dams.

5.6 Officers are working with consultants to scope options post 2027 for the Carbon Removals Project for nature recovery.

6. An Inspiring space benefitting peoples' health and providing opportunities for recreation and enjoyment

6.1 The Epping Forest Engagement team are once again taking the 'Epping Forest Roadshow' to local events this summer. So far they have attended the Swaines Green May Fayre (10 May) and the Highams Park Festival (18 May). They have engaged with a wide range of the local of community stakeholders and are promoting the benefits of the Habitat Restoration Programme work which is taking place in the Forest close to the location of the event. They are also promoting volunteering opportunities within Epping Forest.

6.2 Cow locator cards have been produced and are now available at the Warren Office and the Epping Forest Visitor Centre and are also being distributed by staff to visitors as appropriate. These cards contain a QR code that links to the up-to-date cow locations - [Nofence grazing map](#).

- 6.3 Engagement with the Operation Waxen campaign has proved successful. Communications have been strategically delivered throughout the operation, culminating in a highly impactful video of Epping Forest staff catching a fly-tipper in the act, and making them clean up their tipped rubbish. This post has been viewed over 100,300 times and has 1,200 likes on Facebook. The Instagram post has received over 1,500 likes. The last 5 x #FightTheFlyTip posts on Facebook have seen an active reach of over 35,000 and engagement with the social media campaign has been at 16% on Facebook and 27% on Instagram, comparing extremely favourably against industry standards of 2-4%.
- 6.4 On 6 June the London Fire Brigade hosted a media event on Wanstead Flats to promote responsible land management to prevent wildfires, acknowledging the excellent work of the City of London at Epping Forest. The Chair of Epping Forest and Commons Committee, Caroline Haines, gave interviews to the BBC News and to the Financial Times. This was a great opportunity for us to promote our wildfire prevention messaging.
- 6.5 The Open Air Theatre season commenced on 14 June with a sold-out performance of Wind in the Willows.
- 6.6 The football season concluded successfully hosting over 2000 matches across Wanstead Flats welcoming over 32,000 visitors. The Inner-City World Cup event took place at start of June. The event attracts over 2000 visitors across the weekend with teams made up from multicultural inner-city communities representing their country of origin. This year saw Honduras crowned Men's Champions and Dominican Republic crowned Women's Champions.
- 6.7 Chingford Golf course is very busy and remains number one for online bookings in the county. Additional buggies have had to be hired in to meet demand.

7. A range of special heritage landscapes which are protected and celebrated (Culture, Heritage and Learning)

- 7.1 The contractor has been appointed to start work on phase two of the Grotto restoration. This phase is designed to remove the Grotto from the Historic England At Risk Register. The works starting at the end of June will continue until the end of 2025.

8. Education

- 8.1 Between April and June the Field Studies Council, in partnership with the City of London, engaged with 79 schools and over 5,900 students at the Epping Forest Field Centre in High Beach. In addition over 50 parents and children attended Eco Adventure family events during the Easter holidays and May half term. The Field Studies Centre hosted a Spring Open Day on 5 April and welcomed over 180 visitors.

8.2 The City of London learning team engaged with 790 students throughout April and May.

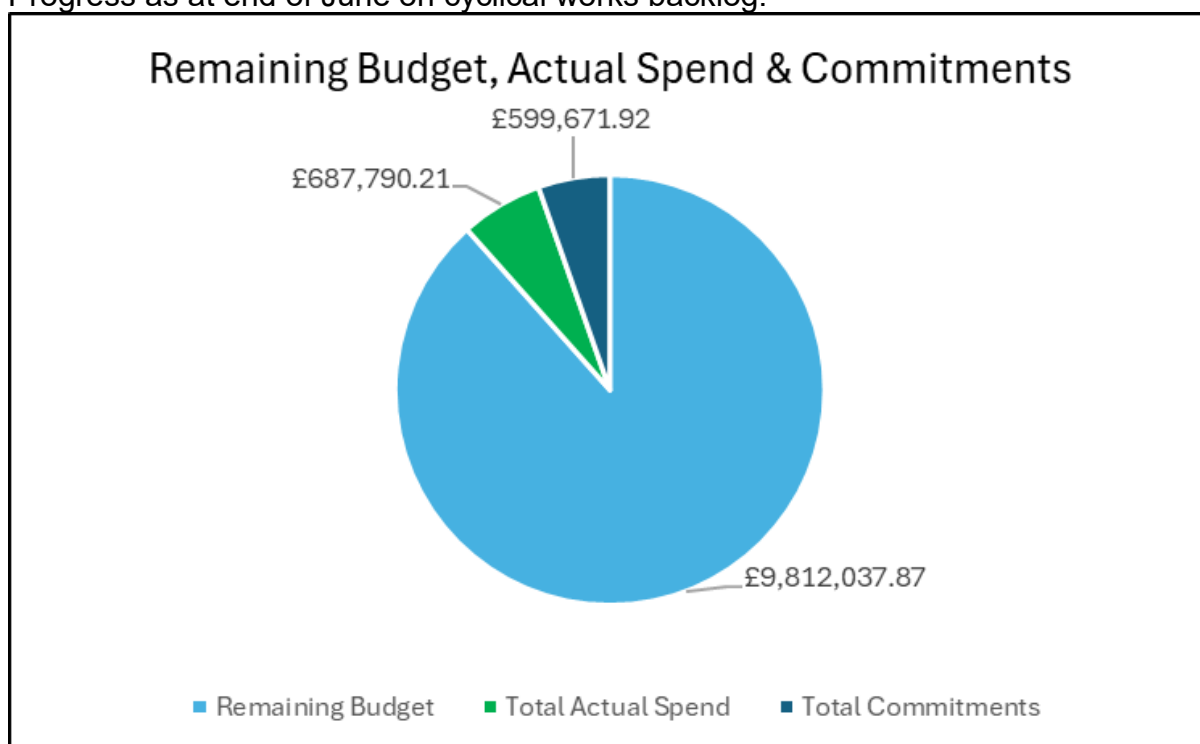
9. A resilient environment, where challenges are embraced and opportunities explored – (Community Engagement)

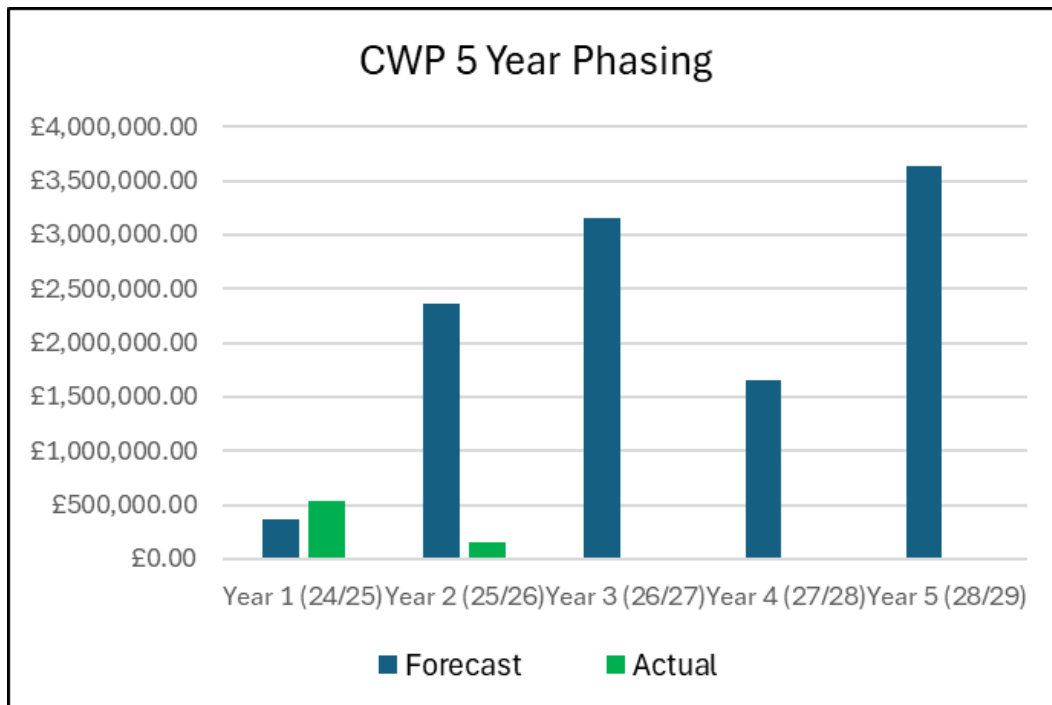
9.1 After a few years of successful trading the two holiday lets have been changed to shorthold tenancy arrangements. Whilst the holiday lets still provided a small profit, the AST income will provide a much larger profit as overheads have risen so significantly on servicing the holiday lets since their inception.

9.2 The furniture from the properties will be auctioned as a fundraiser for the Epping Forest Charity.

10. Cyclical Works Programme.

10.1 Progress as at end of June on cyclical works backlog.





11. Staff News

11.1 In total, 9 new members of the workforce have been recruited in this period.

11.2 New starters appointed and having commenced work this period include:

- Retail Supervisor (p/t)
- Arborist
- Forest Keeper
- Forest Keeper (p/t)
- Conservation Herd Manager
- Estate Worker
- Assistant Estate Worker
- Visitor Experience Assistant (p/t)
- Weddings and Venue Hire Coordinator.

11.3 Appointments made but yet to start in roles:

- 2 x Forest Keeper (p/t)
- Enforcement Officer
- 2 x Assistant Countryside Manager

11.4 Advertised and in progress:

- 4 x Assistant Forest Keepers
- Health and Safety Apprentice
- Access and Development Manager
- Arborist

12. Volunteers

12.1 The annual City of London Corporation volunteer celebration event took place at the Guildhall in May. A long-serving, knowledgeable Volunteer represented Epping Forest as a speaker showcasing his years of dedication as a Volunteer Warden.



12.2 During Volunteer's Week, the first Volunteering Partnership Forum was held, followed by an Epping Forest Volunteer Reception Garden Party at The Warren. Both events were well received by the attendees.

12.3 Ahead of Volunteers' Week two of our most dedicated Epping Forest Volunteers from the Highams Park Snedders and from the Epping Forest Conservation Volunteers, were invited to a Garden Party at Buckingham Palace by the Ranger of Epping Forest, HRH The Duke of Gloucester, in recognition of their outstanding contribution as volunteers for the woodland.



12.4 Historic England led a train the trainer course to our volunteers as part of the Lidar project which is due to commence in coming months. 20 individuals signed

up to volunteer from West Essex Archaeological Group in addition to interest from Chingford Historical Society and Loughton District Historical Society.

- 12.5 Two youth volunteering sessions were held in May half term including a youth conservation session led in partnership with Highams Park Snedders and a youth litter pick.
- 12.6 Topgolf Chigwell attended an Epping Forest led corporate volunteering litter pick at High Beach with nine attendees.
- 12.7 A 'Top Picks' litter picking event took place at Woodriven Hill on 21 May supported by five volunteers.
- 12.8 Ecological monitoring volunteers have now been fully briefed and trained in butterfly and reptile transect surveys. Surveys are now completed fortnightly by approximately 40 volunteers and a few officers. Training has commenced for grassland condition assessment surveys.

13. Staff Training (whole teams)

- 13.1 Officers visited Coulsdon Common, along with representatives from Banstead Common, to benchmark skylark conservation approaches; assessing both the electric fencing deployed at Farthing Downs and wider visitor engagement strategy.
- 13.2 Officers visited Burnham Beeches for a tour to discuss Conservation Management Plans and SAMMS work.
- 13.3 Officers from across the Natural Environment Open Spaces visited the Knepp Estate for a tour of their rewilding/landscape recovery work following hosting the Knepp's freelance ecologists at Epping Forest.
- 13.4 All staff are now up to date with mandatory DSE training.
- 13.5 Budget managers have started specific budget management training.
- 13.6 Officers attended the international conference on the biodiversity of pollarded trees.