

Appendix A

Assistant Director's Update, Epping Forest

Updates on actions taken to deliver Epping Forest charity objectives and Natural Environment strategies for the period July to September 2025.

1.0 A Welcoming Destination for all (Access and Recreation/ Nature Conservation)

1.1 Estate Improvements

1.2 The Gloucester Ride phase one and two are now completed and offer a huge improvement in connectivity in the central visitor hub in Chingford as well as protecting the surrounding SAC. Some remedial top dressing will however be necessary to speed up the process of 'bedding down' whilst material remains sticky.



1.3 Before / After

1.4 The final phase of the play area at Wanstead was completed with the installation of an all-ability swing and path and new signage.





1.5 The wall to the rear of the Orchard at the Warren has severe cracking and is now cordoned off for safety reasons. A report is being prepared however it appears that one section will need rebuilding.

1.6 After two years awaiting an effective repair the security gate to the Warren Yard has been replaced.

1.7 Auditing of culverts and bridges and inspection regime has been completed with colleagues in CSD to ensure a best value approach is taken to the specification with routine inspections to be undertaken by keepers.

1.8 Waymarking fingerposts have been installed in several locations. These are funded through CSS.

2.0 Keepers and Enforcement

2.1 The summer drought following the very dry spring created a high fire risk. The red risk signs were erected at all the grasslands sites, but keepers still had to respond to 81 fires.

2.2 The largest fire was at Wanstead Flats in the Aldersbrook area in July which was attended by several fire appliances and burnt an area of approximately 4 acres.



2.3 The warm weather brings an increase in blue-green algae. Proactive messaging on this has been introduced highlighting that even when not visible it can be present and referencing EA and UKCEH guidance that the safest option is often

to keep dogs out of ponds or lakes entirely. Signage has been installed at ponds where Blue-green algae has been present in the past.

2.4 The keeper team undertook pole saw training and have been able to undertake long outstanding works such as trimming the overhang on bridleways.

2.5 The warm weather saw a rise in rough sleeping, but the teams were able to consistently move people on, collaborating with the appropriate agencies.

2.6 Patrols continued in the areas of ASB at Manor Flats and Aldersbrook. Undergrowth has been cleared to prevent some of the dens and disruption tactics and joint operations with the police is having some impact.

2.7 CCTV has had to be installed at the Temple toilets due to persistent vandalism.

2.8 During the summer the team were at the heart of a complex and high-profile situation surrounding the Bell Hotel in Epping. As national protests unfolded, the Forest – located directly opposite the Hotel – became a key operational space for police efforts to manage public safety.

3.0 Cleansing and waste

3.1 17 waste bins have been purchased. A total of 80 are required to replace damaged bins and this will be done gradually as budgets permit over the next few years. These will be allocated in priority order to replace the worst damaged as well as installation in some key areas of need where there are not currently any bins.



4.0 Health and Safety

4.1 Health & Safety: Epping Forest achieved a 63% audit score for Safe365 in Q2, reflecting continued improvements in operational safety practices.

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

5.1 The grassland condition assessments (focusing on plant diversity and structural quality) for the summer have been completed covering 21 sites with support from approximately 40 volunteers, Reptile and butterfly surveys have also been undertaken at these sites. Results for the 2025 ecological surveys will be analysed and evaluated and presented in a report to be completed early 2026.

5.2 Ecological records and data management:

The review and digitisation of historical ecological records is currently underway, with several paper records already converted into digital format. A total of 16,000 species records has been submitted to Greenspace Information for Greater London (GiGL), with plans to divide the data between London and Essex by November 2025. To facilitate species recording, online forms have been created and promoted through social media, enabling submissions from staff, volunteers, and contractors. Initial records have already been received from both internal teams and members of the public.

5.3 Grassland management: An improved framework for the Grassland Management Plan is in development, focusing on conservation grazing and mapping/digitisation of key management practices such as mowing and cut-and-collect on GIS platforms. The team have introduced additional rotations of long grass across all applicable sites, enhancing habitat structure and promoting ecological diversity where feasible.

5.4. Pond management: Specialist surveys have been undertaken to assess the condition of SSSI pond features, including eDNA testing for amphibian species across Forest ponds. A total of 19 ponds were surveyed—15 for all amphibians and four specifically for great crested newts (GCN). The four GCN specific surveys at Wanstead Park's Perch Pond and Shoulder of Mutton Pond and two ponds at Rookery Wood, Copped Hall came back as negative for GCN presence. However, surveys for all amphibian species elsewhere in the Forest produced several positive results. As is typical, Smooth Newt was the most widespread newt species, found in 11 out of 15 ponds sampled, with Palmate Newt present in 9 out of 15 and GCN in five ponds (Deer Pond, Fairmead Bomb Craters West and East, Oak Plain Pond, Woodford Golf Course Gravels Pond). This work confirmed the continued importance of ponds at High Beach and on Fairmead for amphibians in the Forest, with all three newt species recorded in the Fairmead Bomb Craters and Oak Plain Pond at High Beach. These ponds will be restored as part of Froglife partnership project work in 2025 (Fairmead) and 2026 (High Beach). Deer Pond at Copped Hall was the only other pond to record all three newt species while Common Toad and Common Frog were only recorded from Cuckoo Pits East and Oak Plain Pond (Frog) and Deer Pond and Fairmead Pond (Toad), possibly due to the late sampling dates.

5.5 The Countryside Stewardship Scheme (CSS) habitat restoration work programme continues including:

- Epping Forest Conservation Volunteers (EFCV) efforts included clearing regrowth around the heather near Wake Valley and the pond, scrub clearance at Furze Ground and Barn Hoppitt, bracken removal at Long Running, and wood pasture restoration at Lower Forest. The Epping Forest Heritage Trust (EFHT) carried out rhododendron removal at Paul's

Nursery and in St Thomas' Quarters (as part of extended Ramorum disease control measures) and undertook heathland management work at Sunshine Plain.

- Flailing and grass cutting operations were initiated by both contractors and the in-house team, and grazing activities continued as part of the broader land management strategy.
- The Arboricultural Team has extended restoration work at Pillow Mounds by creating new pollards, increasing light penetration, and haloing veteran trees. Team members have also re-pollarded maiden pollards at Hill Wood near the Suntrap Ride and are catching up on chipping brash piles left by volunteers. Work has also focused on wood pasture restoration at Walthamstow Forest, undertaking thinning of infill growth, creating new pollards, and removing large Turkey oaks to enhance habitat quality.
- Contractors completed Forest 2 works across multiple sites, including Lower Forest, Barn Hoppitt, Sheppard's and Trueloves, St Thomas', Ambresbury, Purlieu, and Leyton Flats. These works involved habitat restoration such as haloing veteran trees, creating new pollards, opening up ponds, glades, and grasslands, and enhancing connectivity by removing dense infill. Meadow and stream habitat restoration were also carried out, along with tree clearance on Scheduled Monuments.

5.6 Explanation of the works and why they are taking place has been shared on social media through detailed StoryMaps, and articles ([Habitat Restoration Programme](#)) were published in local publications throughout Loughton, Theydon Bois and Epping about the Habitat Restoration Programme at Long Running.

5.7 Arborists are reducing the backlog of tree safety works and are now also undertaking CSS works at Walthamstow Forest, Hill Wood, and South Ambresbury Banks.

5.8 Preparation for the annual tree safety survey is underway and has been re-tendered with half the survey being brought in house. If successful we will consider bringing the entire survey in house.

5.9 Ongoing mechanical issues with the Teupen, a critical machine for working at height, continue to cause delays and incur significant repair costs.

5.10 A meeting was held with the Forestry Commission to inform a specification for consultants who will be engaged to prepare woodland management plans over the next two years. Forestry Commission grants are available for this work.

5.11 A forestry mulcher was hired and used to clear vegetation in ornamental waters, restore grasslands and open up an area near Ferndale Rd at Wanstead Flats, an area that is troubled with ASB.



5.12 The Wanstead Park floating reedbed was assessed during summer 2025 and found to be well-established, requiring no intervention throughout the season. Its stable development reflects successful habitat creation. A habitat management and monitoring plan is now being developed to guide future oversight and ecological performance.



5.13 Conservation staff attended the launch of the Essex Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS), a product of extensive collaboration among farmers, landowners, community groups, and environmental organisations. The strategy outlines a clear plan to increase the percentage cover of high-quality habitats in Essex from 14% to 25% by 2030. The draft London LNRS was released for public consultation at the end of September. The EF Conservation team will submit formal comments. Hard copies of the draft are available for public review at the Chingford Visitor Centre and Golf Shop.

5.14 The Nature Resilience and Landscape Oversight Group met and agreed with plans to launch a partnership with the Waterlife Recovery Trust focused on managing invasive non-native American mink. The project will run for two to three years and be delivered in-house, supporting landscape-scale mink control and broader nature recovery efforts. The Oversight Group also heard about:

- Updates on Countryside Stewardship Scheme (CSS), wood pasture, pollarding, heathland, grassland, and grazing impacts.
- Engagement with external nature recovery groups and sharing partnership outcomes.
- Expanded squirrel damage survey planned for spring 2026.
- Feasibility studies for pine marten and beaver reintroduction (beaver not a current priority).
- Actions to structure future meetings by strategic themes, feedback on pond works, and review of wider invasive species policy.
- Suggestions for future discussion: soil health, leaky dams, vegetation screening, and water run-off impacts.

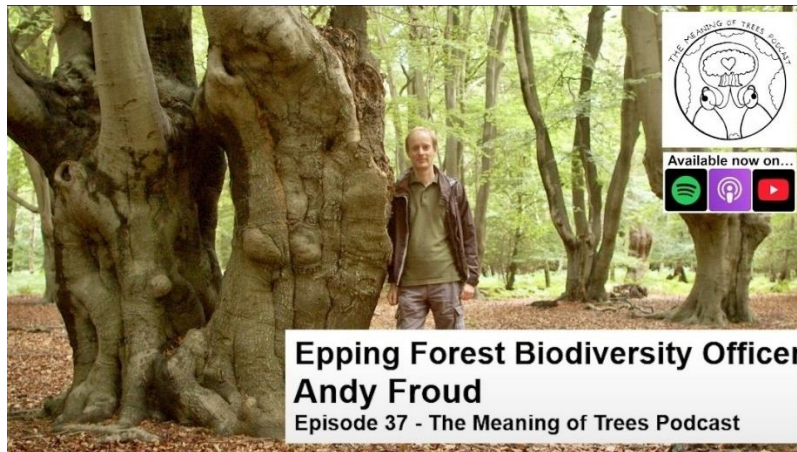
5.15 The Epping Forest Conservation team continues to develop its partnership tracker, with updates in progress. Recent engagement activities include:

- The Head of Conservation served as a judge for CIRIA's Biodiversity Challenge Awards.
- Participation in London Rewilding Action Group meetings.
- Hosted the London Assembly Environment Committee, alongside the EFCC Chair and Deputy Chair, for a site visit to review CSS works and discuss open space management challenges.



- Guest speaking at the EFCV Annual General Meeting.
- The Arborist Team has attended careers fairs at Capel Manor and Walthamstow wetlands, a school visit to Nightingale Primary and spoke to 90 children (6-7yo) who were completing their RFS young foresters award and made a presentation at the Woodford Green amenity groups AGM.
- Participated in a Waltham Forest Nature Recovery Roundtable, organised by the London Borough of Waltham Forest. Following the [Council's Nature Emergency declaration](#), this Roundtable explored local nature recovery priorities and partnership approaches to accelerate nature recovery.

- Grazing and Grassland Manager filmed for a Sky TV series on green technology, featuring Epping Forest cattle and use of NoFence collars.
- Podcast 'The Meaning of Trees' featuring Epping Forest Biodiversity Officer went live in September: [Podcast Link](#)



6.0 Carbon Action Strategy/ Carbon Removals Project

6.1 The final hydrological modelling report by Edendale Young confirmed 374 suitable leaky dam sites. The TRFCC¹ Outline Business Case progressed (completion expected November), unlocking £200k in Natural Flood Management match funding. Statutory permissions were applied for (SSSI consent received), and timber from CSS tree operations were also reserved for dam construction.

6.2 The Copped Hall arable reversion project butterfly and bird surveys concluded in September. Bioacoustic data for birds and bats were analysed by Imperial University students and now pending review. Earthworm surveys will commence in October. Over 90 grassland condition points were surveyed, with over-seeding completed to boost wildflower diversity. All hay has been cut to provide winter feed after drought-reduced yields.

6.3 Grey squirrel survey results from the spring 2025 survey were shared with local teams, and planning begun for a more detailed EF focussed survey with APHA in early spring 2026. Results were inconclusive due to small survey sample. Increasing sample points will provide greater confidence in impact surveys results.

6.4 Overseeding of arable reversion has taken place as part of meadow creation and habitat management. Newly created meadows still have gaps and bare ground which provides unique opportunity to overseed flowering species at optimal conditions when moisture is more abundant and soil levels still above 5 degrees.

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

¹ Thames Regional Flood and Coastal Committee (Environment Agency)

7.1 In September the redundant boathouse at Higham's Park Lake was burnt down in an assumed act of arson. The building will need to be demolished and staff are liaising with insurance on procuring a contractor to complete the necessary works. Staff attended the Higham's Park Planning Group AGM to consult local users on future aspirations for the site.



7.2 The Epping Forest Engagement team took the Epping Forest Roadshow to further local events this summer, attending at Epping Town Show, the Older Person's Fair at Chingford, Toot Hill Festival and Loughton Day. The roadshow engages with local people to promote the benefits of the Habitat Restoration Programme work as well as other visitor attractions such as the new Brambly Hedge Trail. They also promoted volunteering opportunities within Epping Forest.

7.3 A Youth Photography Workshop took place on 29 July, led by two Volunteer Photographers and our two Youth Volunteer Photographers. 18 people attended and resulted in the formation of a new 'Epping Forest Youth Photography Collective'. These budding young photographers and their families were also involved in the TREELINE project workshop (see below).

7.4 Monthly Little Saplings pre-school sessions took place at the Epping Forest Visitor Centre. These events include a seasonal nature-themed story, a relevant activity and singing and help to engage families with the Forest and continue to sell-out with capacity currently set at 15 children.

7.5 A display celebrating the City of London's special stewardship of ancient beech trees was unveiled at Mansion House in September. The centrepiece is a cross-section taken from a fallen Epping Forest beech coppard which underwent dendrochronological analysis revealing centuries of ecological and social change.



7.6 An Epping Forest exhibition is on show at The Guildhall Art Gallery: Heritage Gallery Exhibition until 30 April 2026. Highlights include a map by William D'Oyley, the first Forest Superintendent and a decorative invite to Queen Victoria's visit. The exhibition was compiled by the Guildhall Art Gallery using some of their own collection. For more information please visit [Epping Forest | London Archives](#).

7.7 The Visitor Engagement Team led youth photographers and Epping Forest Conservation Volunteers in a workshop as part of the *TREELINE* project. *TREELINE* is a composition project by renowned British minimalist composer, Graham Fitkin, inspired by the ancient beech woodlands of Europe. Graham will be cycling through the woodlands from Romania to London in 2026, and will be performing the final piece of music in London next spring/summer with Epping Forest's ancient beech woodlands included as the finale of this project. See [About – Graham Fitkin](#) for more information on Graham Fitkin.

7.8 The bench sponsorship scheme has been revised as a Bench Plaque Scheme with better governance over the potential location of benches that will make communication with donors much more efficient and has streamlined any necessary permissions from Natural England. The initial trial phase of the scheme commenced in September and was limited to those already on the waiting list. The opportunity will gradually be rolled out over the coming months with a public launch once the existing waiting list has been approached. The first donation of £2490 has since been received.

7.9 At the start of July, a guided walk of the Brambly Hedge Trail took place as part of the North Chingford Heritage Trail programme of events.

7.10 Exhibitions at the Visitor Centre included: The Epping Forest Summer Show, The Loughton Camera Club Exhibition and the Brimble Exhibition (including talks by the Chingford Historical Society).

7.11 Open House was celebrated in September with special heritage tours and walks at the Epping Forest Visitor Centre at Chingford, Queen Elizabeth's Hunting Lodge, The Temple and Wanstead Park.

7.12 Chingford Golf Course continues to rank among the top five Pay and Play venues in the County. Income increased by 15% this year compared to the same period last year. Investment in new winter mats will be made this year to protect the tees from winter damage.

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

8.1 Contractors have started work on the phase 2 of the Grotto works. These are more extensive works that are intended to remove the Grotto from the Heritage at Risk Register with estimated completion in December.

8.2 LIDAR project: The Archive Research phase of the project has commenced with the involvement of volunteers. 16 research topics have been distributed among three archaeological and heritage organisations as well as several individual volunteers. Participants have been supported with guidance, initial research materials, and a dedicated check-in session. Planning and development of training for volunteers is ongoing in preparation for the upcoming Fieldwalking Surveys.

8.3 The Conservation Management Plan (CMP) for the Queen Elizabeth Hunting Lodge has been completed, and recommendations have been received. Programming of the associated works is scheduled for May-June 2026.

8.4 The CMP for the Temple, originally developed two years ago, has now moved into the implementation phase. Scaffolding will be installed in October with completion targeted for mid-November.

9.0 Education

9.1 45 different schools and almost 2,800 school pupils (comprising 100 primary school and early years, 2,200 secondary school and over 470 A-Level students) attended the Epping Forest Field Centre between July and September 2025. Over 180 visitors attended the second Open Day of the year at the Epping Forest Field Centre on 5 July.

9.2 Summer activities included five Eco Adventure family events, birthday parties, a Summer Photography course and a bat walk. Between July and September 2025, the Field Centre delivered 3,307 customer days equating to over 19,400 learner hours in total across all programmes.

9.3 The City of London Learning Team continued to deliver impactful outdoor learning with 2,747 pupils participating across quarters one and two, in line with last year's figures. Many of these children came from some of London's most economically disadvantaged communities, including Tower Hamlets and Hackney —

the two London boroughs with the highest levels of child poverty at 45 – 47 %. During the summer holidays the youth programme supported two work experience students, welcomed a community group from Tower Hamlets, and in partnership with the City of London Virtual School delivered targeted learning for young asylum seekers. Through forest-based activities, these young people had the chance to build confidence, connect with nature, and develop social and communication skills in a supportive and inclusive environment.

The Learning Team continued to deliver impactful outdoor learning experiences designed to deepen connection to nature, support wellbeing, and build environmental understanding. Evidence shows that early nature connection fosters empathy, emotional resilience, and lays the foundation for lifelong pro-environmental behaviours. Our programmes actively engage the senses, spark emotional responses, and nurture compassion for the natural world—key ingredients in developing future environmental stewards.

It was a strong summer for the schools programme, with high engagement in July and a total of **2,747 school pupils** participating across **Q1 and Q2**.

During the school holidays, the youth programme supported two work experience students and welcomed both a community group from Tower Hamlets and a group of young asylum seekers, further extending our inclusive, nature-based learning offer.

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

10.1 An asset audit is in progress to ensure the Charity's smaller assets are accurately recorded and accounted for.

10.2 Filming of a new ITV drama 'The Blame' was filmed at Coppice Row, Theydon Bois and Bury Road Car Park Chingford. Other filming highlights include adverts for New Balance and Costa Coffee.

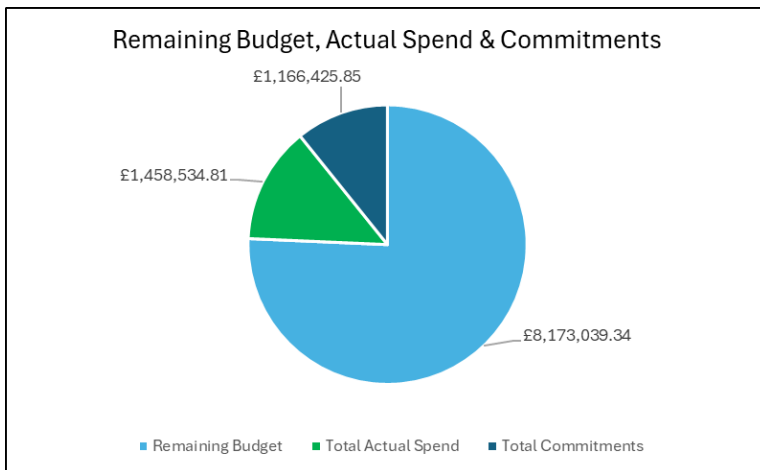
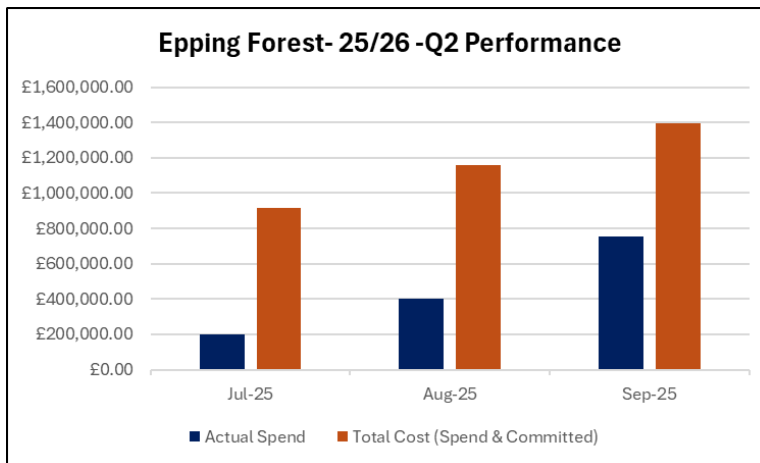
11.0 Cyclical Works Programme.

11.1 CWP Projects: Activity was minimal during the summer quarter, as expected. Key developments included:

- Shaftesbury Lodges (July): Upgrades included a new rainwater drain channel, 28m of boundary fencing, and replacement front doors, with estimated costs of £15,000.
- Knighton Woods Car Park (September): Repairs were completed.
- Work across several properties is progressing toward readiness for rental. At North Lodge (Knighton Wood), the kitchen installation is approximately 70% complete and expected to finish October 2025, followed by internal cleaning and testing. External decoration is scheduled to begin shortly, with scaffolding already in place. Efforts are underway to expedite the replacement of the intruder alarm through the project team, with the property anticipated to be available for rent by 1 November.

- Garden Cottage, the property is expected to be ready for commercial letting in November.

Progress as at end of September on cyclical works backlog.



1.2 A grant application was submitted to the Rural Payments Agency (RPA) in summer 2025 for a Solar PV Scheme at Great Gregories. The outcome is anticipated by winter 2025.

1.3 A long outstanding CWP workstream to replace asbestos roofing has been completed at Great Gregories.

12.0 Staff News

12.1 In total, 11 new members of the workforce have been recruited in this period.

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

- Assistant Estates Worker
- Assistant Forest Keeper (N)

- Enforcement Officer
- Forest Keeper (South – Area 6)
- 2 x Assistant Forest Keeper (S)
- 2 x Assistant Countryside Manager
- 2 x Forest Keeper (p/t)
- Arborist

12.3 Appointments made but yet to start in roles:

2 x Assistant Forest Keeper (p/t)
 Assistant Forest Keeper
 Access Development Manager

12.4 Advertised and in progress:

Assistant Forest Keeper (Driver)

12.5 Leavers during this period:

Enforcement Officer
 Digital Content Officer
 Arborist

13.0 Volunteers

13.1 Youth volunteering sessions were held in the summer holidays half term including a youth conservation session led in partnership with Higham's Park Snedders and two youth litter picks, one at Chingford and one at Wanstead Park.

12.2 Two Top Picks' litter picking events took place at Harrow Road to open up vegetation to reduce antisocial behaviour in the area.

12.3 The ecological monitoring volunteers have had a very successful season with 50 volunteers participating across the Forest.

12.4 The City's Climate Champions visited Leyton Flats and carried out a litter pick following the CSS works in the area in addition to carrying out a conservation task.

12.5 Our first 'Talk about Epping Forest' from the new programme which is volunteer-led, took place at the Theydon Bois Rotary Club.

12.6 Working in partnership with the Wren Group volunteers the skylark send-off took place on 1 September, taking down the ropes as part of another successful skylark nesting season.

13.0 Staff Training

- A low stress livestock handling course was run at Epping Forest with trainer Miriam Parker. This was also open and attended by colleagues from Burnham Beeches and Clty Commons.
- Arborists and members of the conservation team have exchanged visits with Windsor Great Park visit each site visit to collaborate on conservation led tree management techniques. Visit enables practical learning, consistency in standards and sharing and monitoring tree management.
- Arborist apprentices have commenced their training at Capel Manor College.