

## **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 October to December 2025.

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

##### **1.1 Estate Improvements**

1.2 Leaky dam installations and 800m ditch reprofiling at Copped Hall as part of the Carbon Removals Project. Cost of works recharged to CAS project.



1.3 Over 60 defects addressed including new bench installations, maintaining empty lodge gardens, path repairs, equipment welding, bridge repairs, gate replacements.

1.4 Routine maintenance included car park improvements such as flow plate upgrades, grounds maintenance presentation improvements and regular system of inspection. Play area inspection and maintenance including undertaking Rospa follow up recommended works.

1.5 Dam wall maintenance and additional clearance completed with mulcher.



1.6 Contractor works – Bellringers Hollow Culvert repairs. 1 x 12m m pipe replaced, path reinstatement and new fencing. New gabion baskets installed at two other culvert locations.



*Figure 1 Before and after*

1.7 Culvert replacement near Connaught Waters with new accessible bridge installed using ground screws.



Figure 2 Before

## 2.0 Keepers and Enforcement

2.1 Keepers are now getting to know their 'beats', are undertaking risk assessments, and are showing impact with small maintenance tasks improving presentation and safety. Keepers have uncovered hidden ASB and rough sleeper camps by tackling less accessible and previously unvisited areas through their 'beat' walks.

2.2 Keepers are working with community groups to increase litter picking and are supporting the conservation team to engage with the public on site at the CSS works.

## 3.0 Cleansing and waste

3.1 There are concerns that new green waste collection measures in EFDC will result in increased flytipping of garden waste in the Forest. Keepers will monitor to see if there is an uplift and increase patrols along property boundaries.

## 4.0 Health and Safety

4.1 Health & Safety: Epping Forest achieved a 65% audit score for Safety365 in Q3 (which is the corporate target), reflecting continued improvements in operational safety practices. The team are working toward the 'stretch' target of 70%.

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

5.1 Deer management recommenced in November with the focus to improve the welfare of the existing wild deer population, reduce deer vehicle collisions, and preserve the Forest's biodiversity by encouraging natural regeneration of trees and scrub. The annual drone deer census surveys showed approximately 900 fallow deer and 80+ muntjac.

#### Grazing and Grasslands

5.2 Calving took place in December with 38 calves born and 100% successful birth rate.

5.3 The Grassland Team have continued flailing and grass cutting across a number of sites and the conservation herd grazed key grassland areas, with a small number of cattle being left on the Chingford Plain-Bury Wood area over the winter.

5.4 The Epping Forest Charity continues to support Essex Wildlife Trust with their conservation grazing practice at Roding Valley Meadows Nature Reserve by providing cattle from the Epping Forest herd to graze there over the winter period.

#### Pond management

5.5 In partnership with [Froglife](#) and funded by Essex County Council and [Natural England via the national District Level Licencing Scheme for great crested newts, Epping Forest's](#) Project Pondscape commenced. With the aim to tackle challenges associated with climate change, drought due to the hotter, drier summers, we plan to improve the resilience and connectivity of the Forest's ponds for wildlife. 13 new ponds were created at Palmers Bridge Glade, Fairmead, Cuckoo Pits, and Trueloves and six ponds were restored.



*Cuckoo Pit west after phase one of reprofiling as part of Project Pondscape*



*Palmers Bridge pond creation before and after drone photos.*

## Countryside Stewardship Schemes

5.6 The Countryside Stewardship Scheme (CSS) habitat restoration work programme continued including work done over October 2025 to November 2025:

- Veteran tree conservation was completed by contractors on 376 veteran trees across 19 different blocks.
- At Long Running East heathland restoration consisted of large-scale tree clearance at a well visited part of the Forest. A comprehensive public engagement programme was developed to prepare visitors for the works with staff on site talking to visitors.
  - Information was shared on social media which included a dedicated StoryMap for the site [Long Running](#).
  - Safeguards were put in place for sensitive plant and wildlife features and the works were overseen daily by the Conservation Team.
  - Three scrapes to remove dominating vegetation and expose the buried seed bank were made which are hoped will encourage the return of heathland species such as heather.
  - Timber and branches from the felled trees have been used to make reptile hibernacula, generate material for the Carbon Removals Leaky Dams project, and timbers have been placed back across the wider site as lichen habitat.
  - The contractors also put back up scarce lichen species into the trees that were retained.
  - The site will have new on-site signage asking visitors to take care across the area to allow heathland species to return. A variety of plant, wildlife and visitor movement indicators will be monitored into the future.
  - Epping Forest Conservation Volunteers continue their essential contribution to the CSS delivery, contributing to wood pasture, grassland and pond restoration, as well as heathland hibernacula creation.

5.7 The in-house arboricultural team have re-started contributing to the CSS delivery. Seven sites were worked on which involved wood pasture restoration including creation of new pollards and re-pollarding young pollards.

5.8 Wood pasture flailing work undertaken.

5.9 Volunteers undertook delicate conservation work to protect the nationally rare *Codonoblepharon* (formerly *Zygodon*) *forsteri* moss which involved removing other competing mosses, sometimes with tweezers. New *C. forsteri* plants were found which is encouraging.

5.10 The Field Studies Council (FSC) delivered two education sessions funded by CSS focusing on conservation grazing and its role in wood pasture and grassland restoration.



*Creating scrapes as part of the Long Running East heathland restoration project.*

#### SSSI Condition Assessment Update

5.11 Natural England completed their condition assessment update of Epping Forest's lowland dry acid grassland (U1b, c, d, f, and U4), with the condition status reported as Unfavourable – Recovering (detailed on this webpage: [Natural England Designated Sites Feature Condition](#)).

Additional measures proposed are:

- Increase targeted scrapes and seed dispersal of notable species.
- Support rabbit grazing and conserve ant hills.
- Expand conservation grazing.
- Implement visitor strategy to reduce recreational impacts.

#### Arboricultural Team

5.12 As of 19 December 2025 the following arboricultural tree safety works completed in Q3 were 241 jobs, outstanding works (jobs that are required to be completed within 12 months) are 611, with a 151 overdue works. Overdue works will be completed by end of March 2026.

5.13 The Arboricultural Team have contributed to the delivery of CSS and Carbon Removal work, which has included the creation of new pollards and re-pollarding young pollards and the creation of leaky dams.

5.14 The Epping Forest Conservation Team engagement activities included:

- Head of Conservation in collaboration with the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management and Mott MacDonald's Technical Director for Nature Services ran the final training course of the year on Biodiversity Net Gain and Habitat Design to ~20 course participants.
- The Tree Amble podcast hosted by Peter Leeson (Woodland Creation Advisor at the Woodland Trust) featured four Epping Forest employees covering history, biodiversity, conservation grazing, and Coppiced Hall arable reversion project.
- Three Arborists and the Assistant Conservation Officer along with other colleagues across the NE Charities undertook a practical study tour to Spain's Basque region. The collaboration with the Basque people and leading arboricultural professionals that came along helped their understanding of managing beech pollards. Considerations of a tree's vitality, conditions, time out of pollarding cycle and whether to bring trees back into a pollard/reduction regime all require different understanding and techniques which the trip has now better equipped our staff to make.



### 5.15 Epping Forest, Hampstead Heath, Burnham Beeches, and Ashtead Common teams in Spain

- The Rewilding Spain Board of Trustees undertook a site visit around Barn Hoppitt and Bury Wood.
- The London Bryophyte Group visited Epping Forest for a survey visit.
- Head of Conservation appointed to join Rebuilding Nature's Strategic Nature Network (SNN) Advisory Group (<https://rebuildingnature.com/snn-advisory-group/>). The Rebuilding Nature SNN Advisory Group provides expert input into the conceptualisation, development, and refinement of the SNN and its underpinning mechanisms including Nature Investment Zones (NIZs).



- The Grazing and Grasslands Manager hosted staff from The Woodland Trust – Hainault Forest to discuss Conservation Grazing and the use of the NoFence Collar system. The visit sought to share knowledge, build connections with the possibility of partnership working.
- The Arboricultural and Conservation Teams visited counterparts at The Crown Estate Windsor Great Park, where they were shown ancient trees and the management techniques used by the Windsor teams to protect and conserve them, an area of woodland creation, Windsor's ancient woodland restoration and commercial forestry plantation (and the machinery they use), and planted grafted trees from ancients in the Parkland. This continues our continued knowledge sharing and lessons learned building connections with staff at The Crown Estate.



## **6.0 Carbon Action Strategy/ Carbon Removals Project**

6.1 Earthworm surveys commenced in October at Copped Hall associated with the arable reversion/meadow creation project. Over 90 grassland condition assessment points were surveyed, with over-seeding completed to boost wildflower diversity, analysis of the condition assessment surveys are now underway.

6.2 Volunteers who supported the ecological monitoring at Copped Hall and Epping Forest attended a celebration morning at The Warren which saw presentations from the Assistant Conservation Officer and the Carbon Removals Project Officer. Feedback was received on how to improve grassland monitoring onboarding, training and overall experience for volunteers and this is actively being incorporated into the recruitment plan for the 2026 surveying season.

6.3 Working with UCL, a study has commenced on pollarding as a climate action tool, which will run until end of March 2026. Five trees have been identified for pollarding by the Conservation and Arboricultural Teams. Working with Treeconomics the wider reassessment of the Open Spaces carbon sequestration will now commence on-the-ground surveys in the spring of 2026 when leaves are back on trees.

6.4 At Copped Hall, progress on hedge planting is well underway. A 1.3km hedge fence has been installed to protect the new growth, and volunteers alongside our local team have successfully planted 10% of the planned 10,000 whips. To support healthy establishment, we've started applying our own woodchip mulch.

6.5 Leaky dam construction is progressing across multiple sites working with in house teams and volunteers. Six water level monitors have been deployed to assess flow impacts, with signage encouraging volunteer data collection, and morphological stream surveys are ongoing.

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

7.1 The Epping Forest Act 150 Celebrations Oversight Group met in November to plan 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrations for the Epping Forest Act, establishing a framework for a series of civic, cultural, and community events over multiple years. Key discussions included event scheduling, branding, partnership management, resource limitations, and the formation of subgroups to drive specific workstreams.

- The festival will launch with a Parliamentary Reception and include major events such as Lord Mayor's Show, and a final civic dinner.
- Over 38 event ideas were gathered, spanning lectures, exhibitions, walks, and merchandise, with a focus on both income generation and community inclusion.
- Branding and partnership agreements are a priority to ensure City of London recognition and protect intellectual property.
- The strategy aims to highlight both the City's stewardship and the Forest's social impact, with activities mapped across different locations to engage diverse communities.

- Risks include resource constraints, the need for early planning, and the importance of prioritising activities based on funding and capacity.

7.2 The Engagement and Accessibility Group met in December and discussed oversight and planning for several Epping Forest projects, focusing on visitor management, transport strategy, path improvements, risk and safety, accessibility, and engagement. The meeting emphasised evidence-based decision-making, balancing conservation with public access, and the need for clear strategies and communication, including the following key points:

- **Visitor Management Strategy:** Progress delayed pending new data; group will review draft strategy in February, focusing on evidence-based approaches to managing visitor impact and site usage.
- **Transport Strategy:** Discussion on integrating transport with visitor management, including ideas for cycle routes, public transport, and wayfinding; emphasis on connecting Forest access with surrounding towns and reducing car use.
- **Path Projects:** Updates on surfacing and maintenance, especially Gloucester Ride and Reservoir Wood; challenges with materials, weather, and balancing accessibility with conservation.
- **Risk and Safety:** Need for balancing visitor safety with maintaining wilderness aspects
- **Accessibility:** Plans for an updated audit and strategy, aiming for least restrictive access and improved information for visitors with disabilities; inclusion and partnerships highlighted for future development.
- **SAMMs Officers:** Introduction of new staff roles focused on conservation and visitor management.

7.3 The Epping Forest Brambly Hedge Trail was officially opened on 10 October and a new Trail pack was published, including a pull-out map, Brambly Hedge-themed pencil and a completer's sticker, which is now on sale at the Epping Forest Visitor Centre at Chingford for £3. The launch resulted in excellent social media coverage, with posts from Visit England, Brambly Hedge Official and Sir Iain Duncan Smith MP. It was covered by local news including BBC Essex.

7.4 Golf course income this third quarter has seen a total increase of 17% compared with last year.

Q3 Update (April 1st - December 31st figures)

	2024/25	2025/26	Up/Down	% increase
<b>Greenfees</b>	£486,987.92	£561,370.08	£74,382.16	15
<b>Drinks</b>	£8,149.60	£9,918.79	£1,769.19	22
<b>Hire</b>	£43,952.50	£60,108.51	£16,156.01	37
<b>Sales</b>	£32,656.40	£35,545.90	£2,889.50	9
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>£571,746.42</b>	<b>£666,943.28</b>	<b>£95,196.86</b>	<b>17</b>

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

8.1 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](#).

8.2 The Conservation Management Plan for the Temple indicated non urgent external works. These have now been completed and included repainting, repointing and repairs to the external and windows.

8.3 Various events took place between October and December, including an Epping Forest collective photography workshop, a youth volunteer litter pick, engagement sessions about the Habitat Restoration Programme at Long Running, monthly Little Saplings and guided tours of the Hunting Lodge and the Epping Forest exhibition. Art exhibitions and talks took place as well as various volunteer sessions, including a successful volunteer event to decorate Queen Elizabeth's Hunting Lodge with greenery at the end of November.

8.4 The Engagement Team attended three further roadshows as the year ended, Copped Hall Apple Day, A Vision of Britain event and the Essex Field Club annual conference, all of which were very useful for engagement.

8.5 The Brambly Hedge Trail was officially launched on 10 October, with successful social media and media coverage received, and was attended by Sir Iain Duncan Smith MP and Lady Victoria Borwick. The Trail has proved very popular, with many purchasing the new Trail leaflet pack at the Visitor Centre, despite the problems experienced with the Gloucester Ride path.

8.6 LIDAR project: The project has been given the formal name of 'Epping Forest: A Landscape Revealed'. The volunteer archival researchers continue investigating their assigned topics and another check-in session was held in November. 'Fieldwalking' volunteers received training to use the equipment and technology for the surveys which begin in January.

## **9.0 Education**

9.1 The Natural Environment Learning Team delivered to 648 school students—a slight increase on last year. All participating schools were from Waltham Forest, Hackney, and Islington, boroughs with significantly high rates of child poverty.

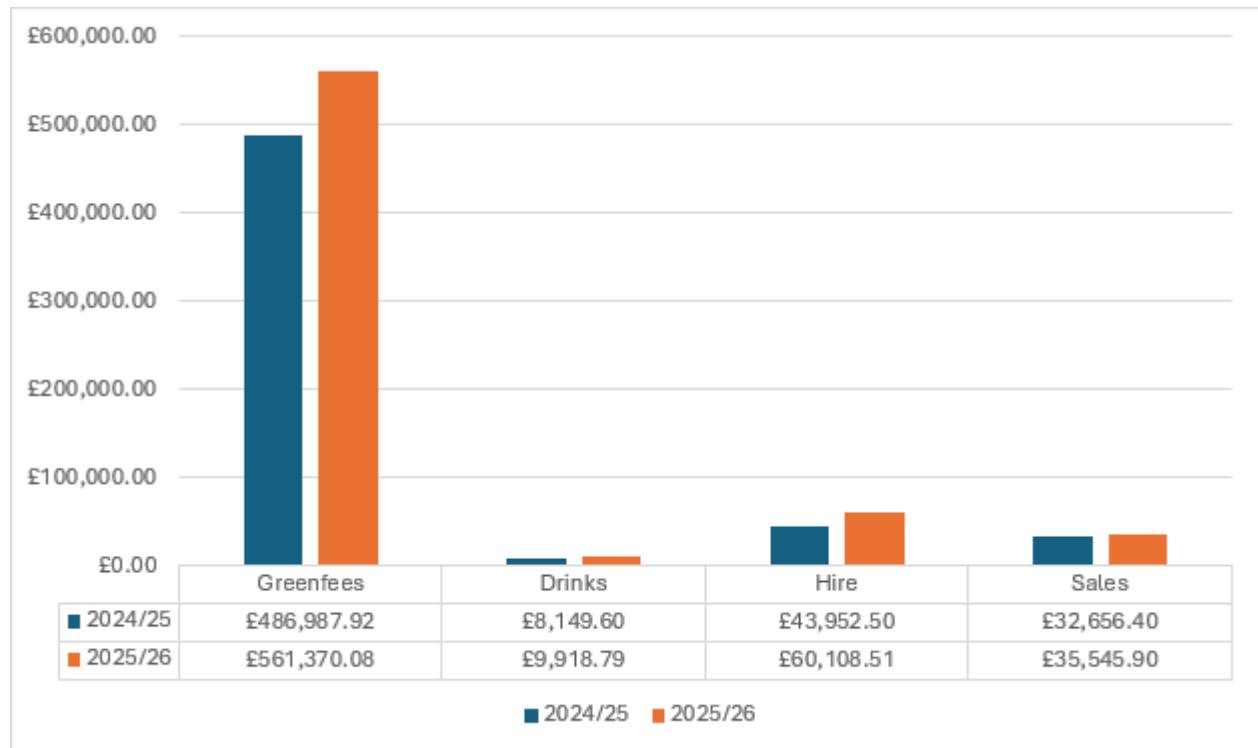
9.2 Targeted learning experiences were delivered for a group of young asylum seekers, in partnership with the City of London Virtual School. Through Forest-based activities, these young people were able to build confidence, connect with nature, and develop social and communication skills within a supportive and inclusive environment. The youth programme engaged a total of 15 young people with special educational needs in creating nature-based table decorations for the Committee

Dinner, and in a bespoke 'caring for the environment' learning session at Epping Forest.

## **10.0 A resilient environment, where challenges are embraced and opportunities explored**

10.1 The plaque sponsorship scheme has secured £19,549 in October- December.

10.2 Income from sales generated by Chingford Golf Course covering April 1<sup>st</sup> 2025 – December 31<sup>st</sup> 2025 (Q1-Q3) saw an increase of £95,196.86 (17%) compared to income in the same periods last year.



## **11.0 Equity, Equality Diversity and Inclusion**

11.1 This quarter improvements were made to the easy access trail at High Beach.

11.2 Stiles removed as part of a long-term plan to create least restrictive access across the Forest and Buffer Lands.

11.3 Upgrade made to the surfacing of Gloucester Ride which will improve visitor experience.

11.4 Braille panels added to the Brambly Hedge Trail.

11.5 Staff attendance at Mental Health First Aid training.

11.6 EF contributes to extensive Internal EEDI Action Plan.

## **12.0 Staff News**

12.1 Our administration apprentice completed her two-year placement with a distinction and has been successful in being appointed to a permanent role.

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

- Three Assistant Forest Keepers
- Events Assistant Apprentice
- Support Services Officer

12.3 Appointments made but yet to start in roles:

- Access and Development Manager
- Conservation Herd Manager
- Arborist

12.4 Advertised and in progress:

- Assistant Forest Keeper (Driver)
- Forest Keeper
- Casual Forest Keepers
- Health and Safety Apprentice
- Digital Content Officer

12.5 Leavers during this period:

- Support Services Officer
- Office Manager
- Conservation Herd Manager
- Arborist

## **13.0 Volunteers**

13.1 Mansion House is hosting an Epping Forest display showcasing an Ancient Beech Tree with interpretation through time. In October volunteers involved in the project were given a tour to see their work on display.

13.2 Ecological monitoring volunteers season drew to a close with a celebration event showcasing results and findings.

13.3 Volunteers decorated the Queen Elizabeth Hunting Lodge with festive foliage in a 'Deck the Halls' floristry event.

13.4 Corporate volunteering launched with opportunities to book into tree planting at Copped Hall and the creation of leaky dams as part of the carbon removals projects.

## **14.0 Staff Training**

14.1 The following training was delivered:

- LLantra tree surveying for Keepers
- Leaky dam building 'Train the Trainer' for Keepers
- Cattle checking training with Keepers and Grazing Team
- Manual Handling (covering approximately 40 employees)
- First Aid at Work
- Forestry training
- Core Safety and Accident and Investigation training was delivered to supervisors, managers and team leaders.