

Committee(s)	Dated:
Epping Forest and Commons	21 November 2016
Subject: Epping Forest - Superintendent's Update for August and September 2016 (SEF 47/16)	Public
Report of: Superintendent of Epping Forest	For Information
Report author: Paul Thomson – Epping Forest	

Summary

This purpose of this report is to summarise the Epping Forest Division's activities across August and September 2016.

Of particular note was significant works across the Forest to facilitate wood-pasture restoration; the increased costs of vegetation cutting following substantial grass growth and a longer cutting period; the renewal of the coveted 'Blue Badge' Visitor Attraction and Quality Assurance Scheme (VAQAS) for visitor facilities at Epping Forest and the award by the Arts Council of full Museum Accreditation to The View collection.

Recommendation(s)

Members are asked to:

- Note the report.

Main Report

Staff and Volunteers

1. Two full time litter pickers, a Forest Keeper, a temporary Arborist post were recruited during the reporting period. The recruitment of both a temporary Geographic Information Systems (GIS) Officer and a full-time Health and Safety Assistant post is also underway.

Budgets

2. Spending at 59% for the 2016/17 financial year remains close to the required profile at six month point when grant funding arrears are taken into account. Revised estimates for the current and next financial year have been submitted.

Weather

3. After a very wet June, the third quarter of the year has been overall very dry. In contrast to the last quarter being the wettest, the third quarter has been the driest period since recordings were first taken at Epping Forest in 1979,. Out of the 87.6mm of rain over the last 3 months, 32mm of it fell in one evening in September, which is 36.5% of the total for this quarter.
4. The clay seams in the Forest have completely dried and cracked and the majority of the brooks were also fully dried out, which again is in complete contrast to the last quarter.

Epping Forest Projects

Open Spaces Bill 2016

5. The Opposed Bill Committee scheduled for 15 November will hear the final petition and will be attended by the Director and Superintendent of Epping Forest, as well as colleagues from Remembrancers.

Branching Out Project/Forest Transport Strategy

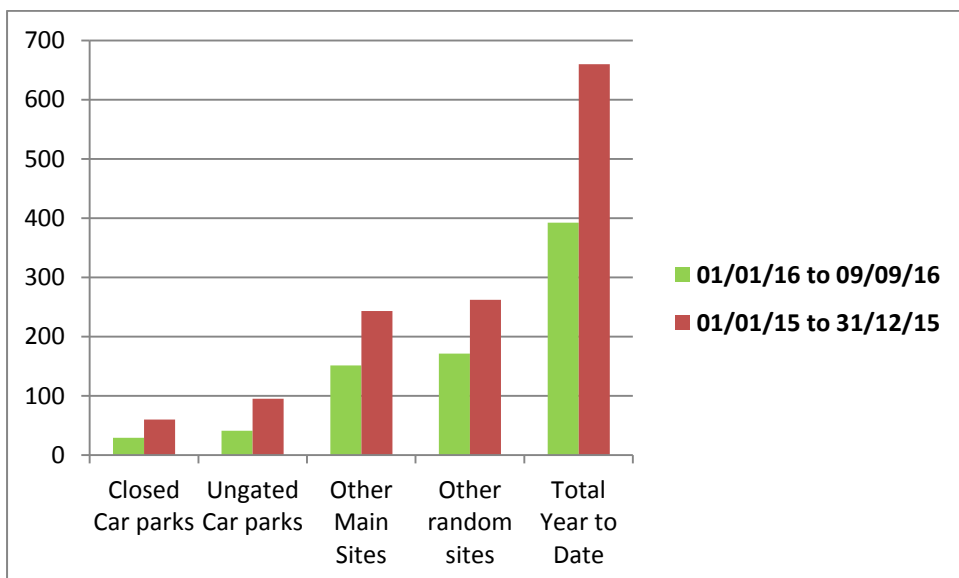
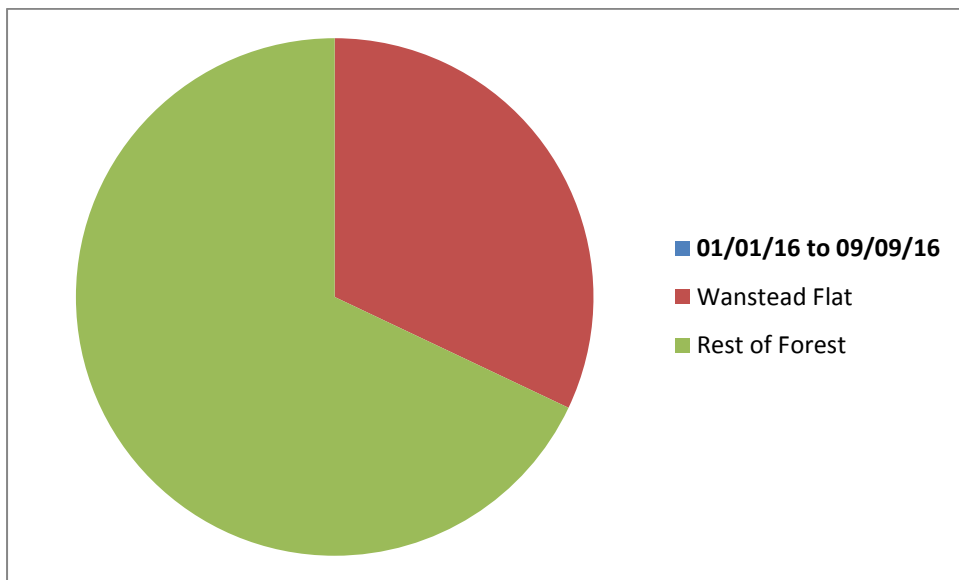
6. The 'gateway' signage rollout began in mid-September 2016 and, as at 30 September, 6 of the 31 units were completed with one further sub-frame installed awaiting VE cladding. The target date for completion of all installations is the 17 November 2016. The first installation was unveiled in a small ceremony on the Wednesday 21 September which was attended by the Chairman, Verderer Morris, local councillors and a number of descendants of the artist, Walter Spradbery, who's work features on the new signs. This was also the first day of a short exhibition entitled 'Beyond the City', a display of Transport for London pre-war advertising posters to encourage travel to Epping Forest. The exhibition included works by Walter Spradbery and others and celebrated the chosen design.

Forest Services

Fly tipping

7. There has been Year to date 263 fly tips of which we have had 47 since the last report this represents a 33% decrease from the previous year.
8. It is of note that of the 47 Fly tips since the last report 27 occurred in or around Wanstead flats. Out of 263 fly tips to date 124 have occurred in or around Wanstead Flats
9. Recent revised guidance by the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA) that the Agency will no longer provide details of vehicles suspected of being involved in fly-tipping unless there has been a witness statement is restricting the use of evidence secured through interviews.
10. Forest Keepers are working with the Environment Agency National Intelligence Unit in Solihull to deal with serious offenders identified as part of two investigations. The Metropolitan Police Service are also assisting with the investigations. A revised Waste Duty of Care Code of Practice issued in March 2016 makes the offence a 'strict' liability without the need to prove fault, which will, support future cases presented in Court.

11. Active partnership work on enviro-crimes with Epping Forest District Council and the London Boroughs of Newham; Redbridge and Waltham Forest has been extended to the Boroughs of Haringey, Enfield, Brent, Barking and Dagenham and the Royal Borough of Greenwich with regards to information sharing and sharing of facilities (interview rooms).
12. LBR Community Policing Team has installed a monitored CCTV camera on the Centre Road car park, in response to the high number of fly tips at this location. This is monitored through their control suite and will be commissioned in the next few weeks. Additionally there is joint working between Forest Keeper and Community Policing teams, local residents and volunteer groups to monitor key fly tip sites.



Rough Sleepers

13. There have been 11 camps found during the reporting period, compared to 7 the previous year, an increase of 57%. These camps are in the Leyton Flats, Wanstead Flats, Wanstead Park, Gilberts Slade, Canada Plain and Bushwood areas of the Forest.
14. Forest Keepers continue to work in partnership with outreach organisations to signpost vulnerable people and long term rough sleepers to appropriate accommodation. Forest Keepers conduct regular joint patrols with the Community Policing and Safer Neighbourhood Teams and the Keeper Team amends its shift timings to be able to target occupied rough sleeper camps and carry out interdiction work. Early intervention reduces the overall clear up costs and level of work for the litter picker teams, once the rough sleeper has been moved on.

Enforcement Activity

15. Nine prosecutions were heard during the period under report (see table 1)

Trial Date	Table 1Name	Offence	Location	Outcome	Costs
29.09.16	Alan GOODMAN	Wanstead Park Bye-Law No.5	Thames Court	GUILTY	Costs £50 Fine £50 V/s 20
29.09.16	Vijay LAKHANI	EPA S33 (1)	Thames Court	GUILTY	Costs £300 Fine £320 V/S £32
29.09.16	Ciprian NECHITA	EPA 34 1 (a) 2 (a) & 6	Thames Magistrates Court	WARRANT ISSUED	
29.09.16	Vasile BILIBOU	EPA 34 1 (a) 2 (a) & 6	Thames Magistrates Court	WARRANT ISSUED	
29.09.16	Mohammed F ALAM	EPA 34 1 (a) 2 (a) & 6	Thames Magistrates Court	TRIAL 21/10/2016	
29.09.16	Mohammed K ISLAM	EPA 34 1 (a) 2 (a) & 6	Thames Magistrates Court	WARRANT ISSUED	

29.09.16	Home Traders Ltd	EPA S34 1 (a)	Thames Magistrates Court	TRIAL 09/12/2016	
29.09.16	Arshian Ahmed KHAN	EPA S34 1 (a)	Thames Magistrates Court	TRIAL 09/12/2016	
29.09.16	Juned MIAH	EPA 34 1 (a)	Thames Magistrates Court	WARRANT ISSUED	

Licences

16. A total of 48 licences for events were issued during the two months being reported, which yielded an income of £8,613.83 plus VAT.
17. 37 licences were issued during the same period in 2015 (income of £26,825.00 which includes a compound licence of £17,388)

Bushcraft

18. Ten Bushcraft Events have been delivered by FK and volunteers during August and September engaging 103 children and 113 adults, generating £894.18 of income.
19. As of 30 September, the net profit from Bushcraft events for the first six months of this financial year stands at £2,814.31 net.
20. Volunteers contributed 19 hours to the success of this project, 9 unskilled hours and 10 professional volunteer hours totalling £493.70 which off sets the £486.00 of staff time required for these events.
21. Recruitment is underway for more volunteers, in conjunction with the Volunteer Development Officer.
22. 3 members of staff have now completed their Level Two Food Hygiene Certificate to support the involvement of food preparation and cooking in Bushcraft courses.

Travellers

23. Forest Keepers have supported Loughton Town Council (LTC) staff regarding the presence of Travellers on Town Council Land at Hillyfields, Loughton which is bordered by Forest Land. The occupation included 9 caravans and associated vehicles between 8 September and 14 September. LTC successfully took legal action to serve notice on the travellers however the site was reoccupied again a few days later. The Head Forest Keeper has been in discussion with LTC regarding landscaping action that may be taken to prevent future incursions.

Heritage; Landscape and Nature Conservation

Heritage

24. An application for funding has been submitted to Natural England to pay for the production of a Parkland Management Plan for Copped Hall. Historic England and Natural England identified Registered Parks and Gardens in the region that do not currently have plans and approached Epping Forest Officers with regard to Copped Hall. These two agencies funded a consultant to prepare the application on our behalf. A decision will be made early 2017. If successful Epping Forest Officers will work with Historic England and Natural England to tender for the preparation of this plan which will be funded at 80%.

Biodiversity

25. For the first time, **Japanese Knotweed** control has been undertaken without the commissioning of contractors and, instead, with the help of colleagues from North London Open Spaces (NLOS). NLOS Conservation Supervisor Richard Payne has been successfully treating this non-native invasive species for several years. He visited Epping in August to treat new areas of the knotweed and train a member of Epping Forest staff. This has resulted in a costs saving compared to the previous external contract and there are plans to work together in the future and share equipment.
26. Results from the **Oak Processionary Moth** survey has shown an increase in number of adult moths caught in the six traps set up and monitored by CoL staff. In 2014 and 2015 six and four respectively were trapped whilst in 2016 the catch was 14 in total. The Forestry Commission have also completed a wider survey this year which included additional traps in Epping Forest monitored by external consultants. However no results from this extra coverage have been released yet. Nonetheless, no caterpillar “nests” have been observed during this year. The nearest nest infestations are along the shared boundary of the London Boroughs of Hackney and Waltham Forest. Therefore, there is no public health risk in the Forest at the moment and it remains within the outer ‘*protected zone*’. As a consequence The Conservators, under statutory plant health notice, would be required to remove any nests discovered.
27. **Fungi** aroused considerable media interest throughout September because of the ban on fungi foraging introduced by the Forestry Commission at the New Forest. Epping Forest’s approach was much cited and several interviews were given to both the newspaper and TV media. The fungi themselves proved more elusive due to the dry conditions that continued from the summer months and into September.
28. On the subject of fungi two more days fieldwork were conducted by the Cardiff University **PhD study** sampling fungal communities from Beech trees for a comparison with those of Windsor Forest. The second year report from this study is due imminently.

Grazing

29. As previewed in my last report, by mutual agreement with our contractor, Wildlife & Countryside Services, the grazing contract was terminated 18 months early on 31st October. Some of the cattle were removed from the Forest in late September whilst since then the herd of 28 Red Poll have been removed from Fairmead in early October and the remaining Red Polls on the Buffer Lands followed later that month. Two separate reports related to grazing, on the continuity arrangements for cattle herd management and on the impacts on the vegetation this year, have been submitted to your Committee's November meeting.

Agri-environment Schemes

30. The payment rate for the Basic Payment Scheme (BPS) was set over the month of September. The average Euro to pound exchange rate was averaged across the month and was €1 = £0.73129 for the 2016 BPS payments. This has resulted in a 16% higher payment rate than that received in 2015, and will result in around £15,000 additional income to support the grassland conservation management at Epping Forest and its Buffer Lands.
31. Contractors have been used for the first time to deliver habitat works required under the Higher Level Stewardship scheme (HLS). Three contractors were commissioned and were working throughout September in wood-pasture restoration areas in Walthamstow Forest, Barn Hoppitt and High Beach. The work at High Beach continues whilst at Walthamstow Forest it has been completed.

Land Management

Town & Country Planning

32. The public consultations for the two Local Plans at Broxbourne Borough Council and London Borough of Redbridge highlighted in my last Superintendent's Report closed on 16th and 30th September 2016 respectively. Comments were made on specific aspects of both of these Plans and these are appended to this report (see **Appendices 1 and 2**).
33. In addition, negotiations on the Memorandum of Understanding between the four SHMA Local (District) Authorities (LPAs) – Uttlesford, East Herts, Harlow and Epping Forest – and Natural England and The Conservators were completed and the MoU prepared for signing. We are still awaiting the copy to be signed by the Chairman although Natural England has completed its signing.
34. Further to this we commissioned a preliminary and summary-only analysis of the data from the Epping Forest Visitor Survey 2010 – 2015 by *Footprint Ecology* to assist the four SHMA LPAs in their role as "competent authorities" for the Epping Forest Special Area of Conservation (SAC) under the Habitat Regulations 2010 (as amended). We have requested that they now fund a full analysis and close any gaps in these data so as to enable a full Habitats Regulation Assessment to be carried out as part of their Local Plans. The preliminary analysis was shared with all the participants as part of the Duty to

Co-operate in the Local Plan process and can be found at **Appendix 3** of this report.

35. Officers commented on 11 planning applications during the period in question. Key points included:
- a. EFDC – Millhouse Farm, Epping – 7 dwellings for the over 55's. This is a reduction on the previous application which was for 10 dwellings. Access to the site is over Forest Land at Bell Common.
 - b. EFDC – Knoll House, Sewardstonebury – 2 dwellings in the grounds of Knoll House – Members recently approved independent access rights for one dwelling and negotiations are continuing on the basis of 1 dwelling only.
 - c. EFDC – Netherhouse Farm – pre-application for change of use of the land to a woodland cemetery / crematorium including a reception building and meeting hall.

Update:

d. Garden Centre, Crown Hill – Outline application for 21 residential houses – this was REFUSED on grounds including inappropriate development within the Green Belt; the scale of the proposal would result in the overdevelopment of the site; unsustainable development. However, the site has been cleared, therefore a further application or appeal is expected.

Licences

36. Licences for the ice cream vans at Pillow Mounds, High Beach and Connaught Waters have been renewed for a further three years from 1st January 2017. The annual income will increase by 16% to £15,745 for the two units.

Operations

Habitat Works

37. **Wood-pasture Restoration and Management:** Until Feb 2017 up to two arborist teams will be working each day on meeting our HLS commitments to restore over 400 ha of the Forest to a more open condition. The annual maintenance work to keep previously cleared areas open by cutting with tractor and flail have started and normally continues until October however the dry conditions is allowing us to work longer. Extraction of the felled cordwood commenced in July and is being taken to the Black Barns from where it is sold each year to local firewood merchants.
38. To help progress the wood pasture works the Operations Team undertook a four week hire of the Bobcat Mulcher that had been previously trialled. This has helped the team to greatly progress works at Gilberts Slade, Walthamstow Forest and Warren Wood slope, with quite extensive work completed at the former two sites.
39. In a change of approach we have also engaged contractors to help progress the wood pasture restoration program. Following a tender with a range of sites individually priced we engaged three companies to undertake work based on the lowest price for each site. All works have been completed successfully

and to a good standard and helpfully we have a much better idea of the contract costs for this work to aid planning.

40. **Wanstead Park, Floating Pennywort control:** The control works for this year are now complete. The apparently weed free appearance has now led to calls for water to be allowed out of the Perch Pond to fill the Ornamental Waters. This however is not advisable until we have greater confidence in the extent of the control work.
41. **Grassland Management:** We are coming to the end of our grass cutting work for this year. Grass growth has been substantial which has increased some costs such as the green waste removal however it has also meant we have a good stock of haylage for the next couple of winters. The dry weather has also meant we have been able to cut some of our wetter sites. On average a total of 327.7 ha of land is managed by regular cutting. Some sites require multiple cuts resulting in each year a total of 355 ha being worked. Of this worked area 206.24 ha is currently undertaken by contractors and 140.75 ha by Epping Forest (EF) staff and volunteers
42. **Highways Verge Vegetation:** The in-house teams have been working the sightlines, however the vigorous grass growth has required a number of sites to be revisited with further cuts. Contract cutting of highways verge vegetation commenced in August but has been slower than hoped for due to changes in the contractor's staff. Some areas have proved difficult due to parked cars and we have agreed replacement work areas to make up for not doing these initial areas for which different approaches will be developed..
43. **Tree Safety:** On the 17th September we had a large Beech tree collapse on to the Epping New Road. While a car was damaged nobody was injured. The independent investigation commissioned by us found that no external defects or symptoms would have been identifiable in 'close proximity to the base of the tree that could be associated with the failure of the tree'. As a consequence it would have been difficult to have foreseen that the tree would have fallen. This information has been passed to our insurers.
44. We continue to work through the trees identified of concern by the 2015/16 annual survey with the 2016/17 survey about to be commissioned.

Access Works

45. Hill Wood Car Park: Contract works are now complete. We are working with contractor on a number of small snagging issues to the Theydon Road car park.

Visitor Services

Communication and Information

46. As of 26 October 2016 our social media following is:
 - Twitter followers: 5132
 - Facebook likes: 469
 - Instagram followers: 143
47. The #TreesNotTrash (anti-fly tipping) campaign on social media has been a great success.
48. Forest Focus magazine distribution and Mailchimp® subscription continues to grow.
49. In October, we promoted the #TreesNotTrash campaign and encouraged the public to feed birds the correct foods, via a leaflet drop to residents local to Wanstead Flats. This was a good example of partnership working with Newham who paid for the printing and distributed the leaflet with their local resident advisory notice about the firework display on Wanstead Flats.
50. Good press coverage received with Essex Life (Buckhurst Hill) promoting Epping Forest and our events.
51. Primary Times provided editorial about Epping Forest alongside the usual advertisement.

VAQAS

52. The View, Hunting Lodge and the Temple were again awarded the coveted Visit England 'Blue Badge' VAQAS quality mark with the Epping Forest as a whole being awarded the same quality mark for the second year. The VAQAS award means that Epping Forest qualifies as a visitor attraction making it the 5th largest free attraction in London

Chingford Golf Course

53. Play figures have been steady over August and September with the weather remaining largely fair.
54. The sports teams have been restructured so that the Golf Manager Gordon Dunn now also manages the Grounds Team and bookings at Wanstead Flats for football as well as at Chingford Golf Course. Although in the early stages we hope to deliver a more efficient and higher standard of service to our users whilst making financial efficiencies.
55. Quotations from builders have been sought for refurbishment of the Caddie House with works anticipated to commence in the New Year at the latest.
56. The Green keeping team continue to provide an excellent facility with winter works beginning over the past month. Primarily, they will level the teeing grounds which have become heavily worn. Other winter works are scheduled to follow including the review of the course layout and playability.
57. Subject to the essential winter maintenance being completed on the golf course, we hope to create a Foot Golf Course on the site of the old practice ground. This would allow the course to bridge the gap between the many

youngsters who play football but have not tried golf; it would also provide an activity for families and non-golfers alike.

58. The Golf Manager has had several “informal” liaison meetings with Royal Epping Forest Golf Club & Chingford Golf Club. These meetings have been used to discuss course condition, tee time management/utilisation and the prospect of the clubs joining forces for the benefit of all.
59. The Café tender application process closed on 20 October, with interviews planned to take place from week commencing 7 November.
60. Groupon offers are now active, in the first 10 days we sold 24 deals (approximately 100 people), which equates to 100 new email addresses that we can target directly . with Wowcher offers due in November we will use Wowcher and Groupon throughout the winter to grow our database.
61. Promotion of our winter offers has begun, these include 4 ball offers from £40, Twilight from 12pm for £10, winter society specials and all advertise a full 18 holes and greens all year round.

Visitor Services Events

62. The Danny Champion of the World open air theatre performance by the Illyria Theatre Company was again a sell out with an audience of 450.
63. The summer art show featured over 60 artists and pulled in new audiences to the View
64. To complement the installation of the new Gateway signage we hosted an exhibition of the TFL pre-war posters for Epping Forest. Several featured art work by Walter Spradbery whose work features on the Gateway signs. Postcards and copies of these advertising posters are selling well in the gift shop.
65. **The Meet our Tudor Herbwife** attracted 287 visitors to the Hunting Lodge; more than double a normal day.
66. A free drop in session for a family audience with displays in the Tudor kitchen linking ‘herbs’ you can see in the Forest with Tudor medicine, how people would have thought about disease, the four humours and Henry VIII’s health when he commissioned the Hunting Lodge in 1543. Casual Information Assistant Kim Walker) wore Tudor costume as the herbwife
67. For the full period of the summer holidays, we set up an on going art activity based around the Elizabethan woodcuts from ‘A Treatise on Venerie’ which show the Queen visiting a hunt standing. We encouraged children (and adults) to think themselves into the role of characters – The Queen, courtiers, huntsmen, dogs – in the illustrations.

Open House

68. Open House at The Temple and The View/Queen Elizabeth’s Hunting Lodge We participated in this London-wide event with a Wanstead Heritage Walk at the Temple opening supported by a display of Wanstead original prints from our museum collection. An introductory talk on Epping Forest focussed on the history of the Hunting Lodge, was repeated three times across the day plus a

display of objects from the museum. The Wanstead Walk was attended by 42 people.

69. Temple visitor figures, 119 adults and 14 children. Queen Elizabeth's Hunting Lodge: 178 adults/40 children = 218 total

Museum Accreditation

70. The View has been awarded full Museum Accreditation by the Arts Council. The accreditation serves as a hallmark of excellence for the centre. In order to qualify, the management of The View, the services it offers and how its collections are cared for, must all meet a set of standards which are designed to measure the quality of museums and exhibitions across the UK.

The View Museum update

71. Forest Centres Officer was successful in achieving a £5,000 grant from the Improve and Innovate fund from the Museum of London's hub development fund. This is to be spent on a pilot audience segmentation project together with a publication of a Forest walk booklet which will be distributed through local estate agents.

Major incidents

72. There have been no major incidents across the Forest. Fire setting in certain hollow trees has continued but has been dealt with effectively by the London Fires and Rescue Service.

Appendices

- Appendix 1 – on-line response submitted to Broxbourne Borough Council Local Plan Consultation
- Appendix 2 - on-line response submitted to London Borough of Redbridge Local Plan Consultation
- Appendix 3 - Epping Forest Visitor Survey 2010 – 2015 by *Footprint Ecology*

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