

FSC Epping Forest: Report on 2016

Introduction

The report below, summarises the achievements of FSC Epping Forest in 2016. The format of the report is linked to the Green Spaces, Learning Places; Open Spaces Learning Programme themes, demonstrating how FSC are supporting the City of London in connecting with surrounding communities. This report also summarises FSC Epping Forest performance against the 2016 FSC Epping Forest Action Plan, based on the FSC Corporate Plan and 2020 Vision, as submitted to the JCC in March 2016.

2016 Overview

FSC continues working together with the City of London to deliver high quality educational experiences in Epping Forest. 2016 was a very successful year, with 19,849 visitor days (18,543 visitors) and over 98% customer satisfaction. There were significant staff changes, with the retirement of Steve Bunce in June, and in July, a non work related serious incident in which a member of staff was hurt. Curriculum change continues to impact on business, specifically on the autumn term, and saw a shift in our customer base, which will continue into future years. FSC continues to develop across the London Region providing more internal support to staff, and also more external support to work in partnership and deliver projects. The hard work and dedication of the team, in a transitional year, is recognised in the successful year we had.

NB Where referenced, 'visitors' are each unique visitor attending FSC Epping Forest regardless of length of visit. 'visitor days' calculate attendance including multiple day visits.

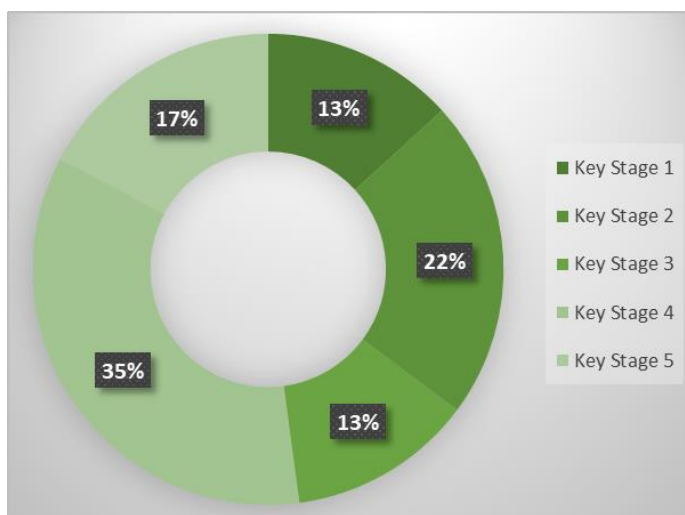
Work with the widest range of learners

Extend the range of opportunities for all to experience first-hand environmental understanding; Develop an integrated network of learning locations; Inspire, encourage and support learning through high quality resources.

Formal Education (schools)

Curriculum linked courses focus on developing knowledge and understanding of the natural environment, and by doing so students, become more able to link Epping Forest, their learning and the wider world. The experiences are enjoyable, supporting their wellbeing and increasing confidence in this environment. Students being to make connections with nature, and specifically with Epping Forest and develop towards being advocates for the future of Forest and other green spaces.

2016 school learners by Key Stage



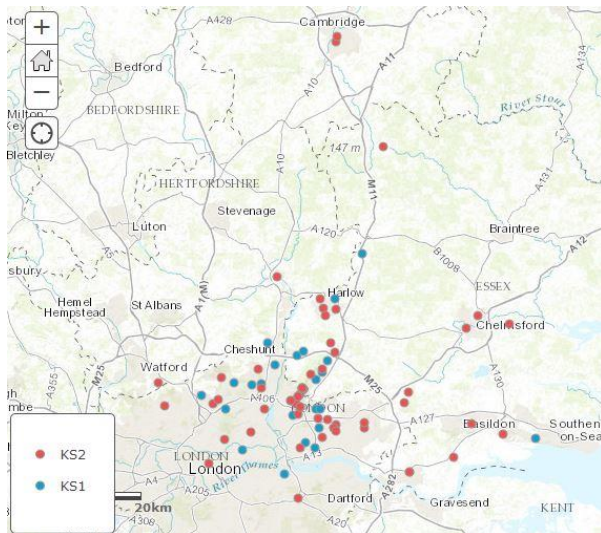
In 2016, 16,245 visitor days were delivered to school visitors.

The overall figure hides a changing booking pattern, which has seen a reduction in school visitors, and an increase in community visitors.

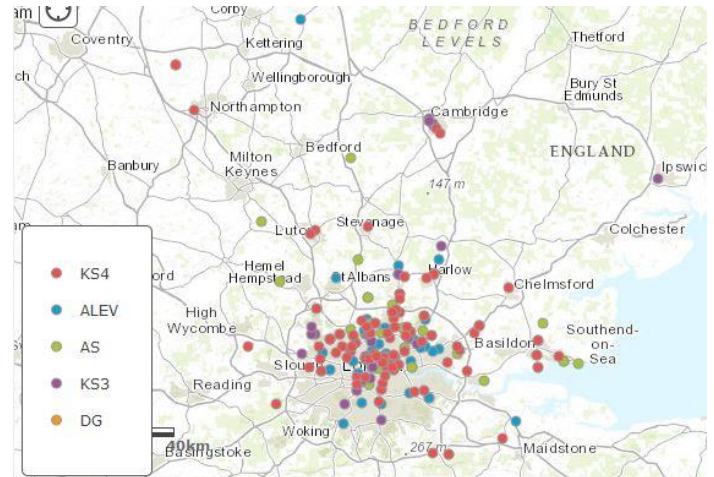
Following changes in Alevel biology, fewer groups stay multiple days impacting on the summer term. The change in Alevel geography rivers content then impacted on the Autumn term. This equates to a drop of 42% in Alevel visitors, and income, since 2014.

By subject, visitors were: 63% Geography, 21% Science and 16% Cross Curricular.

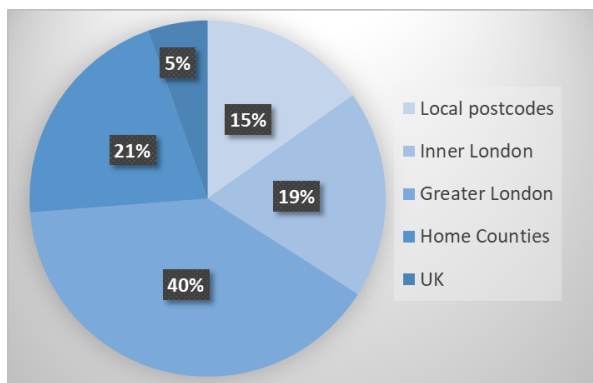
2016 Primary Schools



2016 Secondary Schools



Location of school learners



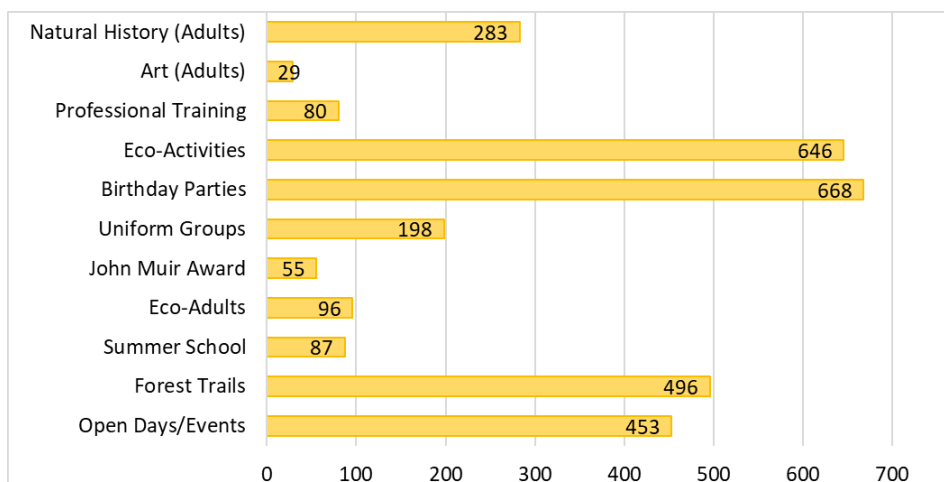
The above maps, and graph show the geographic location of our visitors by postcode.

2,463 (15%) visitors are from postcodes bordering Epping Forest (E12, E7, E1, W17, E18, E4, IG8, IG9, IG10, EN9, CM16), with an additional 9,521 (59%) visitors from Inner and Greater London.

Community Engagement and Play

FSC Epping Forest offers a range of courses and sessions that aim to engage the community across all ages and abilities, and at different levels of knowledge and understanding. The focus of the courses changes at different levels, but underpinning the content is to develop an understanding the value and importance of green spaces; increase confidence in using them; having a positive and meaningful experience and by doing so, increase wellbeing; and developing a connection with Epping Forest, that can be passed on to others.

2016 community learners



In 2016, 3,604 visitors took part in community engagement courses, activities and events. New offers included:

- John Muir Award – a week long programme for age 8+
- Forest Seedlings –age 18 months to 4 years
- Forest Trails - self guided trails, available in school holidays.
- Growing Up Wild – a Girl Guiding activity.

The origin of our customers is different for the two types of customer. For the Natural History and Arts customers the maps below show that whilst there are a significant number of London customers, there is also interest nationally. This is very positive, demonstrating that these visitors see Epping Forest as a great learning site, and that we are offering courses (content and staff) not available locally to them.

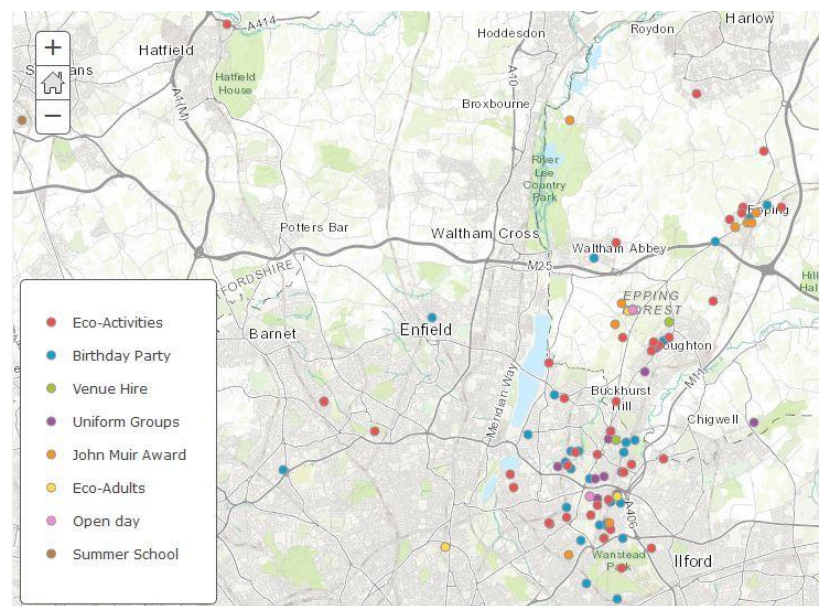
Of the above courses 8 were delivered at the Green Centre, Wat Tyler Country Park (with the Essex Field Club and Basildon Council) or at Forty Hall Farm (a Capel Manor College site). These partnerships allow us access to alternative teaching habitats, not available in the Forest, and broaden the overall offer.

Community learners on our courses, activities and events, show a good connection to the local community, with approx. 92% of visitors attending from postcode areas that border Epping Forest.

2016 Natural History and Arts learners by postcode of booking contact



2016 Community learners by postcode of booking contact



Subsidised learners

FSC is committed to extending opportunities where possible. Outdoor learning makes a huge positive contribution to young peoples’ life skills, school engagement, and educational achievement amongst others. FSC is committed to developing environmentally literate citizens, and providing a journey with a progressive set of experiences. As a charity, FSC recognises the value of reaching people in their local area and in delivering day opportunities engaging communities with their local space. This work is subsidised by the work of the rest of the FSC. An example is the FSC Bursary Fund and FSC Kids fund that provide financial assistance for those who can’t afford the experience.

The generous funding from City of London has enabled us to keep fees for schools low. This has allowed groups, that may otherwise not have visited to attend courses at FSC Epping Forest.

In 2016 Staff from FSC Epping Forest delivered 5 subsidised courses or events to 365 visitors, thanks to additional funding from the FSC kids fund, or FSC Epping Forest donated staff time to other local events, aimed at engaging the community with the Forest.

Developing Networks

As part of FSC London Region, FSC Epping Forest has benefitted from administration support, shared course development, joint staff training and when required, sharing or borrowing staff from other locations to cover busy periods.

FSC Epping Forest is a member of the Essex Learning Outside the Classroom Providers Network, that bring together the organisations working in this sector. We benefit from the support and training they give, and also are able to promote FSC and Epping Forest as a learning location.

Provide learning of the highest quality

Exceed learner expectations in the quality of service provided; Influence others to overcome barriers to first-hand experience; Be a partner of choice.

Exceeding Expectations

Customer feedback continues to be positive, with expectations of over 98% customers met or exceeded. Quotes from teachers included:

Covering the specification in this interactive manner, has enabled students to have a hands on approach to Biodiversity. (Alevel Biology)	Excellent progress was made by all our pupils. What they experienced today was invaluable. (Alevel Geography)	Fun, engaging and an excellent experience of the outdoors for children who don't often come to places like this. (Key Stage 2)
Excellent for urban pupils to appreciate their natural local surroundings. (KS4 Geography)	Excellent! A great way to consolidate learning and explore a river near to London! (KS3 Geography)	Most of the children in my class had never worn wellington boots or been to a forest prior to this trip. One child said "it was the best day of my life!" (Key Stage 2)

FSC Epping Forest External Badging

In 2016 FSC was awarded or maintained the following external awards or badging. We will continue to maintain and improve these standards and be reassessed as per the requirements of each award.

Quality Badge + Assessment June 2015	 2015	 Safety Shield Gold April 2016
 December 2014	 September 2015	

FSC Awards and External Badging

FSC Epping Forest supported FSC in achieving the following awards and external badging. We will continue to work with FSC to maintain or improve these.

 <p>April 2015</p>	 <p>Best Newcomer 2016</p>	
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Overcoming Barriers to first hand experiences

Almost all FSC Epping Forest courses are accessible for all. Where required, alternative teaching sites are used to ensure all visitors can take part in courses. Tutors use a range of skills to ensure that delivery of courses is adapted to learning needs.

Partnerships

City of London are the core partner for FSC Epping Forest, providing and maintaining the building in which we work. The ongoing support of officers and members is appreciated in providing a safe and suitable environment from which to deliver high quality teaching.

The Associates of Epping Forest, function as the 'Friends of' group, supporting the Centre in promoting our work to the local community and carrying out fundraising to support events and projects. They Associates currently have approx. 1,600 members.

Voluntary Action Epping Forest (VAEF) park their community transport minibus at the Centre. They are active in recruiting new volunteers for FSC Epping Forest, and their volunteer grounds team support us each year.

Ensure the Charity's activities are sustainable.

Develop our staff confidence and competence; Improve our environmental performance; Become an increasingly successful charity, more able to invest in its future.

Staff

The Centres main asset is the staff who continually work hard to provide a high standard of customer care for every group from enquiry to delivering the teaching session.

After 24 years, Steve Bunce retired as Head of Centre in June, and was replaced by Helen Robertson, who has previously worked at FSC Epping Forest. With a change in management, there is inevitably an impact and the team were incredibly supportive to ensure a smooth transition.

Three other staff left in 2016, 2 members of the education team, and the administrator.

In July, there was a non work related incident on site in which an FSC member of staff was injured. This incident shook the whole team and it was difficult for staff. We worked closely with the City of London staff to review systems and site security.

To achieve a better working environment for staff and volunteers, the offices were rearranged to create an education office in one room and a meeting room and volunteer space in the other room.

Working with Volunteers

In 2016 22 volunteers offered their time, volunteering in a range of support roles including teaching support, administration support, grounds maintenance, teacher advisory group, and other tasks.

Improving our Environmental performance

Staff continue to monitor our environmental performance, this includes recording energy use and waste volume on a weekly basis, and monitoring vehicle use when travelling to off site teaching locations.

FSC Epping Forest was awarded an FSC Green Fund grant to install 14 Solatubes in the main corridor. These will bring much needed natural light into the space. These will be installed in 2017.

From Autumn 2016 the office went almost paper free. Staff enthusiasm to change in the booking process and making more use of email and online data storage has made this possible.

Financial Report

The 2016 financial performance of the Centre is a separate paper.

Helen Robertson, FSC Epping Forest

