

Committee(s)	Dated:
Epping Forest and Commons Epping Forest Consultative	15 January 2018 24 January 2018
Subject: Epping Forest - Superintendent's Update for October to November 2017 (SEF 01/18)	Public
Report of: Superintendent of Epping Forest	For Information
Report author: Paul Thomson – Epping Forest	

Summary

This purpose of this report is to summarise progress with the work programme at Epping Forest across October and November 2017.

Of particular note was further progress on the passage of the City of London Corporation (Open Spaces) Bill; continuing high levels of fly tipping averaging 55% up on the previous year; the completion of the surfacing of the Woodford Green wayleave; continuing Operational works majoring on tree safety and wood pasture restoration, together with a successful series of visitor events and very positive publicity for the 800 year celebrations for the Forest Charter through both national media and the Lord Mayor's Show.

Recommendation(s)

Members are asked to:

- Note the report.

Main Report

Staff and Volunteers

1. Two staff members, the GIS Officer and Stores person have both returned to their substantive roles. A pilot reorganisation in the Forest Keeper team has resulted in the appointment of Criminal Investigations and Waste Management Officer to replace an existing Forest Keeper role and new arrangements for the management of litter pickers. The Division's part-time Communications Assistant has also been confirmed to a permanent role.

Budgets

2. At 67% through the year we are currently at 63% of target expenditure. Recent unanticipated successes on income generation, due in the large part to the development of a comprehensive licencing policy, has put the Division currently

in a slight underspend position. Plans are underway to achieve target expenditure by the year end.

Weather

3. October 2017 was much drier than average, with total monthly rainfall 69.7% below the average total rainfall for October since 1979 (60.3 mm). There were 15 days of rainfall in total. The wettest day was the 18 October, which saw 4.2 mm of rainfall. This is the third very dry October for Epping Forest in a row, as October 2016 saw rainfall 59.2% below average, and October 2015 saw rainfall 47.6% below average.
4. November 2017 was also drier than average, with total monthly rainfall 43.7% below the average total rainfall for November since 1979 (64.6 mm). There were 20 days of rainfall in total. Half of these 20 days saw rainfall less than 1 mm, with nine of these days having less than 0.5 mm. The wettest day was 10 November, which saw 8.2 mm of rainfall.

Sustainability

5. Sustainability – Photo-Voltaic solar panels at the Warren are now fully operational and are providing electricity to the site. Our total electricity drawn from the grid at weekends is now usually nil, even though a number of staff and assets are still working during this period. Epping Forest is well represented on the Departmental Energy Efficiency Board which is planning future sustainability improvements.

Epping Forest Projects

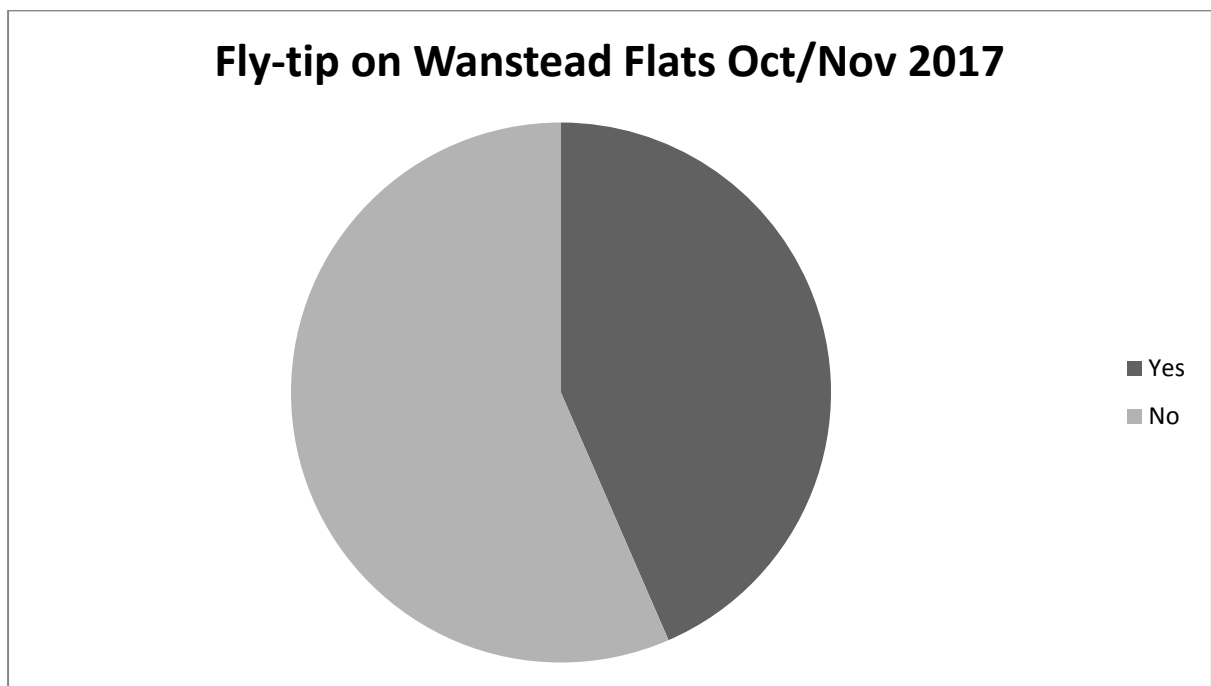
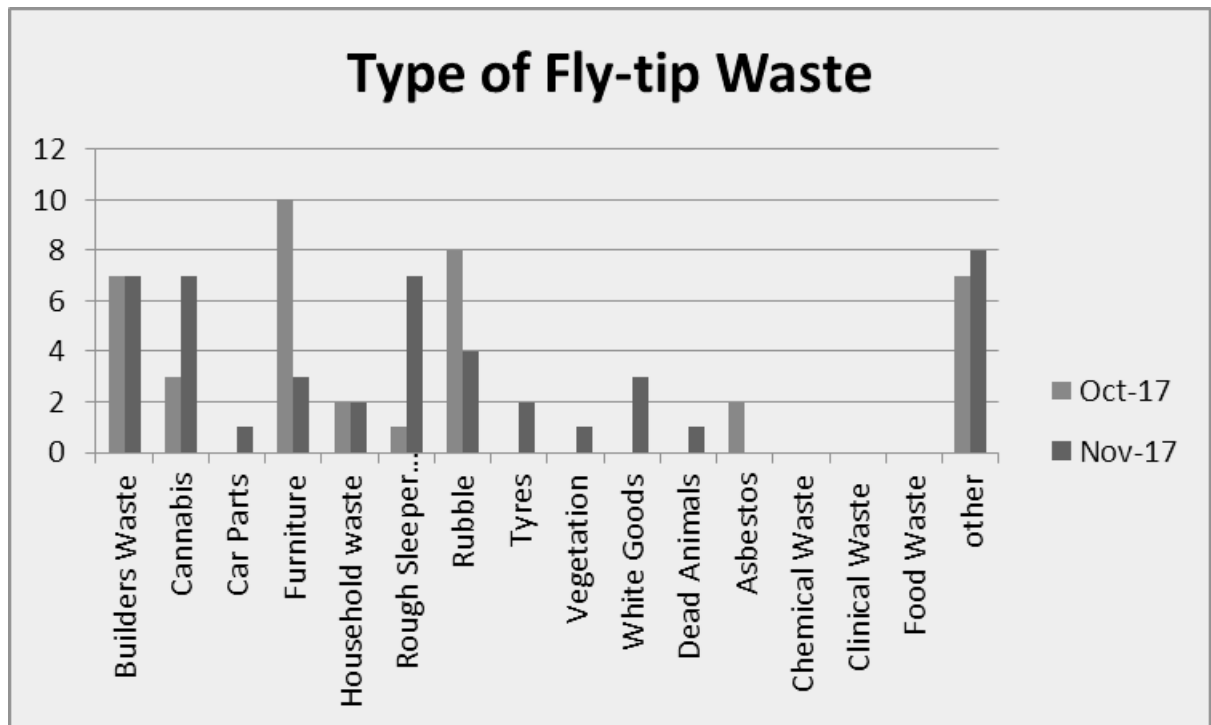
Open Spaces Bill 2016

6. The City of London Corporation (Open Spaces) Bill - The Remembrancer supported by the Superintendents of Epping Forest and Hampstead Heath appeared before the House of Lords Unopposed Bills Committee on the 13 December. The meeting was adjourned until the New Year to allow the City Corporation to formally answer a series of published questions relating to the Bill.

Forest Services

Fly tipping

7. There was a total 86 fly tips in the months of October (40) and November (46), providing a total for 2017 of 544 fly tips. For the same period in 2016 there were a total of 88 tips, giving a total of 351 tips which represents a 55% rise across the year. There was particular a rise in the number of fly-tips recorded within the Forest Interior. This increase can be attributed to the clearance of eight Rough Sleeper Camps and a fly-tip on Daws Hill, E4 where the waste was unusually deposited a considerable distance from the highway. Some 55% (47) of tipping occurred along roadsides. 41% of the tips occurred within the area of Wanstead Flats, especially in the vicinity of Centre Road and Capel Road.



Rough Sleepers

8. During the period of October/November 2017: eight Rough Sleeper Camps have been cleared from the Forest. This included two large unused camps on Leyton Flats and another camp in Forest Glade E11. In contrast to the usual Rough Sleeper Camp locations, Forest Keepers located an occupied camp in Bury Wood. Many of the camps that are being discovered or reported are found to be vacated which can be attributed to the opening of seasonal sanctuaries and volunteer activity to assist the homeless during the winter season.

Enforcement Activity

9. Four prosecutions were heard during the period under report.

Date of Court Hearing	Name of Defendant	Byelaw/ EPA	Court Name	Outcome	Amount Awarded
12.10.2017	Dean SHEA t/a Shea BUILDERS Ltd	EPA 34 1(a) Duty of Care	Chelmsford	Warrant for Arrest	n/a
12.10.2017	R&A Waste Ltd	EPA 34 1(a) Duty of Care	Chelmsford	Warrant for Arrest	n/a
12.10.2017	Richard MCGUIRE	EPA 33 1(a) Deposit of Waste	Chelmsford	Warrant for Arrest	n/a
12.10.2017	Alfie SMITH	EPA 33 1(a) Deposit of Waste	Chelmsford	Warrant for Arrest	n/a

Licences

10. A total of 32 licences for events were issued during the two months being reported, which yielded an income of £131,540.53 plus VAT (inclusive of one compound fee of £124,670. 48 licences were issued during the same period in 2016 (income of £10,002.84).

Bushcraft and Community Engagement

11. The Forest Keeper Team continues to assist the Learning Team with educational visits. On 9 October, the new dedicated educational area in Wanstead Park was used with a view to increase the educational provision to this site next year alongside continuing work at Barn Hoppitt.

12. Another very successful Baby Bushcraft event was held for pre-schoolers on 12 October.

13. Some 45 staff from the Chamberlain's Department joined the Epping Forest team on 20th October for a Corporate Away Day. Keepers were assisted on the day by our Volunteer Wardens as all continued work as part of Project Nightingale on Chingford Plain.

14. Two Venison Workshops have taken place this autumn. One for Redbridge Police Officers that also involved other elements of Bushcraft and a public event on 18 November. Despite being the subject of a web-based petition calling for their closure, the public events still continue to be oversubscribed and sell out as soon as they are advertised. The Keeper Team were again supported by Volunteer Wardens at both of these events.
15. Volunteer Wardens will be assisting with two vital projects over the winter. The Eagle Pond Visitor Survey runs until 22 December and the results will feed directly into the Conservation Statement that is being developed for the wider heritage landscape. The Furniture Audit is also underway and will run until March. Each Forest compartment will be checked and the furniture recorded. Volunteer Wardens are carrying out the majority of the field work whilst being mentored and managed by the Forest Keeper Team.

Unauthorised Occupations

16. There have been no Unauthorised Occupations recorded during this period. However, the City Corporation has continued to monitor traveller movements following evictions within the area by partner authorities.

Dog Incidents

17. There have been no serious dog incidents reported.

Open Riding

18. The unseasonably dry weather has allowed the Open Riding season to extend to the 27 November. Closure was discussed with the Horse Riders Forum on 29 October and formal notice of closure was sent to all licence holders on 23 November.

Heritage; Landscape and Nature Conservation

Biodiversity

19. Ramorum Disease update – Warren Plantation has re-infection of the regrowth from the original infected plants. At one of the locations the infection has spread to the immediate neighbouring plants/regrowth. This spread would have occurred before the plants were cut down. All infected plants have had their roots grubbed out and burnt on site. At this same location a single Sweet Chestnut is suspected of having the infection (awaiting Forestry Commission test results). It is likely that this tree will prove positive for the infection due to the symptoms shown and proximity to infected rhododendron. This tree has died very quickly and is no longer a risk of sporulation. A single larch tree is also suspected of having the disease which had been observed by the Forestry Commissions annual flyover of the site. This tree was felled and examined by the Forestry Commission with samples taken (awaiting results). It is unlikely that this tree will prove positive for the infection as there were no symptoms observed. No further evidence of infection or re-infection has been observed in Wanstead Park or at other rhododendron sites.

Agri-environment Schemes

20. Two contractors were commissioned to undertake habitat work as part of the HLS programme of work. This largely comprised wood pasture restoration scheduled at various sites between Lords Bushes and Honey Lane Quarters. This contract will complete in February 2018.
21. Epping Forest Officers have met with Natural England and Forestry Commission Officers to start discussions on the Countryside Stewardship Scheme, the successor to the HLS grant.

Grazing

22. The cattle came off the Forest mid-October and early November from the Buffer Lands. The move to winter housing completes a successful year of 16,000 grazing days. This exceeds previous grazing activity across all sites and follows the move to in-house management last November. All the cattle are now housed at Great Gregories; and calving has started with 10 calves being born and scanning results showing we are expecting another 18 calves over the winter period. 24 Sussex cows will arrive at Great Gregories at the end of November from City Commons which we will be over wintering and calving for them due to the loss of their stockman in October. The rest of the City Commons young stock will transfer in mid-January.
23. Additional works at Great Gregories have been taking place to improve the efficiency of the site and management of the cattle. This includes concrete feed passages, levelling off and laying hard-core surfaces and the upgrade of CCTV cameras so that all cattle can be viewed remotely day or night if required.

Heritage

24. Consultants Alan Baxter Associates have started preparing a Conservation Statement for George Gilbert Scott and William Moffatt designed Eagle Pond and Snaresbrook Crown Court heritage landscape. The Statement will be informed by a local survey conducted by volunteers to understand the significance of this site for the community.
25. **Town & Country Planning** - Land South of Horseshoe Hill. The proposed development was described by EFDC's Conservation Officer as a "one-off" statement dwelling, demonstrating that sympathetically executed, a modern building can be erected within a traditional context, with the constraints on the leading to fine architecture with the modern design dwelling becoming a new landmark in that part of Upshire – REFUSED on APPEAL
26. **BT/Openreach** – Four requests for BT DSLam (Digital Subscriber line access multiplexer) cabinets and associated cabling at Theydon Green, Fernhall Lane, Upshirebury Green and Mott Street have been received. There are legal difficulties with the acceptability of our agreements at the moment.
27. **Access to Woodford Rugby Club/ Haven House & others frontagers** – Restoration work on the access used by Kier Construction for last 60 weeks has now been completed and a bonded access track has been completed in line with your Committee's previous approval.

28. **Encroachment at Mott Street** – A Boundary hedge has been removed at High Beach in relation to a new build and a significant encroachment has been successfully challenged on an adjacent tenanted field. The Developer has conceded trespass and reinstatement of the land and hedge are in hand

Operations

Habitat Works

29. **Wood-Pasture Restoration and Management** – Arborist teams remain largely engaged with undertaking wood pasture restoration work, including the completion of three weeks of shift work with a hired in Forestry Mulcher, focused on Walthamstow Forest. In addition to working new areas as part of meeting Site of Special Scientific Interest wood pasture restoration targets, the teams have also spent a number of days working locations where there was an identified need to undertake works designed to facilitate future improved routine maintenance..
30. **Wanstead Park, Floating Pennywort control** - Following advice from our Floating Pennywort control contractor that the City Corporation could now justify moving water down the cascade; water has been routed to refill the Ornamental Waters. This involved first filling the Perch Pond with water diverted from the Heronry Pond which as a result is at a slightly lower level. Happily the Ornamental Waters is responding well to the refilling and it seems will refill quicker than first expected.

Risk Management Works

31. **Highways Verge Vegetation**: City Corporation contractors have now completed this year's verge management program. This work is perhaps more evident on the ground to visitors this year and is a consequence of several year's work to bring the verges into a more managed condition. This is a three-year maintenance contract and will be retendered in 2018.
32. **Tree Safety** – Works arising from our tree safety assessments progress with typically one Arborist team working on this important work stream every day. A particularly prominent and complex task involves the re-pollarding of an avenue of overgrown Poplars at North Farm. Teams have completed half the avenue, but the wintry conditions and Christmas leave have led to the postponement of works till the New Year. A Conservation Area consent from London Borough of Redbridge has also been secured to work eight trees adjacent to the cricket ground. on the Woodford Green (Churchill) Avenue which are in hazardous condition.
33. **Path Safety**: As part of developing activity to improve the risk management of the Forest's path network Operation team staff have started assessment of a fifth of the path network with regard to safety issues. Early in 2018, wider management proposals and a path management policy will be developed and will be brought to your committee.

Access Works

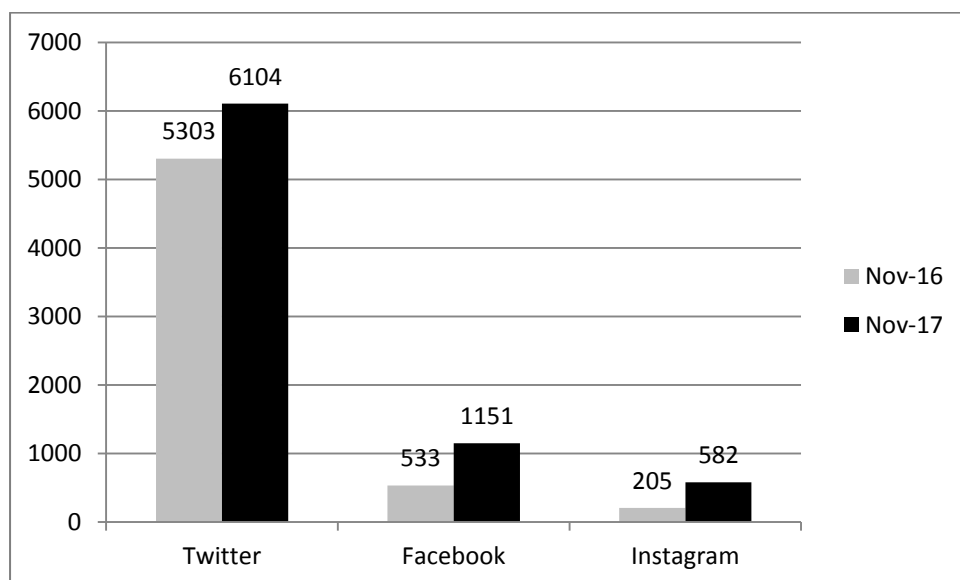
34. Volunteers and staff are currently undertaking an assessment of the conditions of the paths across the Forest. In addition the Grassland team, as part of their winter works program, have started work to open up surfaced woodland rides. This work is relatively robust in its approach to help ensure the routes get more sunlight and wind to help dry the paths out and also to ensure they are kept in a more easily maintainable condition. The Gas Ride has been completed and teams have started work on the ride leading to Whitehall Plain from Rangers Road, however a burst water/sewage pipe has stalled work in this area. To help improve this type of work we have acquired a multi-headed circular saw attachment for our tractor mounted flail, which should allow us to cut larger diameter branches more efficiently and also to leave a cleaner cut.

Visitor Services

Communication and Information

35. As of 29 November 2017 our social media following is:

- Twitter followers: 6,104 (15.1% year on increase)
- Facebook likes: 1151 (116% increase)
- Instagram followers: 582 (184% increase)
- The chart shows a comparison of our figures at the equivalent reporting point in 2016



36. The winter edition of Forest Focus, featuring an article about Karen Humpage's Epping Forest cattle-based art project and promoting the Festive Frost Fair, was well received and was successfully distributed via our Visitor Services team. Alongside Forest Focus distribution, the team promoted the Festive Frost Fair via A6 postcards which were kindly printed free of charge by a local estate agent.

Once again, the e-zine version of the magazine was produced and the response is growing extremely well.

37. The 800th Anniversary of the Forest Charter achieved good coverage in the national, London-wide and local press. The Superintendent was interviewed on BBC Radio 4 and BBC Radio London. Essex Life included a full-page article on the subject in the November edition. In addition the event was celebrated with Epping Forest's inclusion in the Lord Mayor's Show on 11 November which received press and broadcast media coverage.
38. Adverts were placed in the Primary Times publications (East London and south west Essex) for the winter, including free editorial on festive events in the East London edition.
39. Social Media continues to grow well in terms of followers and interest on Instagram has been particularly engaged with the autumn colour images.
40. Promotion of the Open Spaces survey via Twitter and Facebook has resulted in a record number of Epping Surveys being completed (to date over 500 – the target is 100 per annum). This demonstrates the importance of building and engaging with social media followers, to allow us to communicate effectively via this medium.
41. The Head of Conservation, Dr Jeremy Dagley, has now had three 'Country Diary' articles printed in The Guardian, the most recent article having just been published, looking at veteran beech, bracket fungi and mentioning the Forest Charter. In addition Dr Dagley's 'Nature Notes' monthly piece continues to be included in the local Guardian publication.

Chingford Golf Course

42. The number of visitors playing at CGC has continued to be busier than normal for this time of year partly due to the dry & mild weather. This has allowed us the team to continue to offer out golf carts which has seen the course benefit from higher income for this time of year.
43. We are making better use of our online booking system to collect more data from our users. This will allow us to market the golf course better for the new season.
 - Total revenue for October & November was £41,254.13. Revenue from online bookings for October was £2,015.50 & £1,398.00 for November. Revenue from the front of house golf reception for October & November was £37,840.63 of which:

Golf Green fees	£29,431.73
Fridge Sales	£692.60
Hire Equipment Sales	£4,150
Shop Stock Sales	£2,468.80
Football Bookings	£1,097.50

Total revenue from online bookings and front of house revenue from October & November last year was £37,312.45; a total increase of £3941.68.

44. The new scorecards have had a good response with golfers. The final fixtures & fittings were purchased for the shop to complete the refurbishment and it now looks like a more professional sports bookings reception and retail outlet.
45. The green keepers have fed the greens with more organic feed, continuing to do this on a weekly basis throughout October & November to help protect them for the winter months. The overgrown shrub between holes 2 & 8 has been removed to allow more air and light to the 8th green. This green usually suffers from disease and drainage problems in the wet months; however these improvements along with deep aeration work has shown an improvement in the ground conditions.
46. The overgrown vegetation on the 10th tee has been cleared and cut back. Winter mats have been put out on the par 3's to protect the normal tees for the start of the new season. Extra drainage has been put in on the 3rd & 4th hole to help allow machinery to access these holes and also provide buggy service all year round.
47. A new hose and hood has been fitted to the sweeper to allow the green staff to collect leaves off the golf course and ditches allowing play to keep moving without time wasted looking in leaves for their ball. This also helps the moving water in the ditches without any leaves decelerating and restricting water flow.

Wanstead Flats Football

48. Facilities have all received a deep clean at the start of season. New procedures are in place with all facilities now staffed and teams required to sign in and out before and after play. Despite this some players still abuse the facilities and we are addressing this with league managers.
49. A restructure is in progress to integrate the football and golf teams more closely and recruitment to fill vacant posts for grounds and caretaking staff is in progress.
50. The Football Foundation held a meeting with officers in November as part of the monitoring and evaluation of the grant for the Harrow Road building awarded in 2009. The capital grant was supplemented an amount for a five-year development programme. Although this programme is now complete the Football Foundation still expect a football development plan for the site to be continued. Officers will look at this with support from the Football Association during 2018.

Visitor Numbers

51. Visitor Figures

	The View	VC	The Temple	QEHL	Total No
October	4519	2469	744	2954	10,686

52. Income from
Visitor
Centres

	The View	VC	The Temple	Total
October	£7236.31	£1261.64	£217.84	£8715.79

53. Spend per head at Visitor Centres

	The View	VC	The Temple
October	£1.60	£0.51	£0.29

54. Visitor Numbers (and % increase / decrease to previous year)

	Total 16	Total 17	Decrease/Increase	% Difference
October	9522	10686	>1164	>12.22%

Visitor Services Events

Pumpkin Carving. Friday 27th October at The View

55. This October, saw the first year for all bookable tickets being sold online, via Eventbrite. Working from feedback form last year, we offered a longer event time with a cap of 40 participants per time slot. The event sold out well in advance and saw over 200 people attend from 11am – 3pm.

56. A very well received event with great feedback and room to increase participation numbers for next year.

Gayle Chong Kwan's 'The Fairlop Oak' launch at The Barbican, 13 October 2017

57. Gayle Chong Kwan's art installation, a plywood oak pollard created with community input from the Walthamstow Garden Party in the summer, is on public display at The Barbican. This is part of Gayle's project 'The People's Forest'

funded by the Arts Council, Barbican and William Morris Gallery focussing on the radical campaign to save Epping Forest in the 19th century and other protests about trees and forests since then. The Fairlop Oak's – and Hainault Forest's history of destruction is compared with the preservation of Epping Forest. Gayle Chong Kwan's work with Epping Forest in the summer of 2017, and her creativity, has contributed to designs and costumes for the Epping Forest contribution to the Lord Mayor's Show on 11 November with its related themes of Forest Charter and protest.

Rutgers students at The Globe Theatre visit Epping Forest, 16 October 2017

58. On 16 October, 28 American students, part of the Rutgers Conservatory at Shakespeare's Globe visited for a tour of Queen Elizabeth's Hunting Lodge and Barn Hoppitt. This will be the third year we have hosted their visit (charging them £4.95 a head for the tour). This is a very promising liaison with Shakespeare's Globe. We are having some initial discussion about whether next year's students might offer an outdoor performance to take advantage of Epping Forest's unique location and existing synergy (Hunting Lodge staircase as model for Globe reconstruction, Copped Hall Midsummer Night's Dream performance).

University of Nottingham PhD placement, Queen Elizabeth's Hunting Lodge, 11 October 2017

59. A PhD student from University of Nottingham, has secured funding from the Midlands3Cities Doctoral Training partnership to support a contribution of an initial 70 hours working as a volunteer researcher at The View. the placement's PhD is on 'Hunting, Politics and Culture in Early Stuart England' including the 'material culture' of the Early Modern hunt. During the first six days' research at Epping Forest, the researcher has already contributed some interesting insights into use of the Hunting Lodge for deer coursing as well as references to James I hunting at Wanstead Park. As part of the placement, the researcher will be developing a talk and event based on his research to be delivered early in 2018, as well as contributing to new interpretation boards at the Queen Elizabeth's Hunting Lodge.

Epping Forest at The Lord Mayor's Show, Saturday, 11 November

60. A team of just under 40 Epping Forest staff, volunteers, friends and family members literally took the Forest to the City with a 'float' promoting Forest Charter 800 years and the history of Epping Forest in particular. We were supported by Epping Ongar Railway who arranged a vintage London bus for the day, 4 members of the Royal Epping Golf Club, and sponsorship of £2500 from Lathams Timber. Concept, costumes and graphics were designed by in house staff. Several of the major costumes used on the day were already in the Visitor Services interpretation kit for public use: extra costumes made for Lord Mayor's Show will be reused for events as will the protest placards. Only one costume needed to be hired.

61. The Epping Forest float attracted the eye of the BBC commentators who commented (with some surprise) on Epping Forest's '4.2 million visitors' and 'one million trees' for just under 1 minute's coverage of the programme which would

have been viewed by millions both live and on iPlayer. Costumed walkers representing four periods of Forest history, including the young Henry III, Elizabeth I and Henry VIII, Queen Victoria and others including two wild deer men, carried witty protest placards with references to ancient forest practices and modern forest recreation. Participants received applause and recognition from the estimated 500,000 people who lined City streets on the day.

Miranda Kaufmann's Black Tudors at the Queen Elizabeth's Hunting Lodge, 12 November

62. Miranda Kaufmann's acclaimed book, 'Black Tudors' – it has been widely and enthusiastically reviewed in the broadsheets – was available for signing by the author at the Queen Elizabeth's Hunting Lodge on Sunday, 12 November. The event which included Tudor dressing up and a drawing activity was designed to appeal to a range of visitors from family audiences to more specialist history enthusiasts. The talk attracted a full audience of around 35 people and stimulating discussion in The View Community Room: the afternoon as a whole was energetic and lively and well received. This event, though not marketed as part of Black History Month was planned to continue our development of new and diverse audiences to The View and Hunting Lodge site. About 10% of attendees at the talk, by observation, might have been noted as BAME, a higher percentage than would be usual for an event at this site.

Major incidents

63. There were no major incidents during this reporting period.

Appendices

- Appendix 1 – None

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