



# Epping Forest

Registered Charity

# A YEAR IN REVIEW

2024

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# CHAIRMAN'S INTRODUCTION



On behalf of the Conservators and Trustees, I am delighted to introduce this 'look back' at some of the projects and events we have delivered over the past year.

2024 began with the publication of our [Natural Environment vision, mission and strategies](#). With your input, this has helped to clarify who we are and what we seek to achieve.

This year we commissioned a [Natural Capital Assessment](#), which sets a baseline financial value for the public benefits Epping Forest delivers. Scientifically measuring air and water quality regulation, noise reduction, flood

defence, sports and recreation, and health and wellbeing benefits allows us to make better policy decisions. However, I recognise the true value for many does not have a financial value.

To further our conservation objectives, we have built partnerships nationally and submitted representations to a wide range of planning consultations, including the new National Planning Policy Framework, London and Essex Local Nature Recovery Strategies, local and asset specific conservation plans and transport strategies.

# CHAIRMAN'S INTRODUCTION

Like many charities, the demands for us to do more is greater than the resources we have available. We are grateful that the City of London Corporation has increased funding to allow us to expand our staffing in key public-facing roles to support our 13 million visitors annually. Additional resource has also allowed us to start to address a backlog of asset maintenance, such as path repairs. We have had success in external grants too, including DEFRA's Countryside Stewardship Scheme, which awarded £2.35 million over 10 years for habitat restoration. This is in addition to the £2million we secured in 2020.

In accordance with the current Local Plans, developer contributions under the Strategic Access Management and Mitigation Strategy (SAMMS) will deliver £25 million over the next 80 years. This will fund specific work to reduce the damage to Epping Forest caused by increased visitor pressure.

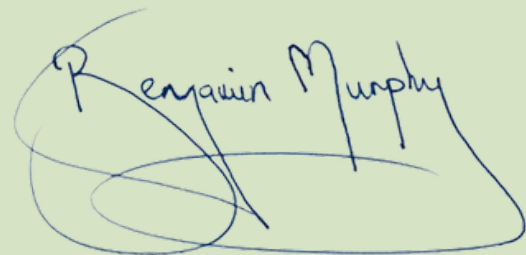
People remain both our greatest asset and our biggest threat. Under the new Superintendent, our staff restructure and a new Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system has allowed us to build resilience and deliver services more effectively. We have been pleased to

promote in-house talent as well as introducing new colleagues, bringing different skills and experience.

Our staff are complemented by an army of volunteers and this year we have been delighted at the introduction of volunteering schemes aimed at young people and families. Our outdoor education programmes also continue to support tens of thousands of students annually.

As 2024 draws to a close, our team are busy finalising our 5 year business plan, which will allow us to publish our priorities and delivery timelines, with regular reporting against Key Performance Indicators.

Thank you to everyone who has helped deliver so much progress this year.



**Benjamin Murphy CC**  
**Chairman, Epping Forest and Commons**  
**Committee**

# RANGER AND EPPING FOREST AND COMMONS COMMITTEE

EPPING FOREST | 05



HRH THE DUKE OF GLOUCESTER  
KG, GCVO, GCS†J RANGER



BENJAMIN MURPHY CC  
CHAIRMAN



CAROLINE HAINES CC  
DEPUTY CHAIRMAN



ALDERMAN  
SIR NICHOLAS LYONS KStJ



ALDERMAN VINCENT KEAVENEY  
CBE KStJ



ALDERMAN  
BRONEK MASOJADA



PHILIP WOODHOUSE CC



JASPREET HODGSON CC



GREGORY LAWRENCE CC



GEORGE ABRAHAMS CC



DAVID SALES CC



EAMONN MULLALLY CC  
EX OFFICIO



VERDERER  
MICHAEL CHAPMAN DL



VERDERER  
PAUL MORRIS



VERDERER  
NICHOLAS MUNDAY



VERDERER HIS HONOUR  
WILLIAM KENNEDY

# EPPING FOREST MANAGEMENT TEAM

EPPING FOREST | 06



IAN THOMAS CBE  
TOWN CLERK AND  
CHIEF EXECUTIVE



KATIE STEWART  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR  
ENVIRONMENT



EMILY BRENNAN  
DIRECTOR  
NATURAL ENVIRONMENT



JACQUELINE EGGLESTON  
SUPERINTENDENT /  
ASSISTANT DIRECTOR



TANITH COOK  
HEAD OF  
CONSERVATION



LAURA LAWSON  
HEAD OF  
OPERATIONS



TRIS VETTA  
INTERIM CO HEAD  
OF BUSINESS  
DEVELOPMENT



YVETTE WOODHOUSE  
INTERIM CO HEAD  
OF BUSINESS  
DEVELOPMENT



## Introduction

I am Jacqueline Eggleston and it is my privilege to lead the Epping Forest team. I am heartened to reflect on 2024 in the pages that follow. It has been a transitional year for the team and I'm proud of how our existing staff have embraced this change with positivity and vigour. It is proving to be an exciting time as we welcome new colleagues to join our ranks, bringing with them a wealth of knowledge and experience to enhance our organisation.

As this review of 2024 demonstrates, we have achieved a great deal collaboratively this year, working with our internal and external partners and, of course, our many voluntary groups and individuals. We are all looking forward to the exciting projects we will be progressing as we move into 2025, which we will soon set out in our 5 year business plan.

## Income generation

Epping Forest is generously supported by the City of London Corporation and no funding is received through council taxes. However, around half of the annual budget is generated locally by the Epping Forest Charity.

**46** filming licences issued generating an income of £242,649



## Filming in the Forest

Two major feature films were filmed in the Forest this year. Whilst the equipment and infrastructure brought in for filming can be extensive, the locations and filming are carefully scrutinised by the team to limit impact on both wildlife and visitors. All major films are required to undertake a professional ecological impact assessment to ensure the Forest is carefully protected throughout the filming.

## Estate Management

With the appointment of the Estate Manager half way through the year, work has commenced to address the backlog of maintenance works. New gates were installed across Warlies Park, repairs made to several of the car park surfaces and a huge range of repairs tackled. Work has commenced on a major 'Paths Programme'. Trials for suitable surfacing materials took place early in the year and mapping, scoping and permissions are being progressed. The City of London Corporation allocated £250,000 to the project and further funds will be allocated from the SAMMS income so that works can commence as soon as the weather allows. The most intensively used paths will be prioritised first.

## Green fleet renewal

A fleet renewal project to switch as far as possible to electric vehicles, ensuring compliance with ULEZ areas further south in the Forest, was completed.



## Solar energy

We are now using a solar array at our headquarters, The Warren in Loughton. The solar array will harvest energy during daylight hours and accumulate it in a battery storage facility.

This will help to reduce costs on utility bills and potentially earn a small income for the Epping Forest Charity, by providing stored energy back to the National Grid. This allows us to reduce our consumption of fossil fuels and means we will have more resources to put to good use in caring for Epping Forest itself.





# SUPERINTENDENT'S UPDATE

## Team Epping Forest

After a challenging few years with depleted staff numbers following a City of London Corporation wide restructure, this year has seen a focus on recruitment. Epping Forest was delighted to have been awarded an increase of over £800,000 to its local budget resulting in a much needed 25% uplift in staffing.

We said a fond farewell to former Superintendent Paul Thomson who retired after 15 years in the role and I was honoured to be appointed as the first female Superintendent of Epping Forest. Throughout the year, 21 new posts were recruited in the three main sections:

### Conservation

Head of Conservation  
Conservation Manager  
Arborist Manager  
Arborists x 2  
Sports Administration and Premises Assistant x 2  
Senior Grasslands Conservation Officer  
Grasslands Conservation Officer  
Wildlife Management Officer  
Health and Safety and Property Officer

Remaining vacancies:  
Conservation Herd Manager  
Conservation Assistant  
Health and Safety Apprentice  
Arborist Apprentice x 2  
Stores Person

### Operations

Keeper Team Manager  
Waste and Recycling Manager  
Regulatory Manager  
Enforcement Officer  
Estates Manager  
Estates Supervisor

Remaining vacancies:  
Forest Keeper x 8  
Assistant Forest Keeper x 8  
Assistant Forest Keeper  
Drivers x 2  
Estate Worker  
Assistant Estates Worker  
Estates Apprentice

### Business Development

Visitor Centre Manager  
Campaigns and Fundraising Officer  
Engagement and Volunteering Officer  
Digital Content Officer

Remaining Vacancies:  
Weddings and Events Officer  
Visitor Experience Assistant  
Access and Development Manager  
Mitigation Project Manager  
Mitigation Ambassador  
Wanstead Park Project Officer

The three teams are supported by an Office Manager, PA and two Support Services Officers.

In addition a Business Administration Apprentice was recruited.





With over 20 new members of the team to onboard and an eventual total full time equivalent of 103 members of staff, investment was needed to accommodate everyone. Offices at the Warren were re organised to create space for extra desks and a new break out space large enough to house everyone together was created with an all weather canopy structure in the orchard.

Staff conferences were held in the canopy in June and November to induct new team members. Opportunities to learn from the incredible expertise of colleagues were organised in the form of practical on site workshops. Staff learnt about cattle grazing, conservation management plans, visitor services and tree management. Epping Forest information was shared with a fun quiz on the history of the Forest taking place, to consolidate learning. We enjoyed team exercises including the creation of a huge jigsaw of the Epping Forest map and building an 'Epping' shaped bug hotel.





## Green Flag Award and Green Heritage Site Accreditation

This year we were once again delighted to have received the prestigious Green Flag and Green Heritage Site Awards, for the 22nd year running.



## Epping Forest retail

This year we were pleased to produce our very first Epping Forest Christmas bauble, celebrating Queen Elizabeth I's iconic Hunting Lodge.

For those who have visited the shop in our Visitor Centre at Chingford, you will be aware that we continue to diversify the range of products available for sale, now including books, outdoor games, confectionery and branded items alongside favourites such as the Official Map of Epping Forest. Some of these products are now available to purchase online via the [City of London shop](#). Every penny of profits from the sale of these items is reinvested directly into taking care of Epping Forest.



# NATURE CONSERVATION AND RESILIENCE

The year began with a series of significant storms (Storms Gerrit, Henk, Isha and Jocelyn) hitting Epping Forest in close succession. This meant that our Arborist teams had to focus their attention on a substantial recovery programme. However, thanks to the hard work of our dedicated Arborists and a £210,000 grant from the City of London Corporation, the team were soon back on track with planned tree management work.



We were delighted to welcome DEFRA Minister, Mark Spencer and local MP, Sir Iain Duncan Smith to Chingford Plain on 10 January. They visited to hear about our success grazing a herd of English longhorn cows across the ancient woodland, helping to improve biodiversity, using innovative 'No Fence' technology, which we were the first UK country to trial.

## Bluebell conservation

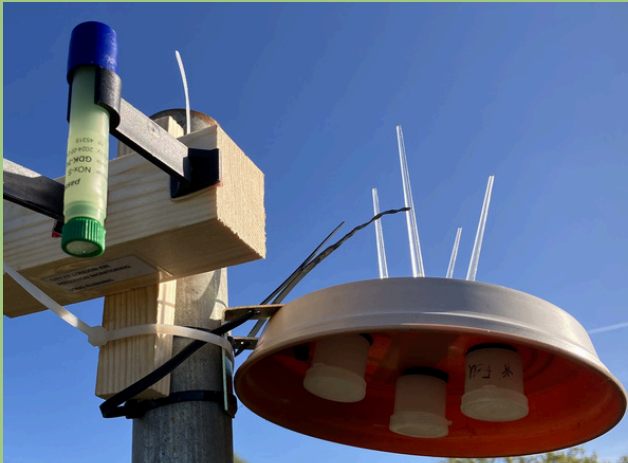
Since the arrival of social media, the early spring phenomenon of bluebells carpeting the woodland floor has resulted in a huge increase in visitors to areas where the bluebells grow. This has led to increased pressures on these sensitive sites in recent years and there was clear evidence of visitors trampling on the flowers to get photographs in the bluebells as well as picking the precious flowers.



# NATURE CONSERVATION AND RESILIENCE



The 2024 bluebell season in Epping Forest demonstrated that the management efforts to conserve the native bluebells in Wanstead Park is proving successful. Subtle and strategically placed signage, along with a continued social media and media campaign, helped to change visitor behaviour around bluebells.



## Air quality monitoring

11 air quality monitoring stations were distributed throughout Epping Forest in May, thanks to Natural England funding, spanning sites from Lower Forest to Leyton Flats.

The monitoring of our local air is important to evidence the impact of our investment in mitigation measures, such as improving the ability of the Buffer Land to capture carbon.



## Whipps Cross wildflower meadow

From traffic to tranquillity, roundabout to red clover, overtaking to ox eye daisies, it was once again pleasing to see the half acre site at Whipps Cross, which was buried under tarmac just 5 years ago, thriving as a wildflower meadow. This year we observed the site on 20 May, World Bee Day, and were delighted to find the meadow abuzz with pollinators and ablaze with colour.



## Institute of Chartered Foresters visit

It was very fitting to welcome the Institute of Chartered Foresters to Epping Forest on World Environment Day, 5 June.

The group tour included an informative site visit discussing various aspects of our management work, but in particular the hornbeam re pollarding at Bury Wood.

22,026 cattle grazing days



# NATURE CONSERVATION AND RESILIENCE

## Wanstead Wildlife Weekend

The Wanstead Wildlife Weekend was organised by the Wren Wildlife and Conservation Group on 22 and 23 June. Across the two days some fantastic activities took place, giving visitors new opportunities to explore these glorious southern areas of Epping Forest.



## Ancient Tree Forum visit

Trustees from the Ancient Tree Forum visited the Forest on 25 June. The group enjoyed a walk across Chingford Plain into Bury Wood where our conservation team talked about the ancient hornbeam pollards, wood pasture and conservation grazing. The group discussed the historical, current, and future management of the famous Epping Forest pollards. It was great to get a group of experts together and share ideas.

## Forestry Stewardship Council (FSC) training day on oak processionary moth

In June, Epping Forest hosted a national informative workshop about oak processionary moth, which was organised and delivered by FSC.



## Lousewort at Ludgate Plain

Our conservation team were delighted to discover lousewort growing at Ludgate Plain in June. The first time this flora species has been found in this area of Epping Forest.



## New fly in the woods

June continued to be a month for Epping Forest firsts when *Pandivirilia melaleuca* (forest silver stiletto fly) was discovered in the Forest for the first time.

This fly is a Red Listed Species, Near Threatened/Nationally Rare (2017, Natural England status review).

# NATURE CONSERVATION AND RESILIENCE

## Countryside Stewardship Scheme (CSS) funding

A CSS grant for Epping Forest for £2.35 million was received in July 2024, enabling an extensive Habitat Restoration Programme to commence throughout the second half of 2024. This important conservation work will continue for the next 10 years.

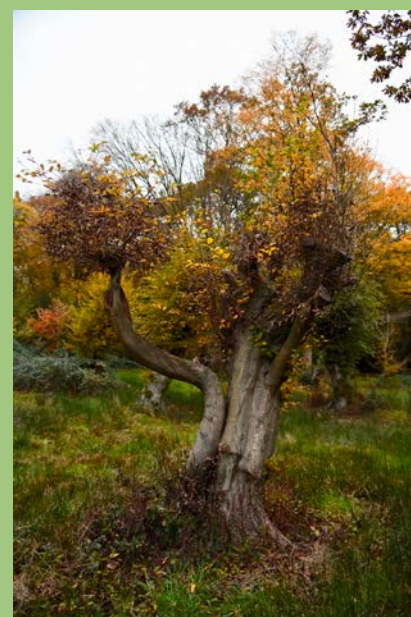


This funding is helping to manage and restore 139 hectares of wood pasture, conserve 481 veteran trees and manage 60 hectares of grassland and 12 hectares of heathland. The funding will help Epping Forest care for Ambresbury Banks and the Purlieu Bank, which are both scheduled monuments. The funds will also contribute towards continuing the conservation grazing programme.

Some of the funding will be used to allow the Field Studies Council to run more engagement sessions to help more young people find out about the conservation grazing programme at Epping Forest.

## Veteran tree work

Habitat improvement and tree management works have continued in Epping Forest this year, with some 155 new pollards created (mainly hornbeam, but some beech also). In the autumn important improvement work took place in Bury Wood, Powell's Forest, St. Thomas' Quarter and Honey Lane. Aims of the work is to improve biodiversity, extend longevity of the trees and to undertake large scale wood pasture restoration, where we increase the light and encourage ground flora and other wildlife. This veteran tree work is on trees that either haven't been worked since the late 19th century or are re pollards in a pollarding cycle that we are continuing.



# NATURE CONSERVATION AND RESILIENCE



## Wildfire training exercise

We were grateful to the London Fire Brigade (LFB) for organising a collaborative wildfire training day on Wanstead Flats on 11 July, with Thames Water. Throughout the event a wildfire was simulated, testing our multi agency response to a real life situation.

LFB tested and demonstrated their new state of the art wildfire fighting equipment including the 'holey hose', a tool which will restrict the amount of damage caused by wildfires by creating a curtain of water reaching up to two metres high. This curtain prevents fire spreading across landscapes such as Epping Forest.



## Enforcement action with Essex Police to tackle anti social incidents

Epping Forest has been one of many open spaces to experience groups deliberately behaving in an anti social and aggressive way, illegally driving motorbikes / quad bikes onto green spaces. In response to this, we worked with the local police and carried out localised awareness campaigns with visitors.

Investigations were ongoing across the summer months. The joint operation and joint patrols by our Forest Keepers and Essex Police were successful, resulting in intelligence reports submitted to the Police and Section 59 warning notices issued.





# NATURE CONSERVATION AND RESILIENCE



Illegal motor vehicle activity such as use of motorbikes and quad bikes in the Forest can cause injury to people and wildlife. As such, we were pleased to observe fewer incidents from late summer onwards and are grateful for the support of Essex Police for their assistance with the operation.

**11** successful court prosecutions



## Manor Flats anti social behaviour

Another place where we have faced challenges with anti social behaviour is at the Manor Park Triangle at Wanstead Flats. Our Enforcement team, the Litter Picking team and Conservation team have been working hard to improve the area. We have taken a multi agency approach to this situation and are grateful for the support of the local Police and the Local Authority.

**12.5** hectares of wood-pasture restoration completed



**24** fires extinguished



# NATURE CONSERVATION AND RESILIENCE

## Wildflower meadow creation at Copped Hall

An exciting project commenced at Copped Hall this September, a pivotal aspect of the City of London Corporation's Climate Action Strategy. The creation of wildflower meadows and areas that will become wood pasture over time are being created on previously cultivated arable fields.



The creation of these sites will lock atmospheric carbon into the soil beneath the new meadow and wood pasture landscapes. This initiative will enhance biodiversity by creating new wildlife habitats for a range of species, while improving water storage and soil health. Importantly, these habitats lie close to other flower rich grasslands in the Forest allowing pollinating insects to move easier through the landscape. New hedgerows are being planted in December.



## Ching Action Plan

We are pleased to be involved in the Ching Action Plan, which is an initiative to improve the biodiversity of the River Ching, led by the Environment Agency. Voluntary group, Thames 21 as well as local volunteers and councillors are working collaboratively to boost wildlife and water quality.

The watercourse and its wildlife suffers from its heavily modified nature and water quality in the river is adversely affected due to household misconnections, sewage pollution, road run off, rural sources and from nearby commercial activities. The Ching Action Plan has been produced to address these complex issues through schemes including river channel restoration, tackling pollution and wildlife habitat improvement schemes. In December, more volunteers were invited to join the efforts for this community river restoration project.



# NATURE CONSERVATION AND RESILIENCE

## Reintroduction of bell heather

On 1 November we had the privilege of partnering with Essex Wildlife Trust to reintroduce a delicate heathland species, bell heather, to Warren Hill in Loughton.

Bell heather was once present at Long Running heath but disappeared from the Forest over 50 years ago as it has specific habitat needs, making it vulnerable to habitat loss.

We are grateful to Botanist Dr Paul Fletcher, and the Essex Wildlife Trust, for their work in propagating eight bell heather plants from the only known location in Essex at Tiptree Heath nature reserve.

This project represented an exciting partnership opportunity to enhance Epping Forest's rich and diverse heathland habitats and is an important contribution to Essex's Local Nature Recovery Strategy.

## Conservation information sharing

Throughout the year we coordinated visits with external organisations such as Essex Wildlife Trust and Bird Life Cyprus, who are aiming to manage wetlands with targeted grazing and reduce permanent fencing. We held meetings with the RSPCA and NoFence, the manufacturer of the fenceless grazing system we use, to focus on collar based containment systems in the UK, to prioritise animal welfare with the use of this technology. We met with Wimbledon Common to share our experience of using this GPS technology for cattle grazing and to discuss approaches to ancient tree management.

Meetings with Harolds Park Farm, Nattergal, alongside Essex Wildlife Trust and Knepp Estate, took place to plan conservation efforts, including creating biodiversity corridors linking the Farm to Epping Forest. An open day also took place with local experts to discuss conservation strategies and Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) units.



# NATURE CONSERVATION AND RESILIENCE

**6** investigations into unlawful enclosure of Forest land were carried out in 2024.



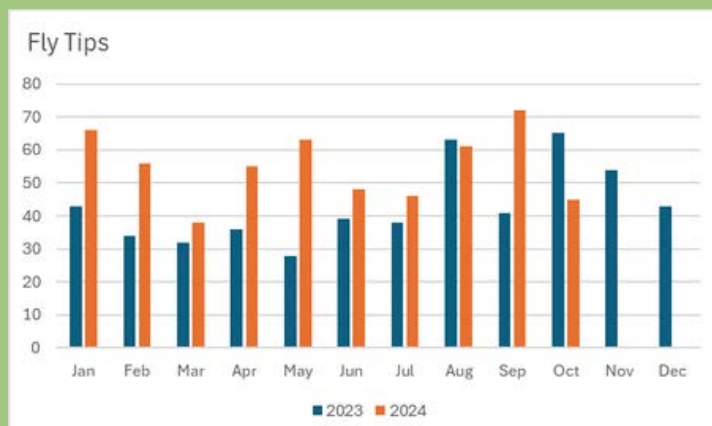
## Great Gregories improvements

Four new agricultural buildings were erected and we installed a rainwater harvesting system that feeds water into the buildings for cattle to drink. A grant towards the cost of this project was secured from the Rural Payments Agency. The new buildings reduce water mixing with animal bedding which can create airborne ammonia. This in turn improves animal welfare and reduces labour time in managing the English longhorn cows.



Rainwater harvesting reduces water bills and is a sustainable practise. The new hay shed reduces plastic use and allows us to use a different sized bale to be more efficient. A large attenuation pond was installed as part of a Sustainable Urban Drainage System (SUDS) to create a permeant wetland habitat and attenuate water discharging into the local brook to reduce flood risks.

**550** fly tips in 2024



## Fly tips

As this table illustrates, sadly fly tipping has increased in 2024. Our dedicated enforcement team work hard to gather evidence from waste dumped in Epping Forest to enable us to bring about a successful prosecution against those found guilty of fly tipping in this protected ancient woodland.

We are pleased to be working in partnership with the Police and the safer communities team at Epping Forest District Council and, thanks to a grant, we are installing new CCTV with Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) to enhance our enforcement capability.

# NATURE CONSERVATION AND RESILIENCE



## Tree management

With over a million trees to take care of and 273km of roadside verges within the Forest as well as 150km of property boundaries, looking after the health of our trees is a full time role for the new 11 strong Arborist team. The team has grown this year to better address tree works as well as the conservation management of 55,000 veteran pollarded / coppiced trees.



The close of the year presented some challenges as we faced two storms in quick succession with Storm Bert in November followed by Storm Darragh in December.

Our arborist teams worked hard to assess the impact on the Forest and to clear trees over fallen paths where necessary.



## Natural Capital Assessment

In January, a new report revealed that Epping Forest is worth around £64.4 million a year in public benefits, with a present value of £1.9 billion over 50 years.

The assessment was carried out by Natural Capital Solutions. It calculated the value of a number of benefits Epping Forest delivers to the public, including through recreation, health and wellbeing, air and water quality, and by removing carbon from the atmosphere. It found that the Forest's health and recreation benefits alone are worth £50.7 million every year to society, and its ability to capture carbon from the atmosphere is worth £4.1 million annually.

The results also show that the site delivers the highest benefit to cost ratio of all City Corporation managed open spaces at £20.2 million, which means that for every £1 spent on service provision, the Forest delivers £20.20 in public benefits.

The assessment incorporated the wider network of open spaces managed by the City Corporation and found the total combined value of all its sites to be worth £282.6 million each year in benefits to society overall, and £8.1 billion over 50 years.

## One Show filming

On 11 January we were thrilled to welcome The One Show to Epping Forest. They were filming with our education partners, The Field Studies Council, who operate the Field Studies Centre at High Beach, and had worked with the Royal Society of Biology to launch a national #SignsOfSpring survey.



## Lend a Hand Day

The Epping Forest and Commons Committee hosted the first 'Lend a Hand' Day on 23 March, to promote volunteering and collaboration amongst our many voluntary groups.



We were grateful to our voluntary group partners, the Epping Forest Conservation Volunteers and the Highams Park Snedders, for their help in hosting practical hands on conservation tasks for people to try at Chingford and at Highams Park.

It was also wonderful to see so many people, of all ages, turn up and get involved with volunteer

litter picks at Chingford.

The Committee then hosted a reception for participants and for our voluntary groups across the Forest, taking the opportunity to pass on their heartfelt thanks for all the incredible work these groups contribute towards helping the City of London Corporation take great care of Epping Forest.

We also launched a new guide to volunteering in Epping Forest, which continues to be updated to promote all of the fantastic volunteering opportunities across the Forest, organised by the City of London Corporation and a variety of our voluntary groups.



## Worshipful Company of Information Technologists

Building on our City of London Livery links, we were honoured to welcome the Master and Company of the Information Technologists on 11 May.



## Brimble Exhibition

Members of the Chingford Historical Society and the Brimble family attended the official opening of the Brimble exhibition at the Epping Forest Visitor Centre at Chingford on 14 June. James Brimble was a well known local photographer who wrote publications about the woodland, including 'London's Epping Forest'.

## Great British Railway Journeys filming

In July, we welcomed BBC travel presenter Michael Portillo to Epping Forest to talk about the history of the Forest and how it became known as 'Cockney's Paradise' and the 'Green Lungs of London'.

Our conservation team provided a guided tour of High Beach, followed by an interview with the Chairman at Queen Elizabeth's Hunting Lodge in Chingford.



## Epping Forest Visitor Centre at High Beach anniversary

On 10 July we were pleased to celebrate the 10th anniversary of voluntary group Epping Forest Heritage Trust operating the Visitor Centre at High Beach on our behalf. During that time, 20,000 volunteer hours have been contributed welcoming over 45,000 visitors to the Forest.





## Nurturing future advocates

Encouraging young people to learn about and care for this special landscape is a vital part of our work.

Across the summer holidays we hosted several events in Epping Forest, including two Youth Litter Picks, a Youth Conservation Session, run by voluntary group, the Highams Park Snedders, and a Youth Photography Workshop.

## Youth Litter Picks

The enthusiasm of the children helping us to look after Epping Forest was really impressive! The fantastic young people who participated in the litter picks were very knowledgeable about why it is important to keep Epping Forest clear of litter, for the safety of the wildlife who call the Forest their home, to lower the risk of wildfires and to ensure that the Forest is a pleasant place for people to visit.

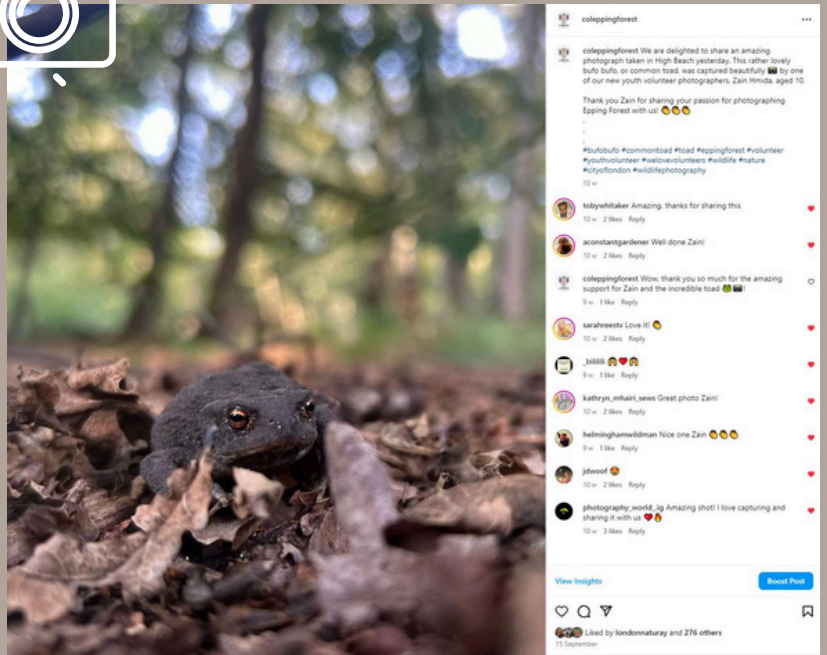
Our thanks to our new generation of volunteers. We hope they will continue to be advocates for Epping Forest!



# COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

## Youth Photography Workshop

Local photographer, Nick Bowman, ran a photography workshop on 29 August. As part of this informative session the children, inspired by Nick's exhibition of the Epping Forest cows, walked across Chingford Plain to find the English longhorn cows and put what they had learnt into practice, taking their own photographs of the beautiful creatures from a safe distance.



The Workshop resulted in a new 'Youth Photographer' role being created, and we are delighted to now have three young people signed up as Epping Forest Youth Photographers. The inaugural Youth Photographer social media post was a huge success, with Youth Volunteer Photographer, Zain Hmida's photograph of a common toad receiving 277 likes on Instagram and 471 likes on Facebook!



## 50 for 50 volunteering campaign

In August, we launched a new volunteering campaign '50 for 50', to mark the Golden Jubilee of HRH The Duke of Gloucester as Ranger of Epping Forest.

Volunteers have been invited to undertake 50 hours of volunteering, between August 2024 and January 2025, to mark this milestone.



## Skylark Send-off

In February, temporary fencing returned to Wanstead Flats to help us protect the habitat for ground-nesting birds, particularly skylarks, throughout the nesting season. Wanstead Flats is the closest skylark nesting site to central London.

At the close of the nesting season in September, we hosted a Skylark Send-off event which coincided with the removal of fencing in partnership with the Wren Wildlife Conservation Group and local RSPB branch. We used this opportunity to say thank you to all the volunteers and members of the local community who were involved in supporting the conservation effort.

A [delightful video about the conservation of the skylarks on Wanstead Flats](#) was produced from the event.



## Big Walk

On 15 September approximately 200 people walked the 14 mile length of Epping Forest, from Manor Park in the south to Epping in the north, as part of the Epping Forest Big Walk organised by voluntary group, the Epping Forest Heritage Trust, with support from City of London Epping Forest staff. The walk commenced with encouraging words from local MP Calvin Bailey MBE and Epping Forest

MP Dr Neil Hudson gave the closing address at the end of the walk. It was a fabulous day enjoyed by all and a really wonderful way to celebrate the scale of the unique ancient woodland of Epping Forest.





## Batty about Epping Forest

We went batty about bats in October, with a series of bat themed events. Two bat talks / walks were held in partnership with the Epping Forest Field Centre in High Beach, on 18 and 29 October, the first being aimed at adults and the latter aimed at families during the half term and a self guided bat themed trail at the Epping Forest Visitor Centre at Chingford proved popular with family groups throughout the half term.



## Youth Conservation Session

On 30 October 22 people attended the second Youth Conservation Session in Highams Park.

Thanks to the Highams Park Snedders for running the session, and to all those who attended and helped us with taking care of Epping Forest.

## Epping Forest 'Top Picks' event

The first of our new litter picking initiative 'Top Picks', a group litter picking event targeting high litter areas, was held at Leyton Flats on 27 November. We are grateful to the 16 participants who joined us, including a representative from local litter picking group OWL Snaresbrook. Together we cleared 21 bags of litter in 90 minutes.



# 11,992

hours volunteered to Epping Forest in 2024!





On 1 February the City of London Corporation hosted the London FA's annual Grassroots Football Awards. The Club of the Year Award was presented to R77 Soccer School, a group based at Capel Road on Wanstead Flats in Epping Forest.

Wanstead Flats is Europe's second largest provider of grass football pitches and a place where so many sporting legends began their career in football.



## Muslim Hikers

On 27 April we were delighted to welcome walkers from the Muslim Hikers to enjoy a fabulous hike through Epping Forest, organised by voluntary group the Epping Forest Heritage Trust.

## Running in Epping Forest

Many of our visitors enjoy running through Epping Forest, and we are proud to host local running Club the Orion Harriers, at Chingford. Earlier this year, we caught up with some of the Orion Harriers as they trained ahead of the London Marathon who told us why they enjoy running in Epping Forest: "It is a very calm and peaceful environment to train in."





## New Brambly Hedge Trail

In the summer we were delighted to receive £48,745 from Epping Forest District Council's Rural England Prosperity Fund to install an inclusive woodland sculpture trail of figures from the Brambly Hedge books.

The Brambly Hedge Trail will be based on the stories, written and illustrated in the 1980s by local

author and artist, Jill Barklem. The Brambly Hedge Trail will be inclusive by featuring various sensory elements. We are looking forward to launching the new Trail in spring 2025.

**859** new signs produced



## Chingford Golf Course

Bookings for Chingford Golf Course compare favourably to the figures for last year.



**9,925,776** visits (January to September 2024)





## Field Studies Centre

Our education partners at the Epping Forest Field Studies Centre at High Beach engaged with over 214 different schools and 19,500 students, consisting of primary, secondary, and A Level students studying curriculum science and geography in our outdoor classrooms and learning locations throughout Epping Forest. This equates to 110,000 learner hours.

They welcomed over 70 attendees to their Family Eco Adventures during the school holidays. Through the City of London Educational Trust grant funding, the FSC delivered Young Naturalist courses to 15 young people aged 11-16 in Wanstead Park.

The FSC's biodiversity team delivered four courses to over 40 adult attendees, including topics such as plant identification and veteran trees.

## Natural Environment Learning Team

The Learning team engaged with 3,800 school students, including those from some of London's most disadvantaged boroughs.

The team also worked with groups from pupil referral units, young refugees, and Wanderers of Colour. These students participated in activities designed to foster a deeper connection to nature, enhance wellbeing, and promote environmental understanding.





## **The Temple**

A Conservation Management Plan (CMP) was developed to create a vision for the Grade II Listed Temple in Wanstead Park. The plan aims to conserve its character as one of the best surviving elements of the historic park; promote the management and conservation of the site based on a thorough understanding of its significance, and implement a proactive regime of cyclical inspections and maintenance works undertaken at regular intervals.

## **Waterscape Adaptive Pathway**

In 2024, work has continued to deliver the interventions identified from the 'Wanstead Park Waterscape Adaptive Pathway' study including reed bed creation in Perch and Heronry Ponds, which will improve water quality particularly in areas where urban drainage enters the ponds. This project is being led in partnership with Thames 21

who have provided £80,000 towards the project.

## **Abstraction from River Roding and pumping into Ornamental Water**

An abstraction licence is currently in place to pump 236,520 m<sup>3</sup> of potable aquifer water each year to 2028. This is not a long term sustainable operation due to ground water shortage and the aim is to reduce or cease this in future. Therefore, the reinstatement and extension of an 'up cascade' scheme is being developed.

Consultants are developing a detailed specification and tendering for the new pumps/pump house and an application has been submitted to the Environment Agency for a new licence to pump water from the River Roding.

## **The Large Raised Reservoir**

The City is now investing £1.15 million to reinforce dams in the Wanstead Park ponds and implement flood prevention measures, this includes grass management to Shoulder of Mutton dam, dam strengthening works to Heronry and Perch and dam re-enforcement works to Ornamental Water (north wall and canal wall). A new pump will be installed to pump from Ornamental Water into the Perch Pond.

Preparatory works and tender processes are underway with works anticipated to take place in the autumn of 2025.





## The Grotto

Also in Wanstead Park, the Grade II listed Grotto has been listed on Historic England's Heritage at Risk Register (HARR) since 2018. This year, a CMP and Restoration and Maintenance Plan (RMP) for The Grotto has been developed.

A programme of remedial conservation actions have been agreed and granted planning permission. The project will cost over £0.5 million with the majority of that amount to be funded by the City of London Corporation.

## Other management projects in Wanstead Park

Additional developments include the installation of a new play area to the rear of the Temple, supported by local groups, and ongoing work to make further improvements. A new programme board has been established to ensure that all the projects taking place are being managed to complement each other and consider any constraints.



## Open Air Theatre

This year, over 750 people enjoyed our programme of Open Air Theatre in Wanstead Park. Performances across the summer included Gilbert and Sullivan's *The Gondoliers*, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's *Hound of the Baskervilles*, Hugh Lofting's *The Adventures of Doctor Dolittle* and Shakespeare's *Much Ado About Nothing*.



# CULTURE, HERITAGE AND LEARNING

## Open House

Open House was celebrated in September at the Temple in Wanstead Park, with items from the museum collection on display and a children's craft activity and a local heritage walk took place.

At Queen Elizabeth's Hunting Lodge in Chingford a costumed guide welcomed visitors for a special tour of this Tudor heritage building, built at the instruction of King Henry VIII in 1543.



## Exhibitions

We hosted nine exhibitions in both the Upper and Lower Galleries at the Epping Forest Visitor Centre at Chingford throughout 2024, including an incredible photographic exhibition, 'Four Seasons with the Longhorn Cattle of Epping Forest' by local photographer, Nicholas Bowman.

## Royal Forest Hotel re opens

It has been wonderful to witness the transformation of the historic Royal Forest in Chingford this year, culminating in the re opening of the local landmark, situated next door to the Epping Forest Visitor Centre at Chingford, on 3 December. We wish the Heartwood Collection every success with their new venture, following their £4 million renovation of this City of London Corporation asset.





# Epping Forest

Registered Charity



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