

## Management issues and future proposals for Epping Forest

### Introduction

As one of earliest publicly accessible wild landscapes in Britain, Epping Forest predates Britain's National Parks by some 71 years, but shares a common bond in seeking to preserve the wildness of a treasured landscape while guaranteeing widespread public access.

The paradox is that, public access to Epping Forest's 'wildness' needs continuing management to conserve both the Forest's character and its relevance to Londoners as a major recreational resource.

Ongoing management of the Forest's landscape, wildlife and visitors is guided by a Management Plan which outlines the vision and direction for this protected area. A new Management Plan for Epping Forest is being developed for the 10 year period 2017 - 2027. To help guide and inform the new plan, this public consultation seeks your help in assessing management challenges and establishing future priorities.

### *An Interconnected Forest*

*"When we try to pick out anything by itself, we find it hitched to everything else in the Universe"*

- John Muir 'My First Summer in the Sierras' 1869

The naturalist and author John Muir, often referred to as the 'Father of the National Parks', describes how active management reveals the interconnected nature of wild areas. His words are as relevant today, as they were at the birth of the National Park movement over 100 years ago. A key challenge for the new Management Plan is to develop truly interconnected policies for the continued protection, conservation and public enjoyment of Epping Forest.

### *Governing Epping Forest*

The Conservators<sup>[1]</sup> of Epping Forest is one of oldest of 15 Conservancies, formed across Britain over the past 155 years. Epping Forest land is held in Charitable Trust and is funded by the City's private resources, charitable grants, public donations, and income generation.

The Forest is governed by twelve elected members of the principal funder (the City of the London Corporation) and four locally elected Verderers<sup>[2]</sup> - a key voluntary role that that has overseen Forest management since Norman times.

Given the size of Epping Forest, visitor surveys and public consultations play an important role in informing decisions made by the Conservators.

### *How we are consulting*

This consultation is arranged around six themes which broadly represent the Conservator's key duties established by the Epping Forest Acts of 1878 and 1880<sup>[3]</sup>. Subsequent legislation on a diverse range of subjects is also reflected in the consultation wherever possible.

- ▶ Public recreation<sup>[4]</sup> and enjoyment
- ▶ Preservation of the natural aspect<sup>[5]</sup>
- ▶ Protection of the unspoilt Forest
- ▶ Regulation and management
- ▶ Heritage

► Deer management

The online consultation process is designed to allow you to comment on any or all of the specific subjects that have been identified as future challenges for Epping Forest. Most individual subjects are crossed referenced. This should help you navigate your way around the sections of the consultation that interests you. The number and variety of these links evidences Muir's claim.

This consultation is restricted to the land defined under the Epping Forest Acts and does not include the further 1,700 acres of 'Buffer Land' <sup>[6]</sup> held separately by the City of London to protect the context and setting of Epping Forest.

The new Management Plan will be developed following consideration of the responses to this consultation. Further public consultation will be undertaken during 2016 on the proposed content of the new Management Plan.

1. The Conservators are the Mayor, Aldermen and Members of the City of London Corporation assembled in Common Council. The Conservators are charged with the responsibility of safeguarding the Forest under the Epping Forest Act 1878. The City of London is the organisation that owns Epping Forest. The authority of the Conservators is vested in the City of London's Epping Forest and Commons Committee. [\[back\]](#)
2. First introduced almost 1,000 years ago, Verderers administered Forest Law and protected the 'vert' (all the vegetation in the forest) and the 'venison' (the hunting animals, principally deer and wild boar) of the forest. Today, elected by the Commoners of Epping Forest once every seven years, the Verderers sit on the management committee of Epping Forest. [\[back\]](#)
3. The Acts of Parliament passed in 1878 and 1880 to protect and conserve Epping Forest as an open space unenclosed and unbuilt upon for the recreation and enjoyment of the public. [\[back\]](#)
4. Any pursuit engaged upon during leisure time, other than pursuits to which people are normally highly committed i.e. shopping, housework, child care etc. [\[back\]](#)
5. No official definition of this term exists. A precursor to 'natural beauty', it was coined by Robert Hunter, who drafted the Epping Forest Act with the City of London's solicitor, Sir Thomas James Nelson. However, there is no definition of the 'natural aspect' within the Act and the papers and notes Hunter compiled have since been lost. While it is clear it relates principally to the Forest's natural landscape, the same section of the Act also makes reference to 'earthworks', 'woodbanks' and 'pollards', which are manmade features of Forest. [\[back\]](#)
6. 735 hectares (1816 acres) of land owned and managed by the City of London around the perimeter of the Forest to preserve the landscape setting and context of the Forest. Buffer land is currently exempt from many of the requirements of the legislation governing the management of the Forest, but is also not protected in the same way. [\[back\]](#)

## Strands

There are 13 golden strands that run throughout our consultation. These help us to meet our management challenges whilst staying true to our values and recognising the opportunities and limitations of the work we do.

### *Finances and resources*

Managing Epping Forest - London's largest open space - is a valuable but expensive commitment for the City of London Corporation. The City has not been immune from the reduction in funding seen across Central and Local Government since the economic downturn of 2008.

The Forest's £4.5 Million operational budget has already fallen by 12.5% to 2015, and will reduce by a further 10% to 2018, at a time when our statutory and operational liabilities continue to increase.

The Forest will need to make many difficult choices over the 10-year life of the next Management Plan and will need to focus on its many statutory <sup>[7]</sup> responsibilities and obligations. In common with much of the open spaces sector, this will inevitably see a conscious change in the Forest's approach to income generation, for example moving tenancy and licence charges to commercial levels, eliminating subsidies for many activities and introducing charges for hitherto free provision.

### *Visitor experience*

We strive to be a warm and welcoming organisation, making the Forest accessible to and enjoyable for all. We want not only to provide a quality service to our visitors but to exceed their expectations. We are listening, committed to consulting with the public, and focussed on making our visitor experience the very best it can be.

### ***Sustainability***

The notion of sustainable management continues to gain acceptance as an important part of our ability to successfully maintain the quality of life on our planet. At Epping Forest we need to develop systems that run indefinitely without depleting resources and maintain the cost of management at viable levels, while also nourishing the needs of the present and future generations.

### ***Health & Safety***

We do everything we can to ensure the Forest is as safe as possible for everyone without stifling opportunities for 'enjoyable risk' and recreation<sup>[8]</sup>. We provide rigorous training for staff and volunteers and undertake to follow best practice. We were the first body within the City of London to carry out an external H&S audit and want to continue to be frontrunners in this field.

### ***Outreach***

As Conservators<sup>[9]</sup> of the Forest, we hold the land in trust for everyone to enjoy; promoting and enabling public access to the Forest remains a guiding principle. Outreach is about engaging marginalised local audiences - particularly in the urban areas south of the Forest - and facilitating broader engagement with the Forest by re-establishing wide-reaching community links with this public space. We aspire to remove social and cultural barriers and help people reconnect with the Forest and the great outdoors.

### ***Lifelong learning***

We believe that people are more likely to protect a natural environment if they appreciate it and the Forest provides endless resources for formal and recreational learning. With this in mind, we seek to communicate the value of Epping Forest, establish lifelong connections and achieve 'guided value outcomes'.

### ***Equality***

We want Epping Forest to be an open and inclusive public space. Everyone's invited, everybody's welcome, regardless of their gender, race, age, ability or cultural background, and we want to break down barriers that discourage or prevent people from visiting, volunteering in or working for the Forest.

### ***Training***

To manage Epping Forest, a challenging and diverse environment, we require a broad range of skills, from landscaping to ancient tree conservation. In order to ensure we have the skills we need to fulfil our duties, we are committed to investing in people, both staff and volunteers, through training courses, apprenticeships and skills-sharing programmes. These measures offer our people on-going professional development, and enable us to safeguard the future of our organisation.

### ***Accessibility***

As Epping Forest is held in trust for the public, we aspire to facilitate physical, intellectual and social access for everyone in their interactions with the Forest, from making more of our sites wheelchair-friendly to providing an outstanding information service online. We are committed to communicating with the public to ensure that we recognise and meet all of the access needs we can within the constraints of the Forest environment and provide a gateway to the Forest for all users.

### ***Volunteering***

We recognise the value and importance of volunteers and endeavour to use volunteering as a tool to enhance the core offer of the Forest and create a sense of community ownership. In recognition of their significant contribution, we seek to support our volunteers in their personal and professional development. In the future, we aim to introduce a wider variety of volunteers to a

wider variety of tasks in the Forest and continue to nurture the long-standing tradition of community involvement in Forest affairs.

### **Public involvement**

As Epping Forest is held in trust for the public, we strive to consult the public whenever possible on the management of the Forest. We want to foster a sense of trust with stakeholders and user groups and pledge to run all consultations in line with our Statement of Community Involvement<sup>[10]</sup>. That means not just finding out your views, but wherever possible actually incorporating the wishes of local people into our decision-making process. We want to target our consultations more effectively too, so that you have a say on the things that matter to you.

### **Communications, information and marketing**

As part of our openness agenda, we have a strong desire to increase and modernise our communication with the public. Whether we are presenting information via social media, on the website or through our printed publications, we strive to make our communications more transparent, relevant and engaging. We want to be more innovative, especially with regards to the use of digital media. We are committed to explaining what's going on in the Forest, and to communicating our site's rich history and heritage, in a way that will resonate strongly with a modern audience.

### **Partnerships**

Epping Forest was decisively saved by a huge coalition of differing interests including the City of London Corporation; Victorian campaigners; commoners<sup>[11]</sup>. This early 'partnership' not only saved Epping Forest but set in train the movement that led to the formation of the National Trust and the National Parks movement.

Today, the Conservators increasingly rely on partnerships to meet the challenges of sustaining the Forest. Partnerships can help to share precious resources; overcome obstacles and build wider ownership around providing a Forest that is protected and enhanced for future generations. The Conservators aim to strengthen existing partnerships and foster new collaborations with a widening variety of organisations to secure the future of the Forest.

7. Denotes something that is defined in legislation. [\[back\]](#)

8. Any pursuit engaged upon during leisure time, other than pursuits to which people are normally highly committed i.e. shopping, housework, child care etc. [\[back\]](#)

9. The Conservators are the Mayor, Aldermen and Members of the City of London Corporation assembled in Common Council. The Conservators are charged with the responsibility of safeguarding the Forest under the Epping Forest Act 1878. The City of London is the organisation that owns Epping Forest. The authority of the Conservators is vested in the City of London's Epping Forest and Commons Committee. [\[back\]](#)

10. A new term introduced by the Planning & Compulsory Purchase Bill proposing that under Local Development Schemes Local Planning Authorities must prepare a SCI which sets out how and when the local community can expect to be consulted on the Local Development Documents. [\[back\]](#)

11. A person who owns or occupies at least half an acre of unencumbered or open land in a Forest parish and has the rights of common of pasture (grazing). [\[back\]](#)

## **1: Public recreation & enjoyment**

In this theme, consultees will find out about our efforts to ensure that the Forest provides the public with appropriate, accessible and varied opportunities for recreation<sup>[12]</sup> and enjoyment, and the key issues and challenges we face in this area of our work. Ever since the Forest was first entrusted to the City of London in the 1870s, providing public recreation and enjoyment has been both a legal obligation and a strategic priority for the Forest's Conservators<sup>[13]</sup>. Today, Epping Forest is London's largest open space, making this aspect of our work more important - and more challenging - than ever.

This theme describes our current action and future plans to ensure that the Forest is accessible to all parts of the community, to bring alive its natural and cultural significance, to ensure visitor safety, and to make it a great place in which to walk, play

and enjoy sports and leisure activities. This involves providing high-quality infrastructure and information that meets the evolving needs and preferences of Forest visitors, while preserving the natural aspect<sup>[14]</sup> of the Forest and protecting its more fragile habitats and threatened species<sup>[15]</sup>. By getting this balance right, we aim to ensure that the Forest continues to make a unique and vital contribution to the health, well-being and enjoyment of current and future generations.

The **management issues** identified within this theme are:

- ▶ [Access for all](#)
- ▶ [Interpretation](#)
- ▶ [Visitor safety](#)
- ▶ [Wildlife watching](#)
- ▶ [Paths and trails](#)
- ▶ [Sport and leisure:](#)
  - ▶ [Cycling](#)
  - ▶ [Horse riding](#)
  - ▶ [Golf](#)
  - ▶ [Football](#)
  - ▶ [Running / Orienteering](#)
  - ▶ [Angling](#)
  - ▶ [Walking](#)
  - ▶ [Dog Walking](#)
- ▶ [Signage and maps](#)
- ▶ [Events](#)
- ▶ [Public transport](#)
- ▶ [Cultural significance](#)
- ▶ [Natural Play](#)

12. Any pursuit engaged upon during leisure time, other than pursuits to which people are normally highly committed i.e. shopping, housework, child care etc. [\[back\]](#)

13. The Conservators are the Mayor, Aldermen and Members of the City of London Corporation assembled in Common Council. The Conservators are charged with the responsibility of safeguarding the Forest under the Epping Forest Act 1878. The City of London is the organisation that owns Epping Forest. The authority of the Conservators is vested in the City of London's Epping Forest and Commons Committee. [\[back\]](#)

14. No official definition of this term exists. A precursor to 'natural beauty', it was coined by Robert Hunter, who drafted the Epping Forest Act with the City of London's solicitor, Sir Thomas James Nelson. However, there is no definition of the 'natural aspect' within the Act and the papers and notes Hunter compiled have since been lost. While it is clear it relates principally to the Forest's natural landscape, the same section of the Act also makes reference to 'earthworks', 'woodbanks' and 'pollards', which are manmade features of Forest. [\[back\]](#)

15. Organisms are named and classified by a system of taxonomy according to similarities in structure and origin. Species are the taxonomic group whose members can interbreed. [\[back\]](#)

## 1.1 Access for All

### Ensuring that Epping Forest remains 'The People's Forest'

*We are committed to ensuring that everyone - including individuals who may have disabilities, older people, children and families, and disadvantaged groups - can enjoy access to the Forest. We have made significant progress in this area, but would welcome your views on future improvements.*

## Overview

Epping Forest has been known as 'The People's Forest' ever since it ceased to be a royal forest and was placed in the care of the City of London Corporation. The Epping Forest Act 1878<sup>[16]</sup> stipulates that the Conservators<sup>[17]</sup> "shall at all times keep Epping Forest... as an open space for the recreation and enjoyment of the people".

This commitment to 'access for all' remains at the heart of the vision and governance of the Forest today, and we continue to open up the pleasures and amenities of the Forest so that everyone can enjoy them. We welcome and cater for visitors with disabilities, older people, children and families, as well as visitors who have particular recreational<sup>[18]</sup> or sporting interests, and we seek to bring alive and interpret the heritage, ecology and wildlife of the Forest for everyone.

## Major issues and challenges

The Forest is within fifteen minutes' walking distance of five underground stations and one overground station, as well as benefiting from numerous bus routes. The Epping Forest Transport Strategy addresses the need for balance in providing access to the Forest for visitors by car and by public transport.

Six of our car parks have designated disabled parking, and in recent years, the Conservators have achieved good progress in making parts of the Forest more accessible for wheelchairs and buggies. Four fully accessible trails with seating and resting places have been constructed, along with 33km of surfaced shared-use trails and nine waymarked trails. In providing accessible routes and signage, we must remain mindful of our obligation to maintain the natural aspect<sup>[19]</sup> of the Forest. Many of the paths in the Forest are 'desire lines', part of a dynamic network. We recognise that some areas of the Forest will always be inaccessible for some and we must be practical about visitor safety, in all our decision making about access.

All four of our Forest Centres have baby changing facilities and disabled toilets, and are free to visit (though occasionally there is a small charge for temporary exhibitions). The View and Butler's Retreat are both wheelchair accessible, and The View has a hearing loop as well as an accessibly designed exhibition space with easy-to-read text panels. The historic nature of Queen Elizabeth's Hunting Lodge and the Temple mean that there is no step-free access to upper levels.

Under the Equality Act 2010, all information must also be accessible. All of our general information materials and leaflets are available in accessible formats. Our website also complies with Priority 2, or Level AA, of the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines, enabling those who are visually-impaired, deaf-blind, hearing impaired and those who have learning disabilities, including literacy problems, as well as physical disabilities, to access information about the Forest. The Epping Forest webpages contain a dedicated section on access for all.

We also participate in the VisitEngland Visitor Attraction Quality Assurance Scheme (VAQAS)<sup>[20]</sup> where independent assessors test for visitor experience from pre-visit web and telephone service and the cleanliness, information, accessibility and friendliness of staff when visiting the centre. All Forest Centres have passed this assessment on each occasion.

Through events, sports and physical activities, and play facilities, we seek to support people's health and wellbeing, to promote pleasure and fun, to encourage people to find out about Epping Forest for the first time, and to deepen knowledge and understanding.

Disability Awareness and Equality Training is available to all staff and volunteers, and all 'front of house' staff undertake compulsory disability equality training. Our strategy and ongoing work in these areas is greatly assisted by the invaluable support of the Epping Forest Access Forum.

## What are we doing to address these issues?

To enable appropriate access to the Forest for all visitors, we currently:

- ▶ Take account of the need to balance access for visitors by car, public transport and other transport modes in the Epping Forest Transport Strategy
- ▶ Provide infrastructure and facilities for disabled Forest visitors, including car parking spaces, accessible paths, buildings and toilet facilities
- ▶ Provide information about access for disabled visitors, in a range of appropriate formats
- ▶ Take account of the access needs of different groups of visitors (including people with disabilities, children and families, and people with English as a second language) in our learning activities and partnerships, and our events, interpretation facilities, exhibitions and information, and signage
- ▶ Seek to support the health and well-being of all parts of the community in our strategies for learning, sports and play

16. The Acts of Parliament passed in 1878 and 1880 to protect and conserve Epping Forest as an open space unenclosed and unbuilt upon for the recreation and enjoyment of the public. [\[back\]](#)

17. The Conservators are the Mayor, Aldermen and Members of the City of London Corporation assembled in Common Council. The Conservators are charged with the responsibility of safeguarding the Forest under the Epping Forest Act 1878. The City of London is the organisation that owns Epping Forest. The authority of the Conservators is vested in the City of London's Epping Forest and Commons Committee. [\[back\]](#)

18. Any pursuit engaged upon during leisure time, other than pursuits to which people are normally highly committed i.e. shopping, housework, child care etc. [\[back\]](#)

19. No official definition of this term exists. A precursor to 'natural beauty', it was coined by Robert Hunter, who drafted the Epping Forest Act with the City of London's solicitor, Sir Thomas James Nelson. However, there is no definition of the 'natural aspect' within the Act and the papers and notes Hunter compiled have since been lost. While it is clear it relates principally to the Forest's natural landscape, the same section of the Act also makes reference to 'earthworks', 'woodbanks' and 'pollards', which are manmade features of Forest. [\[back\]](#)

20. VisitEngland's Visitor Attraction Quality Scheme, a quality mark awarded to visitor attractions that reflects the visitor experience and the quality of the product and services offered by the attraction and its staff. [\[back\]](#)

## 1.2 Interpreting the Forest

### Bringing the Forest to life through interpretation

*Interpretation brings alive the many layers of history and ecology embedded in the Forest, and adds an important dimension to visitor experiences, enjoyment and learning. We have laid good foundations for our interpretation work, but need to extend and refine it, and make sure we are interpreting the Forest in ways that reach and resonate with all audiences.*

#### Overview

Rather than the simple communication of factual information, interpretation is the use of communications tools and techniques to explain the meaning and demonstrate the relevance of different aspects of the Forest to enrich visitor experience and learning.

Interpretation of the Forest's ecology, heritage and cultural significance forms an increasingly important part of our work, making Epping Forest more accessible and interesting for all visitors. We also hope to facilitate understanding through interpretation, leading to an appreciation of the Forest's unique character and assisting the efforts of the Conservators <sup>[21]</sup> in its preservation and protection.

#### Major issues and challenges

Signage and information boards at key locations provide the most prominent form of Forest interpretation, describing the ecology, heritage and cultural significance of the Forest, and other features of interest. Information boards are designed to be easy to read and understand, and relevant to all types of visitor. In developing and locating signage, we must remain aware of our obligation to preserve the Forest's character.

Our free printed materials, website and online resources and downloads are designed to provide interesting and imaginative insights into life in the Forest, as well as straightforward factual information. We also produce regular press releases to encourage the media to cover Epping Forest's fascinating history, ecology and wildlife.

Temporary and longer term exhibitions and displays at our Forest Centres tell deeper stories about the Forest's past, present and future, and permanent displays at The View, The Temple and Queen Elizabeth's Hunting Lodge provide historical background to the buildings and Forest.

Our busy and popular schedule of events engages many diverse sections of the community, and we make increasing use of creativity within our events programme, bringing the Forest to life through music, drama and other arts and crafts.

The Friends of Epping Forest provide additional interpretation at High Beach Forest Centre and many of our partners run their own programmes of events.

Our visitor survey helps us understand who our visitors are, their interests, and how we can best engage and communicate with them, and also identifies gaps in our provision. It has reassured us that we provide good interpretation for adults and children, but has also flagged that we could provide more events for young people and teenagers. Young people are well catered for, however, through school trips and through courses and educational activities on ecology, conservation, and outdoor learning offered by The Epping Forest Field Centre, the Suntrap Forest Education Centre and the Epping Forest Centenary Trust.

We recognise that social media offers valuable new channels for storytelling, interaction and engagement with new audiences, and although we have a Twitter feed, we know that we could do more to make full use of these new, informal channels for communication, interpretation and interaction.

### **What are we doing to address these issues?**

To develop and deliver informative, enjoyable and relevant interpretation activities and facilities, we currently:

- ▶ Provide signage and maps, leaflets and online resources
- ▶ Produce regular press releases and other media materials to publicise different aspects of the Forest and to highlight opportunities to explore and enjoy it
- ▶ Mount exhibitions and displays at Epping Forest's Forest Centres
- ▶ Organise, promote and deliver a schedule of events to cater for a range of visitor interests and types, which are relevant to (and affordable for) all sections of the community
- ▶ Conduct a regular visitor survey, and respond to its findings via our ongoing management plans
- ▶ Maintain a Twitter feed for Epping Forest

21. The Conservators are the Mayor, Aldermen and Members of the City of London Corporation assembled in Common Council. The Conservators are charged with the responsibility of safeguarding the Forest under the Epping Forest Act 1878. The City of London is the organisation that owns Epping Forest. The authority of the Conservators is vested in the City of London's Epping Forest and Commons Committee. [\[back\]](#)

## **1.3 A safe place for visitors**

### **A robust and detailed approach to safety management**

*Maintaining the Forest as a safe place without spoiling its character, or lessening visitors' sense of exploration and adventure, requires a clear framework, careful planning and balanced judgement. We are proud of our track record for safety, and hope to continue best practice in this area in the years ahead.*



## Overview

Despite the 4.2 million visits made to Epping Forest each year, the Forest is a safe place; the only incidents reported in 2014/15 were 5 'slips and trips' and 2 'falls from height'.

Visitor safety is an important priority for all staff at Epping Forest.

We have systems in place to anticipate and deal with a range of safety challenges, from emergencies such as floods and forest fires, to personal safety and crime, anti-social behaviour, sporting and traffic accidents, and providing safe events and buildings.

## Major issues and challenges

The Forest is a place of freedom and adventure, and in working to safeguard visitors, we must be careful not to impose too many restrictions or cause unnecessary alarm. At the same time, we need to inform people of risks, to set sensible rules, and to be ready to take swift and appropriate action when required.

Our approach to safety begins with risk assessments to identify potential causes of harm, and to inform our emergency and safety plans. All staff also take part in our annual health and safety audit, with separate audits for tree and reservoir<sup>[22]</sup> safety. The audits provide a framework to review issues and incidents in detail, to update safety plans, and identify needs for specialist training or communication with visitors. Managing conflicting needs and interests between different types of visitor (for example cyclists and walkers) can require careful assessment and negotiation.

Police can sometimes also be reluctant to respond to incidents in the Forest, which is often perceived to be private land. However, section 45 of the Epping Forest Act 1878<sup>[23]</sup> explicitly states that the powers and duties of both the Metropolitan and Essex police forces extend to the Forest. We need to work closely with local police forces to change this perception.

Some parts of the Forest can become temporary or longer-term 'hotspots' for anti-social behaviour. Other parts border on built-up areas of social deprivation, where issues such as vandalism can spill over and require particular action or partnership working with police or local authorities. Forest Keepers<sup>[24]</sup> are on duty 365 days a year and patrol the Forest, but maintaining a permanent watch on all areas is not feasible. Although CCTV can sometimes be a useful deterrent it can be intrusive and unsuitable in a natural environment. Mobile phones help visitors feel safer and provide a valuable tool for responding to incidents, but mobile phone signals are weak or missing in certain parts of the Forest.

Overall, the track record for visitor safety at Epping Forest remains excellent. Despite the fact that budgets are often under pressure, we have managed to sustain and in some cases increase resources for this important priority. Of course, certain risks can never be eliminated, but we believe we now have a strong framework in place. This will enable us to continue to develop specialised action plans and achieve our longer-term aspiration of remaining a best practice organisation for visitor safety.

## What are we doing to address these issues?

To safeguard and maintain visitor safety in Epping Forest, we currently:

- ▶ Enact a safety plan based on appropriate audits and risk assessments, as well as an emergency plan
- ▶ Employ Forest Keepers to patrol the Forest, provide information and reassurance to visitors and ensure adherence to Forest byelaws
- ▶ Work with Police Safer Neighbourhoods Teams in London and Neighbourhood Policing Teams in Essex to manage problems associated with anti-social behaviour
- ▶ Work with our partners in neighbouring Local Authorities to enforce Dog Control Orders
- ▶ Provide an out of hours contact centre and Forest Duty Manager allowing the public to report issues that can be dealt with in an efficient manner

- ▶ Welcome visitors to report incidents at any of our Forest Centres during opening hours, including weekends and bank holidays
- ▶ Include clear terms and conditions with organisations that utilise the Forest

22. A natural or artificial lake for the storage of water for industrial and domestic purposes and for the regulation of inland waterways. [\[back\]](#)

23. The Acts of Parliament passed in 1878 and 1880 to protect and conserve Epping Forest as an open space unenclosed and unbuilt upon for the recreation and enjoyment of the public. [\[back\]](#)

24. Staff members whose role is to assist the public to enjoy the Forest safely and to protect the Forest from inappropriate damage or abuse. The Forest Keepers are also attested constables and enforce the Epping Forest byelaws. [\[back\]](#)

## 1.4 New decisions on wildlife watching

### *Considering whether to establish or enhance facilities for wildlife watching*

*Wildlife watching offers great opportunities to engage with, and learn about, the Forest's rich and unique biodiversity<sup>[25]</sup>. But it can also bring risks and impacts. We are considering whether and how to extend opportunities for wildlife watching, and would value your input and feedback.*

#### Overview

A survey in 2012 for Natural England found that 11% of visits to local parks are made for the purpose of watching wildlife. Although many keen wildlife watchers already visit and enjoy the Forest, we are currently considering whether we should work with partners to provide more specific facilities such as hides and webcams. Some of these proposals have potential impacts on the landscape or on animals, and we are keen to gather views before making our decisions.

#### Major issues and challenges

Much of Epping Forest is designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)<sup>[26]</sup> and a Special Area of Conservation (SAC)<sup>[27]</sup>. The SSSI citation for the Forest describes it as containing "a nationally outstanding assemblage of invertebrates, a major amphibian interest and an exceptional breeding bird community."

This richness of fauna makes the Forest a popular site for wildlife enthusiasts. But SSSI and SAC designation also brings particular legal and management obligations, so any operations that could disturb wildlife require very careful consideration.

Wildlife watching, filming and photography are increasingly popular. But without careful management these activities have the potential to scare away animals, disrupt their feeding and breeding patterns, or acclimatise them to the presence of people. Structures (such as hides) and equipment (such as video links) for wildlife watching require planning permission and regular inspection and maintenance, and can have an adverse effect on the landscape or be visually intrusive. They can also attract vandalism and anti-social behaviour, although webcams in suitable nests and other discreet sites can be managed without significant disruption.

Some sites, such as our [deer sanctuary](#), provide good opportunities for carefully managed wildlife observation. Improved communication (through publications, logs of sightings, online forums and alerts via mobile phone or social media) could help us to make the most of opportunities for observing and learning without the need for new physical structures. However, some [species need to be protected](#) from potential disruption at particular times, so even minimally invasive activities require expert management.

#### What are we doing to address these issues?

To enable wildlife watching in the Forest, we currently:

- ▶ Encourage and liaise with independently organised nature and wildlife clubs, such as birdwatching groups, the Wren Conservation Group, and Wanstead Nature Club (for 8-13 year-olds)
- ▶ Mount wildlife displays and photographs at our Forest Centres
- ▶ Organise various guided walks and events with a wildlife focus

25. The term given to the variety of life and the natural process of which living things are a part. The term includes living organisms, the genetic differences between them and the communities in which they occur. [\[back\]](#)

26. Area identified by English Nature under the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949 for protection by reason of the rarity of its nature conservation, wildlife features or geological interest. [\[back\]](#)

27. Site designated according to the Habitats Directive 93/43/EEC on the conservation of natural habitats and wild fauna and flora. SAC defines a site of Community Importance designated by member states through a statutory, administrative and/or contractual act, where the necessary conservation measures are applied for the maintenance or restoration, at a favourable conservation status, of the natural habitats and/or the populations of the species for which the site is designated. [\[back\]](#)

## 1.5 Keeping trails in working order

### *Improving our maintenance regime for trails with limited resources*

*Our shared-use trails, waymarked trails and easy access paths create a network around the Forest for our visitors, but to maintain them in good condition, they require upkeep at significant cost. Alongside these trails, there are more remote Forest paths, often formed by people and wildlife exploring the Forest. As a result, these are dynamic and ever-shifting, and we do not have the resources to maintain these to the same level as our trails.*

#### Overview

Shared-use trails make the Forest accessible for the majority of people. There is an extensive network of surfaced trails but their construction and maintenance take a significant amount of time and effort. Decisions about the location, surface material and construction for new trails are governed by a complex range of factors. We need to refine our maintenance regime for all trails in the light of ongoing budget constraints.

#### Current situation and challenges

Epping Forest has over 33 km of surfaced and 64km of unsurfaced trails, providing access to a wide range of landscapes for visitors, whether they travel on foot, horseback or by bicycle. In addition, there are nine waymarked trails, covering a total distance of 40km, and four easy access paths, as well as the public rights of way that pass through the Forest.

Wear and tear on the trails, especially in wet conditions, can demand that the surfaces require frequent maintenance at significant cost. The constraints associated with the Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)<sup>[28]</sup> and Special Area of Conservation (SAC)<sup>[29]</sup> status of much of the Forest prevent the use of macadam<sup>[30]</sup> paths or self-binding aggregates<sup>[31]</sup> that contain a significant amount of calcium carbonate.

Our four easy access paths have been constructed for wheelchairs and buggies in easily accessible sites with seating and resting places. However, to remain fit for purpose, the surface needs to be regularly re-dressed to keep it smooth.

Other trails are constructed from a range of different materials, and are in varying states of repair. Wear and erosion mean that all trails need periodic resurfacing, and in many cases overhanging vegetation needs cutting back, or drains and culverts cleared or repaired.

The upgrading and maintenance of shared-use trails is a priority for the future. Some stretches of shared-use trails can be subject to heavy use from the 4.2 million visits (per annum). In these cases, maintenance is required more often and can require the use of more heavy-duty surface treatments.

Although we aim to ensure that all trails are safe and offer reasonable access, budget constraints mean that some trails become narrowed or uneven before maintenance can be carried out. Signage for trails also varies across the Forest, and the designation of trails for shared use by walkers, cyclists and riders is unclear. The natural appearance of trails is important and must be in keeping with the varying natural local terrain of the Forest. In making new trails or new crossing places, we err on the side of caution. Any new construction requires a very strong argument and detailed assessment to be sure that it will not interfere with the character of the Forest, or disturb particular types of plant or wildlife. We aim to strike an appropriate balance between wilder, more remote parts of the Forest, parts which require some effort and sense of adventure to access, and other parts which are easy for everyone to access and enjoy.

### What are we doing to address these issues?

- ▶ Nine circular waymarked trails in the most popular, accessible parts of the Forest have been completed.
- ▶ Illustrated maps are available for all trails, which also have specially designed signage with a low visual impact.
- ▶ Maintaining the existing trail network, in response to defects reported, within budget constraints
- ▶ Choosing suitable materials for maintenance or construction, considering safety and slip resistance, durability, potential pollution, sustainable sourcing and cost.

28. Area identified by English Nature under the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949 for protection by reason of the rarity of its nature conservation, wildlife features or geological interest. [\[back\]](#)

29. Site designated according to the Habitats Directive 93/43/EEC on the conservation or natural habitats and wild fauna and flora. SAC defines a site of Community Importance designated by member states through a statutory, administrative and/or contractual act, where the necessary conservation measures are applied for the maintenance or restoration, at a favourable conservation status, of the natural habitats and/or the populations of the species for which the site is designated. [\[back\]](#)

30. Single-sized aggregate layers of small stones, with a coating of binder as a cementing agent, are mixed in an open-structured roadway or path. [\[back\]](#)

31. Sand and gravel, crushed rock and other bulk materials used in the construction industry for purposes such as making concrete, mortar, asphalt or roadstone, drainage or bulk filling. [\[back\]](#)

## 1.6 Sports and physical activity in Epping Forest

### *Understanding the importance of sports and physical activity provision in Epping Forest*

*We encourage the Forest's use as a public sports and activity area, while also seeking to preserve the natural environment of the Forest for the enjoyment of future generations. In fact, the Conservators<sup>[32]</sup> currently subsidise sports in the Forest. However, constraints on resources mean we need to find new ways to fund sports and physical activities.*

### Overview

Epping Forest has been a valued recreational<sup>[33]</sup> resource for hundreds of years. The Forest's important role as a provider of public sports and physical activities was enshrined in the 1878 Epping Forest Act<sup>[34]</sup>. Since then, sports provision in the Forest has provided hundreds of thousands of people with the opportunity to exercise and enjoy the outdoors - as well as creating an early training ground for more than 150 of England's professional footballers, including David Beckham, John Terry and Jermaine Defoe.

According to the NHS, around a quarter of adults are obese, representing a marked increase in obesity over the past decade. Recent studies have also pointed towards inactivity as a major cause of health problems. As a large open space with the ability to provide sports, we see this as an important part of serving our local communities.

In addition to individual health benefits, sports and physical activity provision support community outreach and involvement. For example, there are 26 schools which use Forest land for sport and physical education that would not otherwise have access to an appropriate outdoor space.

During the London 2012 Olympics, the profile of sport within the Forest was significantly increased. The City of London partnered with several community groups and organisations to improve the Forest's sporting facilities, including installing new cycle paths. The legacy of the Olympics is something we are keen to build on, to encourage more visitors to enjoy the Forest's recreational facilities.

### Major issues and challenges

Currently, there is an uneven distribution of sports provision in the Forest. The range of sporting activities is also less extensive than it could be, with no facilities for sports such as tennis. This is because we have limited staff and financial resources to provide sports and leisure within the Forest. Although there are sports grants available, sports provision in the Forest continues to require subsidisation from the Conservators.

Additionally, some feel that environmental conservation and non-sporting leisure activities should take priority over sports provision, and we need to ensure the provision of sports and physical activities doesn't affect our responsibility to preserve the natural aspect of the Forest.

### What are we doing to address these issues?

We currently have provision for a wide range of sports and physical activities, including:

- ▶ Golf
- ▶ Running/Orienteering
- ▶ Walking
- ▶ Football
- ▶ Cycling
- ▶ Horse riding
- ▶ Angling
- ▶ Cricket. Grounds are rented out to cricket clubs.
- ▶ Since 2014, a number of different sports events have also been piloted on Wanstead Flats:
  - ▶ Field archery sessions for families
  - ▶ Taster sessions for Ultimate Frisbee
  - ▶ Summer rounders family league
- ▶ Wanstead Flats will also be hosting games for the regional Ultimate Frisbee Tournament in 2015.

Epping Forest currently employs a member of staff partly dedicated to sports development, as well as staff to care for and maintain the sports facilities.

32. The Conservators are the Mayor, Aldermen and Members of the City of London Corporation assembled in Common Council. The Conservators are charged with the responsibility of safeguarding the Forest under the Epping Forest Act 1878. The City of London is the organisation that owns Epping Forest. The authority of the Conservators is vested in the City of London's Epping Forest and Commons Committee. [\[back\]](#)

33. Any pursuit engaged upon during leisure time, other than pursuits to which people are normally highly committed i.e. shopping, housework, child care etc. [\[back\]](#)

34. The Acts of Parliament passed in 1878 and 1880 to protect and conserve Epping Forest as an open space unenclosed and unbuilt upon for the recreation and enjoyment of the public. [\[back\]](#)

## 1 1.6.A Keeping cycling on track

## ***Developing a balanced and sustainable approach to cycling in the Forest***

*We need to develop a long-term plan to manage the impacts that cycling can have on the Forest. At the same time we want to support cycling as a fun, healthy and sustainable activity which is valued by many visitors.*

### **Overview**

Over 10% of visits to Epping Forest involve cycling, which comes in many varieties - from mountain biking to less strenuous individual, family and group cycling (including small scale cycling events). Some cyclists use the Forest's quieter roads and trails as a pleasant alternative to urban access routes for their travel needs. Most cyclists want to stick to well used, easily accessible trails, while the more adventurous want to get deep into the more remote parts of the Forest, which offer more challenge.

Cycling has significant health benefits, can be a great social activity, and is a good way to discover the Forest. However, cycling can also damage the landscape and, sometimes, can create tensions with other visitors. We are keen to review the impacts of cycling so that we can develop a balanced and sustainable approach to its future management.

Epping Forest is unusual in offering relatively unrestricted access for cyclists. Other open spaces, including Ashdown Forest, Malvern Hills and Wimbledon and Putney Commons, have restricted cycling to certain routes, as have other divisions within the City of London Open Spaces Department.

### **Major issues and challenges**

Cyclists currently have free, year-round access to around 33km of surfaced and 64km of unsurfaced shared use trails across the Forest. Four of our waymarked trails (Holly, Hornbeam, Lime and Beech) are also suitable for cycling. Some areas of the Forest are out-of-bounds to cyclists for historic, ecological or scientific reasons, and cycling is not permitted in Wanstead Park (with the exception of a permissive cycle path). In line with the Country Code, cyclists must give way to walkers and horse riders in these areas, but some cyclists believe that they have right of way, which can result in user conflict.

In general, considerate cyclists who respect the fragility of some parts of the Forest, keep to designated trails, and minimise potential disruption to walkers, horses and wildlife, are viewed positively by other users of the Forest. Our visitor survey, coupled with the number of complaints we receive, highlight the fact that some cyclists (notably mountain bikers) can cause alarm or inconvenience by cycling recklessly. Forest byelaws<sup>[35]</sup> specifically prohibit cycling "to the danger, injury, annoyance or inconvenience of the public". Breaching these byelaws may incur prosecution and a fine of up to £200.

Though research has indicated that the pressure from mountain bikes is buffered by tyres, erosion of trails, and of parts of the Forest floor where cyclists go off the trails, has become significant in some areas as mountain biking has become more popular, with moss banks, stream banks and heather heathlands showing particular damage.

Although prohibited, some cyclists continue to construct ad hoc ramps or jumps, which can be dangerous and riding at speed can be a risk to cyclists themselves, as well as to walkers, horse riders, deer and other wildlife. Recently, aided by new LED technology, some mountain bikers have taken up riding in the dark, which poses more risk, especially since accident response is more complex at night, but also to other wildlife, including deer during the rutting season, when it can affect breeding patterns and cause disturbance, leading to an increase in Deer Vehicle Collisions. Parking within Forest car parks after dark is not permitted and comes with its own issues.

Finally, the Conservators<sup>[36]</sup> are under pressure from cycling campaign groups to dedicate some Forest land for safe, vehicle free routes for cycle journeys.

### **What are we doing to address these issues?**

To encourage responsible cycling, and respond to pressures connected with intense or reckless cycling, we currently:

- ▶ Organise safe, fun and inclusive cycling events and activities
- ▶ Welcome well-organised and considerate cycling groups

- ▶ Respond quickly and efficiently to concerns and complaints relating to cycling. Users can contact us by phone, even outside of office hours when our calls are monitored by an external contractor, by email, by letter or by visiting one of our Forest Centres during opening hours. We have an agreed response time of 24 hours for e-mails or 5 working days for letters.
- ▶ Prosecute cyclists who breach Forest byelaws, imposing fines of up to £200.
- ▶ Invest in trail surface design and management to improve trail width, surfaces and drainage, and organise volunteer workdays to fix trails which have been damaged by overuse from cyclists.
- ▶ Actively promote the Mountain Bike Code of Conduct, first introduced by the Countryside Commission in 1987.

35. Regulation made by a local authority in consultation with central government. [\[back\]](#)

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## 2 1.6.B A welcoming place for horses and riders

### *Maintaining a proud tradition of riding in the Forest*

*We recognise the importance of Epping Forest to horse riders, and are committed to maintaining our extensive network of rides and our relationships with riders. This includes ensuring that our systems for rider licensing, safety and insurance are fit for the future.*

#### Overview

There is an unbroken tradition of horse riding in Epping Forest stretching back for millennia. Today, the Forest continues to provide a wonderful setting for riding, offering the largest network of continuous rides close to London. We feel that our infrastructure for, and dialogue with, riders is good but we need to review the effectiveness of key aspects of provision including rider insurance and safety, and our licensing system for horse riding.

#### Major issues and challenges

Riders enjoy around 64km of surfaced and 33km of unsurfaced trails across the Forest. This extensive network is a valuable resource for the local community who otherwise would have to travel some distance to reach suitable terrain where riding is permitted. Complementing these trails are the woodlands and grass swathes across much of the northern Forest which are open for 'free range' riding when weather permits.

To reflect previously significant levels of damage to Epping Forest trails, open riding is restricted during the winter months to surfaced trails, and a licence fee is charged to reflect a proportion of the maintenance costs of these trails.

Horse riding is not permitted on the Forest's four accessible paths (designed specifically to accommodate wheelchairs and buggies with easily damaged surface treatments) and some other areas are out of bounds to riders for historic, ecological or scientific reasons. Jumping obstacles such as fallen logs or ditches is not permitted and riders are requested to follow common-sense procedures relating to safety, protection of wildlife and consideration for others. Most riders observe the rules and restrictions on where, and how, to ride but a small number are either unaware or choose to ignore them.

The large number of shared-use trails and bridleways across the Forest mean that some sections, or related infrastructure such as signage, are overdue for repair.

There is currently no requirement for riders in the Forest to have insurance, and some riders (especially those with less experience) can get into difficulties with cars, dogs, cyclists, deer or with the rougher Forest terrain. A high proportion of riders

are teenagers, a group which is generally under-represented in Forest activities and with whom we aim to improve communication and dialogue.

Riders must purchase a licence for riding in the Forest, and failure to do so may result in prosecution and a fine. The licence was increased in 2015 for the first time since 2004, but remains good value for money when compared to other similar open spaces in the south of England, working out at just over 15 pence a day in most cases. While most riders respect the restrictions which only allow the same licence to be used by different riders when they share the same horse, a small minority flout the rules. Some riders question the fairness of the licensing scheme, since visitors using the Forest for other non-organised, non-income generating, recreational<sup>[37]</sup> activities are not required to pay. Administering and enforcing the scheme requires significant time and resources in comparison to the income generated. Car parking for horse boxes and other horse transport is currently free.

Four stables and four riding schools are located in or near the Forest, with a number of other equestrian establishments in the area having closed over the past decade. The number of people regularly taking part in horse riding activities has declined over recent years.

We organise a Horse Riders' Forum to discuss issues with users and the Epping Forest Riders Association has regular contact and dialogue with Forest staff on relevant issues.

### **What are we currently doing to address these issues?**

To promote safe and responsible riding, and manage issues surrounding riding, we currently:

- ▶ Inspect and maintain trails, signage and parking facilities suitable for horse transport
- ▶ Welcome responsible riders and well-organised riding groups and events
- ▶ Maintain an efficient licensing system and related database
- ▶ Organise occasional fun learning events to help riders develop awareness and skills to handle challenges in the Forest (such as encountering dogs or navigating cattle grids)
- ▶ Work with the Horse Riders' Forum and other relevant stakeholders to address problems, and develop strategy

37. Any pursuit engaged upon during leisure time, other than pursuits to which people are normally highly committed i.e. shopping, housework, child care etc. [\[back\]](#)

## **3 1.6.C Keeping golf courses up to par**

### ***A more sustainable future for the Forest's golf courses***

*Golf has been played in Epping Forest for almost 130 years. Today, golf is heavily subsidised by the Conservators<sup>[38]</sup> and the Forest's four golf courses need to adopt new approaches to ensure their environmental and financial sustainability. We'll be stepping up our work with golf club management teams to ensure that golfing in the Forest has a viable future.*

#### **Overview**

There are four golf courses within Epping Forest and its Buffer Land<sup>[39]</sup>, making the Forest an important and well-loved destination for golfers. While the Forest provides a beautiful and scenic setting, golf courses require careful management and are relatively sterile environments in terms of biodiversity<sup>[40]</sup>. Ensuring a sustainable financial future for golf courses during the economic downturn has also presented challenges, and we are working with management teams at the golf clubs (especially at Chingford) to ensure that they remain financially healthy.



The open, mown landscapes of golf courses are also popular with walkers and other Forest users, which can lead to user conflict.

### Major issues and challenges

There are four golf courses within the Forest: Chingford, Theydon Bois, Loughton and Woodford. Chingford and Theydon Bois have 18 holes while Loughton and Woodford each have 9. Chingford is the oldest golf course in Essex, and the fourth oldest in London, dating back to 1886. Some of the courses are associated with the earliest exponents of golf course design, including James Braid and William Dunne.

All four courses have clubhouses, catering facilities or restaurants, and all operate a commercial charging policy. The course at Chingford is managed by the Conservators while the private golf clubs are operated by teams of contractors. Each course has its own arrangement but all of them share similar challenges in terms of landscape and habitat management.

Traditional management of golf courses involves high levels of fertiliser and pesticides, with the potential to interfere with trees, plants and wildlife in the surrounding Forest. Best practice requires using the minimum amount of chemicals to maintain healthy turf and optimum playing conditions. Staff must be well qualified in working with chemicals, must understand the need to protect the public as well as surrounding landscapes, and must avoid particular hazards such as pollution of aquatic systems. Using water wisely can also be an issue, especially given increasing drought and compulsory water conservation measures in the face of climate change<sup>[41]</sup>. We work with the management teams at golf courses in the Forest to develop more sustainable landscape management systems. At Chingford, a sustainable 'washdown' area to reduce contamination from golf course machinery has been installed, less polluting types of herbicide and wormicide are in use, and a reedbed filtration system to reduce pollutants is under construction.

An added benefit of reducing the amount of chemicals and water used is the potential to save money. With over-capacity in provision, falling participation and a dated image, many golf clubs have struggled to remain profitable in the current economic climate, particularly those with shared public access, and those at Epping Forest are no exception - not least because of competition from other golf courses nearby. Chingford Golf Course is now struggling to remain in profit, and in response, a recovery plan has been developed. The plan will try to maximise income opportunities and reduce overheads, as well as addressing marketing and other commercial opportunities. We will be working with the Grounds Staff and Golf Professional to try to ensure the plan works effectively.

Chingford, like the other golf courses on Forest Land, benefits from the support of committed volunteers, and we are exploring the potential to establish apprenticeships, coaching schemes and enhanced volunteering opportunities, to attract as many new recruits as possible, particularly among young people.

Further challenges at the golf courses on Forest land revolve around security, and occasional tensions with other Forest visitors. The golf course clubhouses and other premises can be vulnerable to crime and vandalism, and as the courses are shared-use areas, conflict can occur between golfers and other Forest users.

### What are we doing to address these issues?

To deal with issues and challenges faced by golf courses on Forest land, and support their ecological and financial sustainability, we currently:

- ▶ Work with golf course management teams to identify and deliver less environmentally damaging management practices
- ▶ Identify and support measures to retain and attract golf club members, and improve profitability, through marketing and other promotional initiatives
- ▶ Help to promote golf clubs through a dedicated page on our website
- ▶ Promote awareness of our codes of conduct for golfers and other Forest users when on the golf courses

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39. 735 hectares (1816 acres) of land owned and managed by the City of London around the perimeter of the Forest to preserve the landscape setting and context of the Forest. Buffer land is currently exempt from many of the requirements of the legislation governing the management of the Forest, but is also not protected in the same way. [\[back\]](#)

40. The term given to the variety of life and the natural process of which living things are a part. The term includes living organisms, the genetic differences between them and the communities in which they occur. [\[back\]](#)

41. Any change in climate over time, whether due to natural variability or as a result of indirect human activity. [\[back\]](#)

#### 4 1.6.D Keeping football alive and kicking

##### *Maintaining access to football for all parts of the community*

*Epping Forest makes an important contribution to local football infrastructure and development, and is committed to sustaining access and participation for all. Giving football a healthy future in the Forest will require close partnership with external funders and stakeholders to ensure financial viability, as well as active outreach to recruit a new generation of players, volunteers, staff and leaders.*

##### Overview

Wanstead Flats Playing Fields, in the southern part of the Forest, contain between 45 and 60 football pitches (depending on the season), which have made a significant contribution to London's football provision since 1890, especially since the closure of many school playing fields. Play is subsidised by the Forest's Conservators<sup>[42]</sup>, which means that we can offer the most competitively priced pitches for hire in East London. However, this subsidy is not financially viable and football needs to begin covering its own costs. In addition, the quality of football facilities varies widely and upgrading is required. Sustaining investment is an important priority, but will present significant challenges in the period ahead.

##### Major issues and challenges

Around 80% of grassroots football relies on local authority or charity pitch provision. Wanstead Flats contains a mix of mini, 9-a-side youth and 11-a-side adult football pitches, available for hire between September and April (with limited summer availability). Sustaining the quality of infrastructure and facilities so that Wanstead Flats Playing Fields remain competitive with other recreational<sup>[43]</sup> facilities in the region will remain an important priority.

All pitches have changing facilities and free car parking. The Conservators, in partnership with the Football Foundation, funded a £1.4 million pavilion at Harrow Road in 2008, and are scheduled to invest £220,000 in refurbishments at the 50 year old Capel Road pavilion. Other facilities, including those at Aldersbrook, require significant modernisation, including provision of separate changing rooms. In managing football provision, we are strongly committed to ensuring access for disadvantaged and hard to reach groups. This involves active outreach work and community projects as well as keeping hire costs as low as is possible.

Participation in organised 11-a-side football is declining, particularly in areas such as the London Boroughs of Waltham Forest and Newham, driven by a drop in coaching and organised competitions. Encouraging new coaches and fixtures, and investing in recruitment and training of skilled volunteers as well as the wider workforce and leadership, will remain an important strand in ongoing strategy. There is potential to work with 'Get Into Football' officers, employed by the Football Association and local authorities, to encourage new players.

The Football Association has also introduced 9-a-side football for under-11s and under-12s. This format requires new smaller pitch sizes and markings, and potentially means investment in new portable goals is needed.

We currently invest around £1.50 in football provision for every £1 recouped by charges. Sustaining our funding levels will be challenging in the period ahead, partly due to budget constraints and partly because of factors such as the higher standards for facilities set by Sport England and the Football Association, and changes to youth football including smaller teams and adapted pitches. This may mean that we need to introduce a sliding scale for fees and licences to run facilities (with higher

rates for private hire and licensing, compared to community rates) as well as forging new external partnerships to develop infrastructure and personnel. We need to review and upgrade our pricing structure for pitch hire and ensure efficient implementation of our processes for collecting fees and arrears. There are also many Forest users who play on the pitches unofficially without paying, so we need to raise awareness of pitch hire charges through increased promotion.

Care must be taken in managing some of the impacts that high visitor numbers associated with football can have on the more ecological fragile areas of Wanstead Flats and on local residents and other Forest users. Some participants in football leave litter around pitches and facilities, requiring additional resources to clean up and causing a nuisance to others.

### What are we doing to address these issues?

To deal with issues and challenges associated with football facilities and provision, we currently:

- ▶ Invest in football infrastructure, facilities maintenance, and personnel
- ▶ Manage facilities, sub-contractors and licensees, and administer hire charges
- ▶ Maintain pitches in line with relevant standards and environmental considerations
- ▶ Work with partners, including relevant sports bodies, community groups, local leagues and football groups, to support participation in football, especially among young people, disadvantaged communities, and hard to reach groups
- ▶ Work with partners to identify, recruit and train volunteers and staff for local football from all parts of the community
- ▶ Include a requirement to leave facilities litter free in pitch hire terms

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43. Any pursuit engaged upon during leisure time, other than pursuits to which people are normally highly committed i.e. shopping, housework, child care etc. [\[back\]](#)

## 5 1.6.E A fun place to run and orienteer

### *Welcoming runners and orienteers of all ages and abilities*

*Epping Forest is a great place to run, with a good range of routes, running groups and events. Both running and orienteering are generally low impact, and the Conservators<sup>[44]</sup> will work to support their development and ensure both remain inclusive, fun routes to health for people of all ages and abilities.*

#### Overview

We aim to ensure that Epping Forest is a welcoming place for all runners and orienteers, providing varying types of route, encouraging a range of events and groups, and helping to develop new opportunities and partnerships to ensure access to running and orienteering for all parts of the community. Running and orienteering present relatively few challenges for Forest Conservators, and we will continue to identify ways to develop running and orienteering as accessible, inclusive sporting activities in the years ahead.

The shared-use trails across the Forest provide a good surface for running, and offer varying levels of difficulty through different landscapes and terrains. There is also a 'Parkrun' in Wanstead Flats each Saturday morning, taking runners of all abilities, aged 16 and over, through a 5km timed route, with guidance from volunteer marshals around a waymarked trail. Over 2,000 different runners have taken part in Parkrun so far, with participation numbers ranging from 21 - 139 per session.

Numerous running and orienteering groups use the Forest on a regular basis, and also host charity and other events, such as school leagues and borough championships. Orion Harriers, a cross country running club founded in 1911, has over 300

members and is the largest regular running group, catering for all ages and abilities. Chigwell & Epping Forest Orienteering Club cover the Epping Forest area and caters for all ages and abilities.

### Major issues and challenges

We find that runners and orienteers are generally very responsible Forest visitors. Problems such as litter or erosion are rare, although very large groups of participants can be a little daunting for other visitors and disturbing for wildlife. Runners and orienteers have encountered conflict problems with dogs, dog owners and cyclists and may also suffer accidents or be exposed to risk on busy roads or crossing points.

There is no dedicated team or officer that has the responsibility to enhance and promote our current partnerships. This would inevitably lead to an improved quality of service and a better relationship with UK Athletics, Run England, British Orienteering and other bodies.

Costs associated with our support for running and orienteering are generally low. Future investment could centre around creating a wider variety of types of route (with the potential development of dedicated running routes), initiatives to ensure further access for all ages, abilities and communities, and improving our publicity and communications so that people can easily identify the running or orienteering events and routes that best meet their needs.

### What are we doing to address these issues?

To ensure that running and orienteering remain popular activities in the Forest, and deal with any associated challenges, we currently:

- ▶ Welcome runners and orienteers on shared-use trails
- ▶ Provide information about running and orienteering in the Forest on our website
- ▶ Provide licences for running and orienteering events
- ▶ Identify and develop new opportunities and partnerships for initiatives and events to support running and orienteering, and encourage new participants
- ▶ Support local clubs and groups, where possible

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## 6 1.6.F A popular place for angling

### *Sustaining a well-managed resource for anglers*

Ponds and lakes are a significant feature within Epping Forest, providing a vital habitat for plants, wildlife and fish, and a very valuable resource for anglers of all abilities and ages. We aim to manage fishing ponds and lakes to high standards, providing ecologically healthy habitats that offer a great fishing experience.

### Overview

Ponds and lakes in Epping Forest offer the only free fishing, with access for all, within the local area and make an important contribution to angling in London. Our management regime for fishing lakes and ponds is supported by a committed group of volunteers; we hope to enhance their role even further in future, as well as ensuring that we sustain access to fishing for everyone.

## Major issues and challenges

Epping Forest has 109 ponds and lakes, of which 42 contain fish. Of the 25 open to anglers, 13 are actively managed under the present management plan to improve fishing facilities while protecting their ecology. These ponds and lakes are strategically located across the Forest, close to population centres and transport links to enable easy access.

Accessible fishing platforms are available for anglers at Connaught Water and Hollow Pond. Anyone with a rod licence from the Environment Agency is permitted to use the Forest's fishing lakes and ponds, except at night or during the closed season from 15 March to 15 June. Children under 12 do not need a licence. We operate a catch and release policy and removing fish from the lakes and ponds is against the byelaws<sup>[45]</sup> of Epping Forest.

We have finite resources to actively manage fishing lakes and ponds. This process has previously been supported by funding from the Environment Agency, guided by the Epping Forest Fisheries Management Policy and Plan, which will run through to the end of 2015. This document sets out a series of regulations that anglers must abide by, which include: using a maximum of two rods at any time; not removing or introducing fish, aquatic animals or plants; and restrictions on the types of bait, hooks and lines that can be used.

Management of fishing lakes and ponds is an intensive process, involving annual planting regimes, tree cutting and swim clearance, surveying fish and amphibians and conducting health checks, restocking with appropriate species<sup>[46]</sup>, and laying Barley Straw to reduce the build up of algae. Special measures must also be taken to sustain fish stocks and protect particular species such as the great crested newt (by reducing predatory fish) and crucian carp (by removing goldfish or any hybridised fish). Securing ongoing funding to support fisheries management will be an important priority in the period ahead.

While many lakes and ponds are in good condition and offer a good range of fish for angling (including tench, rudd and bream) some need better aquatic and marginal planting, and some need more varied and suitable species of fish. Predators such as cormorants can threaten fish stocks - as can illegal removal of fish for consumption by anglers. Inappropriate or invasive plant species (such as crassula) are sometimes introduced to lakes and ponds, and can be difficult to eradicate. The levels of predatory species (such as perch and pike) and species that can damage vegetation (such as carp) must sometimes be reduced to appropriate levels.

Maintenance of fishing ponds and lakes has been improved through the dedication of a volunteer Lakes and Ponds Task Force, which assists with many routine and specialist tasks. Six volunteer Fishing Bailiffs also help us to manage angling facilities and ensure that anglers have up to date licences and follow angling regulations.

### What are we doing to address these issues?

To ensure that angling remains a popular activity in the Forest, and deal with any associated challenges, we currently:

- ▶ Provide free access to 25 fishing lakes and ponds for anglers with an Environment Agency rod licence
- ▶ Welcome disabled anglers and provide accessible fishing platforms in two locations
- ▶ Actively manage 13 fishing lakes and ponds under a strategic management plan to optimise fishing, water quality and ecology. This will be reviewed later this year and look to actively manage more of the fishing lakes and ponds.
- ▶ Undertake specific management measures to reduce invasive, alien or damaging fish species
- ▶ Recruit, train and manage the work of a volunteer Lakes and Ponds Task Force and volunteer Fishing Bailiffs
- ▶ Actively welcome young anglers and organise Junior Angling Days
- ▶ Construct more accessible fishing platforms with the help of volunteers
- ▶ Conduct an annual angling survey and identify and resolve any problems associated with angling, such as littering

45. Regulation made by a local authority in consultation with central government. [\[back\]](#)

46. Organisms are named and classified by a system of taxonomy according to similarities in structure and origin. Species are the taxonomic group whose members can interbreed. [\[back\]](#)

## 7 1.6.G Epping Forest: wonderful walking

### *Relaxation, exercise and adventure for walkers and ramblers*

*Epping Forest has been an important place for leisure and pleasure for Londoners for centuries. As London's largest open space, it remains an important and popular destination for walkers and ramblers from London, Essex and beyond. In the future, we need to develop a more responsive and strategic approach to meeting the needs of different types of walkers, to maintain easy access while protecting unspoiled habitats, and to improve publicity about walking routes and events.*

### Overview

The trails and wooded depths of Epping Forest entice walkers, ramblers and dog walkers from across London and beyond. The Forest provides unparalleled access to a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)<sup>[47]</sup>, and acts as part of the city's 'green lung'.

Improvements to surfaced trails and good provision for walking events and groups mean that the Forest is now accessible to a wider range of walkers, but stronger partnerships, improved publicity, and a more strategic approach are needed to deliver our future vision of walking for all.

### Major issues and challenges

In developing the Forest's network of trails, it is vitally important to strike a balance so that it remains a wild and mysterious place for more adventurous walkers, but is also accessible for disabled and older people, families and those who are out for an easy stroll. Four fully accessible surfaced paths with seating and resting places have been completed in recent years. Nine waymarked trails and 33km of surfaced shared use trails provide varying levels of challenge and access to different landscapes and walking experiences.

In future, we need to consider how to offer facilities such as toilets, seating and picnic areas in popular Forest locations, while minimising visual and ecological impact. We also need to explore options to identify and publicise a more 'joined up' network of trails, as well as walks of seasonal interest.

In some parts of the Forest, especially near busy roads, walkers can feel vulnerable to accidents or are deterred by crime and anti-social behaviour. We need to review our use of traffic calming, CCTV and other safety measures, and ensure that Forest staff and volunteers are appropriately trained to reassure the public and prevent or deal with crime or disruptive behaviour in a confident way.

Our signage and information boards and interpretation open up the Forest and explain its rich heritage, diverse plants and wildlife - but it's also important to ensure that some parts of the Forest remain free from man-made items such as signs. We provide free maps for accessible paths and waymarked trails to download on our website, as well as a range of maps, guidebooks and leaflets at our Forest Centres.

Forest staff organise and lead a range of walking events and guided tours, including a weekly Health Walk and special events focussed on aspects of the Forest's ecology or heritage. Most walks are free, although some are charged at low cost, and licence fees are levied for large-scale walking events. In future, we need to consider introducing or extending affordable fees to cover the cost of some events. We also want to explore the feasibility of providing more 'expert' walks led by well-known naturalists, volunteers and others with specialist knowledge, skills and insight. Guided walks are also hosted by the Friends of Epping Forest and a range of ramblers' groups, and Epping Forest District Council works with local health practices to offer LifeWalks on referral to people with a range of conditions.

Walks are publicised on our website and in the Epping Forest events diary. Social media, apps, and mobile phones offer exciting new ways to enrich our publicity and enable walkers to share their own experiences, and we need to develop our skills and resources to use social media in a more relevant way.

Walkers come to the Forest with a range of needs and interests including relaxation, exercise and health, and wildlife watching. Children, school groups, families and other groups also have particular needs. In future, we need to understand and be more responsive to these diverse groups, and to work with partners to develop a more structured and comprehensive programme that caters to the needs of all of these groups.

### What are we doing to address these issues?

To ensure that walking is a safe, accessible, enjoyable activity in the Forest, and deal with any associated challenges, we currently:

- ▶ Maintain trails across the Forest which are suitable for walkers and ramblers of different interests and abilities, with appropriate signage
- ▶ Patrol the Forest on foot, by bicycle and by car to prevent and deter crime, and deal with security and safety issues and incidents
- ▶ Organise, publicise and lead a range of walking events
- ▶ Welcome and work with walking and rambling groups, and help to publicise and promote their activities and events
- ▶ Provide licences to organisers of larger scale walking events
- ▶ Produce and distribute maps of walking routes, and listings of walking events, at Forest Centres and via our website
- ▶ Work with the Ramblers Association and the Open Spaces Society to enhance partnerships
- ▶ Provide training for staff and volunteers to lead walks

47. Area identified by English Nature under the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949 for protection by reason of the rarity of its nature conservation, wildlife features or geological interest. [\[back\]](#)

## 8 1.6.H Welcoming well-behaved dogs

### *Promoting responsible dog ownership*

*We want dogs, and their owners, to enjoy Epping Forest to the full. We rely on dog owners to make sure their dogs don't cause nuisance to other Forest visitors or wildlife.*

#### Overview

Well-behaved dogs are welcome in Epping Forest and dog walkers are one of the most frequent and regular types of Forest visitor; according to the 2014 Visitor Survey, up to 28% of visitors bring their dog to the Forest.

We recognise the value of Epping Forest to the physical and mental health of dogs and their owners. The Forest provides an ideal environment for dogs to exercise and 'socialise' with other dogs.

Dogs can, however, cause a range of problems for other visitors and dogs, and for wildlife, if their owners don't keep them under control and clean up after them. Under Forest byelaws<sup>[48]</sup>, dogs must come back to their owner when called, must wear a collar with the owner's name and contact details, and must not chase birds or animals. In 2014, there were 8 reported incidents of conflict between dogs and humans, 20 reported incidents of dogs attacking other dogs and 30 reported incidents of dogs attacking wildlife. Hunting, racing and training with dogs (other than basic obedience training) is prohibited.

Owners are encouraged to clean up after their dog. Bagged dog waste may be placed in all litter bins across the Forest, as well as in separate dog waste bins provided by local authorities in some locations on Forest land.

Local authorities can enforce fixed penalty notices<sup>[49]</sup> on people who fail to clear up after their pets. These make it an offence to fail to remove dog faeces on public land, or to fail to put a dog on a lead when directed to do so by an authorised person (including Forest Keepers<sup>[50]</sup>). The Control Orders also set a limit on the number of dogs under the control of any single person.

### Major issues and challenges

Wildlife (including deer, ground-nesting birds, rabbits and squirrels) are particularly susceptible to disturbance or injury from dogs. In some cases, deer have been involved in accidents on Forest roads after being chased by dogs. Dogs that are not under control or on a lead can also disturb or frighten the cattle that graze in the Forest during the summer, as well as horses on the many trails across the Forest.

Dogs can make some people or children nervous too, which is why owners are asked to keep their dog under control if another visitor requests it. Recently, concerns have also emerged about 'aggressive' dog breeds, and the ability of professional dog walkers to manage large numbers of dogs in their care.

Lastly, dogs' processed diet means that their faeces are rich in nitrogen and phosphorus, which changes the composition of soil and can affect the health of some plant and insect species<sup>[51]</sup>.

Taken together, all these factors mean that dogs can have a significant impact - and that the Forest's Conservators<sup>[52]</sup> rely on owners to be informed, alert and responsible when they bring their dogs into Epping Forest.

While Dog Control Orders go some way towards resolving some of these issues, only areas of the Forest that fall within Epping Forest District Council, London Borough of Waltham Forest and London Borough of Redbridge are currently covered by Dog Control Orders. Forest Keepers have the power to issue fixed penalty notices on behalf of these local authorities. In future, Epping Forest's Conservators will consider whether professional dog walkers should be required to hold a licence and whether to implement Dog Control Orders under their own powers on areas of Forest land that are not covered by local authorities.

### What are we doing to address these issues?

In response to issues relating to dog behaviour and dog mess in the Forest, we currently:

- ▶ Provide notices about dog fouling
- ▶ Produce and distribute a leaflet, 'You & Your Dog', for dog owners who visit the Forest, and provide information for dog walkers on our website
- ▶ Aim to meet our obligations under relevant legislation (including Epping Forest Byelaws, the Dogs (Fouling of Lands) Act 1991, the Clean Neighbourhoods and Environments Act 2005) and encourage dog owners to do the same

48. Regulation made by a local authority in consultation with central government. [\[back\]](#)

49. A notice requiring the recipient to pay a fixed amount of money to the issuing authority for minor offences, including breaches of byelaws and Dog Control Orders. A fixed penalty notice is not a fine and does not result in a criminal conviction. The recipient can opt for the matter to be dealt with in court instead. [\[back\]](#)

50. Staff members whose role is to assist the public to enjoy the Forest safely and to protect the Forest from inappropriate damage or abuse. The Forest Keepers are also attested constables and enforce the Epping Forest byelaws. [\[back\]](#)

51. Organisms are named and classified by a system of taxonomy according to similarities in structure and origin. Species are the taxonomic group whose members can interbreed. [\[back\]](#)

52. The Conservators are the Mayor, Aldermen and Members of the City of London Corporation assembled in Common Council. The Conservators are charged with the responsibility of safeguarding the Forest under the Epping Forest Act 1878. The City of London is the organisation that owns Epping Forest. The authority of the Conservators is vested in the City of London's Epping Forest and Commons Committee. [\[back\]](#)



## 1.7 Providing quality information and directions for our visitors

### *Protecting Epping Forest and enhancing its use through informative signage and maps*

*Our Forest signage and maps help to orientate and inform visitors, providing directions, interpretation and advice. However, our existing materials will need updating and improving over the coming years, specifically to reduce 'negative' messages and meet the expectations of our visitors regarding the use of new technology.*

#### Overview

The Conservators<sup>[53]</sup> of Epping Forest provide signage across the Forest. Our current signage and wayfinding materials include:

- ▶ Interpretation panels to inform visitors and enhance their enjoyment of the Forest
- ▶ Prohibitive notices to help preserve the Forest's natural aspect and protect special and historical sites
- ▶ Leisure maps designed to support recreational<sup>[54]</sup> activities and maximise the public's enjoyment of the Forest

However, in some cases these materials are dated and no longer meet the expectations of our visitors.

#### Major issues and challenges

As part of our strategy for providing Forest signage, we try to balance the needs and expectations of visitors with the need to keep the Forest uncluttered and preserve its natural aspect.

There are currently 25 interpretive panels across the Forest, numerous advisory notices, and approximately 20 temporary notice holders.

The City of London has produced a number of maps of the Forest. These include the Ordnance Survey Map of Epping Forest (out of print), the Official Map of Epping Forest (published by Collins) which is available to purchase from our Forest Centres, a free map within the general Epping Forest leaflet, downloadable site-specific maps with information on waymarked trail routes, and maps for specific leisure activities, including horse riding..

Our existing signage materials need to be refreshed. At present, they risk appearing dated and out of step with changes in technology. Today, the general public expect to receive information through innovative design, social media, Quick Response (QR)<sup>[55]</sup> codes and software applications. The relatively recent growth of smartphones and tablets offers new opportunities to communicate with visitors; similarly, the growth of augmented reality applications, which can offer supplementary information overlaid over real views of the Forest, is set to revolutionise the scope and functionality of the Forest's information systems.

We also recognise that we need to apply the uniform design recently developed for all of the City of London's Open Spaces to signage materials across the Forest.

Additionally, our signs and maps do not represent different groups of Forest users equally. For example, we produce a horse riding leaflet containing a specialist map and there are currently more features listed for horse riders than there are for cyclists across our publications. This kind of imbalance can cause some groups of visitors to feel overlooked or insufficiently catered for. Our maps also currently lack accurate representations of the Forest boundary and local amenities; at the same time, the scale of the maps will not allow for too much additional detail.

Finally, it has been noted that our signs contain too many negatively-worded messages prohibiting access and activities in key areas. How to communicate a 'don't do' message in friendly terms remains a challenge for the entire industry. What's more, positively phrased messages require more words, which risks compromising clarity. However, we need to address this issue as part of our commitment to making visitors to the Forest feel welcome and enhancing the user experience.

#### What are we doing to address these issues?

As part of our efforts to update and refresh our signage and maps, we are currently:

- ▶ Reviewing all signage materials to see where they could be improved to provide quality information and direction to visitors

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54. Any pursuit engaged upon during leisure time, other than pursuits to which people are normally highly committed i.e. shopping, housework, child care etc. [\[back\]](#)

55. A two-dimensional (2D) matrix barcode that provides a fast and effective way of providing content to users, including weblinks. QR codes are read by special software applications on smartphones or tablets. They can hold a large amount of data in a very small space and can be read even where dirty or damaged. [\[back\]](#)

## 1.8 A sustainable programme of events for the Forest

### *Increasing public participation in Forest events*

*We currently provide a range of events across Epping Forest each year. Action is needed to promote these events in a more targeted way, while ensuring they do not place too high a demand on our resources.*

#### **Overview**

Events can educate, contribute to healthy living and quality of life, and provide a way of introducing new visitors to the Forest. The current programme of events in Epping Forest encompasses family learning, sports, heritage, walks, exhibitions and seasonal themed activities. We produce 15,000 diaries annually which list the coming year's events and activities provided by the Conservators<sup>[56]</sup>, as well as events promoted by other partner organisations.

Our events are predominantly free and generally suitable and accessible for all. While events currently take place right across the Forest, the north is more targeted than the south. It is possible we are missing opportunities to promote our events and increase participation among user groups who do not visit the Forest so often. What's more, bookings can only be made either by phone or in person, at The View Forest Centre, Chingford. A clearer events strategy is needed to identify potential audiences and plan our activities and communications accordingly.

Similar organisations have hosted large scale events such as music concerts, open air film screenings and seasonal activities such as ice rinks which can prove commercially successful. While we do not believe the Forest is an appropriate venue for such events, we would welcome your views on this.

#### **Major issues and challenges**

One of our overriding aims and commitments, alongside preserving the natural aspect of the Forest, is to enhance the visitor experience. In the events and activities we provide, our aim is to appeal to a broad range of existing and potential visitors. However, we need to broaden the type of activity we offer, and the geographical locations within the Forest where we offer them, to widen our appeal, attract new visitors and encourage currently underrepresented people to use the Forest.

With no standard pricing structure applied to events in the Forest, there is currently no effective mechanism for generating income through our planned activities. Charging for some events, expanding our programme and developing larger-scale events such as festivals could be one possible way to maximise income potential, as could licensing similar external events on Forest land. This would help to subsidise other events and work in targeted areas. However, these measures should be carefully balanced with our conservation role, as large events could damage the environment and our reputation. To achieve this balance, we need to devise policy templates which set out clear procedures for risk assessment, partnerships, budgets, charges and other issues for all events within the Forest.

Our annual events programme also regularly stretches our in-house resources, especially staffing. While we have a skilled and willing volunteer force, relevant training is needed to ensure individual volunteers are equipped to help at these events.

### What are we doing to address these issues?

As part of our events management programme, we currently:

- ▶ Publish an annual events diary including events across Epping Forest, compiled by local partners and internal departments, and distribute 15,000 copies each year
- ▶ Deliver over 200 events per annum
- ▶ Advertise all Forest events on the City of London website and on Twitter, where relevant
- ▶ Provide training for staff and volunteers in walk-leading, emergency first aid, manual handling and fire safety

56. The Conservators are the Mayor, Aldermen and Members of the City of London Corporation assembled in Common Council. The Conservators are charged with the responsibility of safeguarding the Forest under the Epping Forest Act 1878. The City of London is the organisation that owns Epping Forest. The authority of the Conservators is vested in the City of London's Epping Forest and Commons Committee. [\[back\]](#)

## 1.9 Promoting public transport access to Epping Forest

### *Enhanced public transport signage and awareness needed to make the Forest more accessible to visitors*

*To improve visitor access to Epping Forest, the City of London would like to increase awareness and improve signage, as well as work with local authorities to enhance public transport links where possible.*

#### Overview

Much of Epping Forest can be accessed by public transport. While the edges of the Forest are particularly well served by public transport, links through the Forest are poor, and there is limited service for the north of the Forest.

Although there are train, overground, underground and bus links to the Forest, most destination stations require a 15-20 minute walk. Without a map, it can be challenging to find the Forest from these stations as there is limited signage.

Our 2014 Visitor Survey reflected these issues: only 10% of visitors used public transport to access the Forest, compared to 52% who travelled by car. A notable 19% of visitors wanted more signage, while 10% said better public transport would encourage them to visit the Forest more often.

As Conservators<sup>[57]</sup> of an important natural habitat, we want to promote sustainable transport to protect the environment - alleviating congestion, pollution and pressure on our car parking facilities, while increasing public awareness of the Forest's accessibility. While it's not possible to reach all the Forest's destinations via public transport, we want to encourage its use where possible.

#### Major issues and challenges

The further you wish to travel from the towns and villages surrounding Epping Forest, the more challenging it is to access the Forest by public transport. Local buses run less frequently than in central London and the City of London has no control over public transport provision. The Conservators operated a pilot shuttle bus on Sundays and public holidays in 2011, but available funding didn't match the running costs and this service was discontinued.

To protect the natural aspect<sup>[58]</sup>, there are few signs within the Forest indicating how to get to public transport hubs. There is also little signage at train stations and bus stops indicating how to get to Epping Forest, though the Forest has begun to feature on Legible London interpretation panels.

## What are we doing to address these issues?

Enhancing signage and public transport access needs to be done in a low impact manner that provides greater accessibility while balancing our need to preserve the natural aspect of Epping Forest.

We have implemented a number of initiatives to support these goals:

- ▶ Our website prioritises public transport information before instructions for drivers
- ▶ Eight of our nine waymarked trail maps indicate public transport access options
- ▶ Nearby stations are marked on a number of the Forest's interpretation boards
- ▶ The View, with numerous events and exhibitions each year, is easy to reach by public transport
- ▶ Information on how to get to the Forest, as well as things to see and do, is presented in a poster at Loughton tube station on a trial basis
- ▶ We partnered with Legible London, a TfL programme that produces consistent signage and wayfinding to help pedestrians, to produce signage featuring Epping Forest

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58. No official definition of this term exists. A precursor to 'natural beauty', it was coined by Robert Hunter, who drafted the Epping Forest Act with the City of London's solicitor, Sir Thomas James Nelson. However, there is no definition of the 'natural aspect' within the Act and the papers and notes Hunter compiled have since been lost. While it is clear it relates principally to the Forest's natural landscape, the same section of the Act also makes reference to 'earthworks', 'woodbanks' and 'pollards', which are manmade features of Forest. [\[back\]](#)

## 1.10 Making the most of Epping Forest's cultural significance

### *Balancing the natural and cultural heritage of Epping Forest*

*Epping Forest features prominently in the cultural psyche of many people. Within the Forest, visitors value those areas which help them to understand the past or enrich the present, and which will be of significance to future generations. Defining and preserving these areas of cultural significance underpins everything that we do.*

#### Overview

When we talk about cultural significance, we mean the aesthetic, historic, scientific, social or spiritual value of a place for past, present and future generations. The concept of cultural significance is reflected in the 1878 and 1880 Epping Forest Acts<sup>[59]</sup>, which have the preservation of the Forest's natural and cultural heritage as a central duty.

Natural heritage refers to the Forest's ecological and environmental value. Cultural heritage, meanwhile, refers to how humans have been influenced by and interacted with the landscape. For hundreds of years the Forest has inspired artists, writers and poets and provided recreation<sup>[60]</sup> and enjoyment to countless generations of visitors.

The tranquillity<sup>[61]</sup> of the Forest has also enabled people to escape urban life and find peace and solitude. In the past, because people valued Epping Forest so much, they were prepared to fight for its preservation. It is important that we continue to preserve the elements that make Epping Forest such a special place. Cultural significance can only be sustained by enabling people to access and enjoy the Forest and find out more about it, thereby making them more inclined to look after it for the future.

Subject areas, features and figures associated with the Forest and often considered part of its 'cultural significance' include:

- ▶ Art and literature: artists such as Sir Jacob Epstein, Lucien Pissaro, Octavius Dixie Deacon and Walter Spradbery; poets and writers such as John Clare, William Morris and Alfred Lord Tennyson in the past, or Ian Sinclair and James Herbert today; over 100 years of London Transport posters featuring Epping Forest as a destination; and a range of contemporary photographers and artists
- ▶ Science and nature: societies such as the Wren Group and the Essex Field Club, which has continuously studied the Forest since 1880; Fred Speakman; Edward North Buxton; naturalists such as Ken Hoy and Fred Wanless; Oliver Rackham, expert on wood pasture-landscapes; and archaeologist Mortimer Wheeler
- ▶ History: over 1,000 years of history as a Royal Forest, with connections to Henry VIII, Elizabeth I, and Victoria, as well as the involvement of members of the royal household as Rangers of Epping Forest since the City of London took over its management; the rare survival of the elected role of the Verderers<sup>[62]</sup>, caring for and managing the Forest for nearly 1,000 years; highwaymen, such as Dick Turpin and John Rann, also known as Sixteen String Jack; the early Iron Age history of the region and romantic links to Queen Boudicca of the Iceni; Humphry Repton's landscape designs; Catherine Tylney Long at Wanstead Park; melanistic fallow deer, with a possible link to James I and his father-in-law, King Frederick II of Denmark; the historic environment and ancient trees; and our museum collection and archives.
- ▶ Social histories and personal associations: wartime memories such as camps on Wanstead Flats; generations of families visiting the same spot in the Forest such as High Beach; bikers using Min's tea hut; campaigns to save the Forest (recently from roads and in the past from enclosure); favourite landscapes, walks and views; and childhood trips from the East End of London.

### Major issues and challenges

Cultural significance is intangible and subjective, which often makes it difficult to define. Many heritage assets are protected by designations. Including Listed Buildings<sup>[63]</sup>, Scheduled Ancient Monuments<sup>[64]</sup>, Conservation Areas and Registered Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest<sup>[65]</sup>. Indeed, 70% of the Forest is a Site of Specific Scientific Interest (SSSI)<sup>[66]</sup>, and most of it is also a Special Area of Conservation (SAC)<sup>[67]</sup>.

However, lists of protected sites are not the totality of what we consider important about Epping Forest's past. Many heritage assets remain undesignated and others, such as archaeological remains, may yet be discovered. Additionally, lack of consensus as to what constitutes cultural significance means it is hard to develop effective strategies for its promotion and preservation.

So, in order to protect the Forest's cultural significance, we need further research, definition and understanding in this area.

Finally, there is also an economic dimension to cultural significance. Around £5.4 million per annum is spent maintaining Epping Forest, and statutory<sup>[68]</sup> requirements such as the maintenance of dams result in significant additional costs running into millions of pounds. Much more needs to be done to raise funding and sponsorship for the Forest and the preservation of its areas of natural and cultural heritage.

### What are we doing to address these issues?

As part of our approach to cultural significance, we currently:

- ▶ Honour our commitments and duties as set out in the Epping Forest Act 1878 to preserve the natural aspect <sup>[69]</sup> of Epping Forest
- ▶ Consult to understand which aspects of the Forest are most important to the general public
- ▶ Work with key partners to raise funds and exploit opportunities for investment
- ▶ Provide interpretation and learning opportunities
- ▶ Create volunteer roles and run consultations to involve people in the management of the Forest
- ▶ Commission management plans for culturally significant areas of the Forest

59. The Acts of Parliament passed in 1878 and 1880 to protect and conserve Epping Forest as an open space unenclosed and unbuilt upon for the recreation and enjoyment of the public. [\[back\]](#)
60. Any pursuit engaged upon during leisure time, other than pursuits to which people are normally highly committed i.e. shopping, housework, child care etc. [\[back\]](#)
61. Composite feature which seeks to characterise elements of wildness, solitude, peace and quiet, relating principally to low levels of built development, traffic, noise and artificial lighting. [\[back\]](#)
62. First introduced almost 1,000 years ago, Verderers administered Forest Law and protected the 'vert' (all the vegetation in the forest) and the 'venison' (the hunting animals, principally deer and wild boar) of the forest. Today, elected by the Commoners of Epping Forest once every seven years, the Verderers sit on the management committee of Epping Forest. [\[back\]](#)
63. A building of architectural or historical importance, graded according to its merit (I, II\*, II) and subject to special controls. [\[back\]](#)
64. A structure defined by Historic England for protection under the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979. [\[back\]](#)
65. Parks and Gardens containing historic features dating from 1939 or earlier and registered by Historic England in three grades as with historic buildings. [\[back\]](#)
66. Area identified by English Nature under the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949 for protection by reason of the rarity of its nature conservation, wildlife features or geological interest. [\[back\]](#)
67. Site designated according to the Habitats Directive 93/43/EEC on the conservation or natural habitats and wild fauna and flora. SAC defines a site of Community Importance designated by member states through a statutory, administrative and/or contractual act, where the necessary conservation measures are applied for the maintenance or restoration, at a favourable conservation status, of the natural habitats and/or the populations of the species for which the site is designated. [\[back\]](#)
68. Denotes something that is defined in legislation. [\[back\]](#)
69. No official definition of this term exists. A precursor to 'natural beauty', it was coined by Robert Hunter, who drafted the Epping Forest Act with the City of London's solicitor, Sir Thomas James Nelson. However, there is no definition of the 'natural aspect' within the Act and the papers and notes Hunter compiled have since been lost. While it is clear it relates principally to the Forest's natural landscape, the same section of the Act also makes reference to 'earthworks', 'woodbanks' and 'pollards', which are manmade features of Forest. [\[back\]](#)

## 1.11 An exciting natural playground

### *Healthy opportunities for adventurous and imaginative play*

*Epping Forest is a great place to play, and has given generations of children the chance to develop healthy bodies, active imaginations and an enduring love of nature. We are committed to ensuring that our provision for play in the Forest provides future generations with access to the powerful benefits of active outdoor play.*

### Overview

Epping Forest is a place of fun, freedom and adventure for children, and we are keen to encourage all types of play. Research shows that active outdoor play gives a powerful boost to children's learning, their health, and their social and emotional development - and adults can benefit from using fitness equipment in outdoor environments too. We will explore new ways to provide opportunities for imaginative, physical and educational play in the period ahead.

### Major issues and challenges

Epping Forest is a natural playground for children. Self-directed play in the Forest has nurtured the imagination and well-being of many growing generations, and continues to provide children with important formative experience of wilderness and wildlife. William Morris, the writer and textile designer, regularly rode his horse through the Forest (sometimes dressed in a suit of armour) and some of his wallpaper and fabric designs are said to be inspired by these early experiences.

The Forest, in its natural state, can offer children hours of absorbing activity and adventure. But increasingly, children who live in urban environments need to be guided and introduced to opportunities for outdoor play. Research from Play England has shown that only 10 per cent of today's children play in woodland, compared to 40 per cent of their parents' generation, and that 32 per cent of children have never climbed a tree. Research also indicates that outdoor play may be one the best forms of physical activity for children, and that it delivers clear and lasting psychological and social benefits. Outdoor play can also have an important role in developing new generations of visitors to, and champions for, green spaces and natural heritage.

The Forest currently contains traditional children's playgrounds in Lords Bushes and at Jubilee Pond, which are leased and maintained in partnership with local authorities. Natural structures for less formal play, such as log stepping stones and scramble mounds, have recently been installed near Butler's Retreat and at Connaught Water, Jubilee Pond and Hollow Pond. Using natural materials (most of which are readily available in the Forest) to build play structures can save money, as well as being less visually intrusive and more ecologically benign.

Naturally occurring features, such as tree stumps, logs and grassland provide easy opportunities for play and physical activity too. Furthermore, the natural decay of wood features offers a valuable habitat for insects such as stag beetles, providing another point of interest for young people.

Introducing ideas for wild and natural play, and awakening young imaginations to the stories, folklore, plants, animals and 'bushcraft' inherent in the Forest could be an increasing focus in our future interpretation and outreach activities, and in our programme of events. Ensuring that we draw in children and young people who may not generally have access to natural outdoor environments will be a priority.

Some adults, including older people, also enjoy and benefit from outdoor exercise equipment, and we will explore options for installing appropriate adult fitness equipment in the period ahead.

We need to be mindful of safety and the risk of accidents in all of our play provision, but at the same time, assessment of risk must be balanced against the powerful benefits that outdoor play can provide, and the need to leave children (and adults) free to experience challenge, adventure and wilderness in a world where these important and exhilarating experiences are increasingly rare.

### **What are we doing to address these issues?**

To ensure that we offer good opportunities for outdoor play in the Forest, we currently:

- ▶ Provide traditional playgrounds and natural play structures in strategic locations across the Forest
- ▶ Organise, deliver and publicise our own activities and events for children and families, and host activities organised by others
- ▶ Provide the public, other organisations and community groups with information about how they can enjoy outdoor play on the Forest

## **2: Preservation of the natural aspect**

In this theme, consultees will find out about our efforts to preserve both natural and human-influenced aspects of Epping Forest, and the key issues we face in this area of our work. Under the 1878 Epping Forest Act<sup>[70]</sup>, we have a clear legal obligation to safeguard the Forest for future generations. Today, in addition to using methods such as grazing and pollarding<sup>[71]</sup> to preserve ancient habitats of high conservation value, we also need to protect the Forest from the effects of climate change<sup>[72]</sup>, plant pests, diseases and non-native invasive species<sup>[73]</sup>.

This theme also considers the careful balance we need to strike between welcoming visitors to the Forest and preventing environmental damage and the disturbance of wildlife. While we are pleased with our site's continuing popularity and want to encourage public access, the weight of visitor numbers places pressure on our natural habitats. This section looks at how we address this issue, and how we tailor historic Forest management techniques to the unique threats and challenges of the 21st Century.

The **management issues** identified within this theme are;

- ▶ [Habitat management](#)
- ▶ [Wood-pasture restoration](#)
- ▶ [Commoners'\[74\] grazing rights](#)
- ▶ [Grassland and heathland](#)
- ▶ [Amenity mowing](#)
- ▶ [High Forest](#)
- ▶ [Low Forest and scrub](#)
- ▶ [Plantations](#)
- ▶ [Wetlands](#)
- ▶ [Protected species](#)
- ▶ [Non-native invasive species](#)
- ▶ [Plant pests and diseases](#)
- ▶ [Carrying capacity](#)
- ▶ [Tranquillity](#)
- ▶ [Climate change](#)

70. The Act of Parliament passed in 1878 to protect and conserve Epping Forest as an open space unenclosed and unbuilt upon for the recreation and enjoyment of the public. [\[back\]](#)

71. A tree cut regularly at or above head height to produce a crop of branches. Trees in Epping Forest were traditionally cut this way by commoners with the rights of common of estover, so that the branches re-grew above the reach of grazing animals. The result of such regular harvesting of branches is to rejuvenate the tree and pollarded trees usually live to greater ages than trees of the same species left uncut. [\[back\]](#)

72. Any change in climate over time, whether due to natural variability or as a result of indirect human activity. [\[back\]](#)

73. Defined as a plant or animal species that have been transported accidentally through human activity or purposefully introduced from their native ranges into new ecosystems where they did not evolve. [\[back\]](#)

74. A person who owns or occupies at least half an acre of unencumbered or open land in a Forest parish and has the rights of common of pasture (grazing) [\[back\]](#)

## 2.1 Habitat management

### *Responding to changing pressures in managing Forest habitats*

*Epping Forest is a landscape-scale site, covering over 24 square kilometres, on the edge of London. It is protected by the Epping Forest Act 1878<sup>[75]</sup>, which requires the Conservators<sup>[76]</sup> to preserve the 'natural aspect'<sup>[77]</sup>. More than two-thirds of the Forest is also protected by additional conservation legislation. However, Forest habitats are facing large-scale environmental changes. Decisions on management priorities and allocation of future resources are vital for ensuring the conservation of the Forest's special character.*

### Overview

Epping Forest contains a nationally- important mosaic of natural habitats within a [wood-pasture](#) landscape including veteran pollarded<sup>[78]</sup> trees, secondary woodland<sup>[79]</sup>, scrub, [grasslands and heathlands](#), and lakes, bogs and ponds. The protection of these habitats is one of our main duties and requires significant time and resources.

Many of these habitats are rare and sometimes fragile. As a result two-thirds of the Forest area is protected as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)<sup>[80]</sup>. A similar area, including the Forest's Beech-dominated areas and its heathlands, is also



designated as a Special Area of Conservation (SAC)<sup>[81]</sup> of European importance.

Historically, these habitats were created and maintained by methods such as grazing, wood-cutting and hay-cutting, carried out by the many 'commoners'<sup>[82]</sup>.

Today, there are no commoners active on the Forest. Despite skilled and knowledgeable staff teams and our enthusiastic volunteer groups, our human and financial resources are limited. With over 50,000 pollards and more than 100 ponds, we cannot manage all the areas that require intervention.

We also face new social and environmental pressures, from invasive species to pollution to significant visitor numbers, which, combined with budgetary and resource constraints, make habitat management more complex and challenging than ever before.

### Major issues and challenges

The Conservators have a legal obligation to make sure that specific habitats are protected under both the Epping Forest Act 1878 and subsequent legislation. The Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and Special Area of Conservation (SAC) that make up over two thirds of the Forest have to be maintained to *Favourable Condition*<sup>[83]</sup> standards set out by UK Government. These designated sites are regulated tightly under the Habitats Regulations 2010 and the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981.

In recognition of these conservation responsibilities, the Conservators receive a grant under Natural England's Environmental Stewardship Scheme for their wood-pasture, heathland and grassland habitat work. However, traditional methods of management, such as pollarding trees and grazing by cattle, require extensive manpower and significant financial resources.

The task of habitat management is further magnified by the size of Epping Forest, and the number of roads that pass through and fragment the site. There are also the added pressures of urbanisation, development<sup>[84]</sup> and site misuse, all of which impact on the health and well-being of the Forest's habitats. The introduction of invasive non-native species<sup>[85]</sup> has also had a negative effect on certain habitats.

The Common Agricultural Policy Review of 2012 has already reduced the funding available from external grant schemes. Ahead of 2018, when the Stewardship Scheme and grazing contracts will be reviewed, we need to consider future plans for a succession to the current Stewardship Scheme and to build on the legacy of our Heritage Lottery Funded *Branching Out* Project<sup>[86]</sup>.

Our coordinated site management plans need to be better and more regularly communicated to the public in order to promote a clearer understanding of what we are doing and why.

Finally, while the City of London has in the past applied a common-sense interpretation of the preservation of the 'natural aspect', which embraces the need to carry out vegetation management works, current legislation is by no means clear.

### What are we doing to address these issues?

In response to the challenges of habitat management in Epping Forest, we:

- ▶ are managing and conserving 1,200 specially selected 'keystone' trees, mainly the most significant Beech and Oak pollards.
- ▶ have been restoring wood-pasture for many years with an increased restoration target of 358 hectares (885 acres), supported by funding from Natural England under the Environmental Stewardship Scheme, which runs until at least 2018
- ▶ have been re-pollarding Hornbeams for over 25 years, re-establishing a pollarding cycle
- ▶ have been re-establishing and extending cattle grazing since 2002

- ▶ are coppicing<sup>[87]</sup> blocks of overgrown scrub across the central belt of the Forest to create a thicker structure and provide better habitat for songbirds and insects
- ▶ created 4 new ponds, completely desilted and restored a further 9 ponds (including Highams Park Lake in 2014) and totally re-excavated and re-shaped Jubilee (formerly Model Yacht) Pond during the last 20 years
- ▶ are carrying out scientific monitoring and research
- ▶ are using skilled and knowledgeable volunteer groups to supplement our in-house efforts
- ▶ are considering changes to the legislation governing Epping Forest to clarify the City of London's powers to manage vegetation

75. The Act of Parliament passed in 1878 to protect and conserve Epping Forest as an open space unenclosed and unbuilt upon for the recreation and enjoyment of the public. [\[back\]](#)

76. The Conservators are the Mayor, Aldermen and Members of the City of London Corporation assembled in Common Council. The Conservators are charged with the responsibility of safeguarding the Forest under the Epping Forest Act 1878. The City of London is the organisation that owns Epping Forest. The authority of the Conservators is vested in the City of London's Epping Forest and Commons Committee. [\[back\]](#)

77. No official definition of this term exists. A precursor to 'natural beauty', it was coined by Robert Hunter, who drafted the Epping Forest Act with the City of London's solicitor, Sir Thomas James Nelson. However, there is no definition of the 'natural aspect' within the Act and the papers and notes Hunter compiled have since been lost. While it is clear it relates principally to the Forest's natural landscape, the same section of the Act also makes reference to 'earthworks', 'woodbanks' and 'pollards', which are manmade features of Forest. [\[back\]](#)

78. A tree cut regularly at or above head height to produce a crop of branches. Trees in Epping Forest were traditionally cut this way by commoners with the rights of common of estover, so that the branches re-grew above the reach of grazing animals. The result of such regular harvesting of branches is to rejuvenate the tree and pollarded trees usually live to greater ages than trees of the same species left uncut. [\[back\]](#)

79. Woodland that has grown up on land that was without tree cover in the past [\[back\]](#)

80. Area identified by English Nature under the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949 for protection by reason of the rarity of its nature conservation, wildlife features or geological interest. [\[back\]](#)

81. Site designated according to the Habitats Directive 93/43/EEC on the conservation of natural habitats and wild fauna and flora. SAC defines a site of Community Importance designated by member states through a statutory, administrative and/or contractual act, where the necessary conservation measures are applied for the maintenance or restoration, at a favourable conservation status, of the natural habitats and/or the populations of the species for which the site is designated. [\[back\]](#)

82. A person who owns or occupies at least half an acre of unencumbered or open land in a Forest parish and has the rights of common of pasture (grazing). [\[back\]](#)

83. This is a formal term, used by Natural England, the government's nature conservation agency in England, used to define the state of a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). In those SSSIs found to be in favourable or recovering condition, the habitats and species are being conserved by appropriate management. Unfavourable condition would indicate that there is a current lack of management or there are damaging impacts (which may be outside the control of the owner) which need to be addressed. [\[back\]](#)

84. The carrying out of building, engineering, mining or other operations in, on, over or under land, or the making of any material change in the use of any buildings or land. [\[back\]](#)

85. Defined as a plant or animal species that have been transported accidentally through human activity or purposefully introduced from their native ranges into new ecosystems where they did not evolve. [\[back\]](#)

86. In 2009, the Conservators of Epping Forest embarked on an ambitious project, Branching Out, with support from the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF). The project aims to make the Forest more recognisable, welcoming and accessible. Over the past 5 years, we have successfully delivered almost the entire project, making numerous improvements to the Forest for our visitors. The four key areas of the project are: • Heritage - improvements to education and learning facilities and promotion of the Forest's history via a new Forest Centre, refurbished café and improved access to museum artefacts and archive materials • Access - creation of visitor hubs at High Beach, Connaught Water, Chingford Plain, Barn Hoppit and Jubilee Pond. • Grazing - devising a long term grazing strategy to restore the Forest's wood-pasture landscape. • Trees - an accelerated programme of ancient tree management to prevent the loss of Epping Forest's most special veteran 'keystone' trees. [\[back\]](#)

87. The regular cutting back of trees close to the ground which re-grow to produce numerous straight shoots. [\[back\]](#)

## 2.2 Wood-pasture

### *Epping Forest's wood-pasture habitats need active management to maintain their special character*

All three lowland wood-pasture<sup>[88]</sup> habitats, Beech, Oak and Hornbeam, are found in Epping Forest, together containing over 50,000 veteran pollarded<sup>[89]</sup> tree - more than any other site in the UK. These habitats are the core reasons for the Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)<sup>[90]</sup> and the Special Area of Conservation (SAC)<sup>[91]</sup> designations and have been the focus of our habitat management.

## Overview

*"In 1878 Epping Forest was a complex and balanced system, every acre the product of centuries of peculiar land uses, and a thing of distinction and beauty; with its combination of pollards and heather, there was probably nothing quite like it in the world. Now it is well on the way to becoming just another Chiltern-type beech wood."*

*"Ancient wood-pastures are among our favourite places of public resort and recreation<sup>[92]</sup> ....."*

Oliver Rackham's *The History of the Countryside* (1986)

Epping Forest is one of the most important and largest survivors of ancient wood-pasture habitat in the UK. It is the only Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) in the country to encompass all three of the main types of lowland wood-pasture: Beech-Oak, Hornbeam-Oak and Mixed Oak. Wood-pasture is noted for its open-grown ancient trees and it is one of the most biodiverse habitats in Europe. This is due to the mosaic pattern of different, interconnected habitats within wood-pasture, such as the ancient trees, open glades, thickets of thorn scrub, open heathland, old grassland plains, streams and scattered ponds. This variety also makes the Forest very attractive to and highly-valued by visitors.

In Epping Forest, wood-pasture was created over hundreds of years by a system that involved 'pollarding', which is the regular removal of branches from above head height, combined with cattle and pony grazing of the underlying vegetation and with pigs put out in the autumn to forage for mast and acorns.

While commoners<sup>[93]</sup> no longer graze cattle on the Forest or pollard trees for firewood, the Conservators<sup>[94]</sup> have re-pollarded more than 2,000 veteran Hornbeam pollards in the last 30 years and have stabilised a further 1,300 Beech and Oak pollards since 2004. A total of 226 hectares (558 acres) of wood-pasture has been restored since 2008.

Epping Forest still contains more veteran pollard trees - over 50,000 - than any other site in Britain and is one of the most densely-pollarded sites in Europe. These pollards are protected by Section 7 of the Epping Forest Act 1878 and are the essence of the Forest's unique character. Today, the Forest encompasses more than 7% of the UK's total wood-pasture habitat, recognised by UK legislation as a Principal Priority Habitat requiring active conservation.

## Major issues and challenges

The end of regular pollarding and a decline in grazing by cattle across the 20th century caused the Forest's wood-pastures to become overgrown and heavily shaded. This has led to the decline and loss of many of the ancient trees and of specialist flora and fauna. To save the ancient trees from shade they require "haloing"<sup>[95]</sup> - the careful, phased removal of younger competing trees from around them.

The lack of regular cutting has resulted in the previously pollard trees becoming top-heavy so they fall apart or collapse. This leads to their premature death and a loss of decaying wood habitats on which half of the insect species<sup>[96]</sup> in the Forest depend at some point in their life cycles. To prevent collapse these pollards require re-pollarding (in the case of Hornbeam) or crown reductions<sup>[97]</sup> and balancing (in the case of Beech and Oak).

There is a lack of younger replacement trees providing a similar variety of micro-habitats to maintain the biodiversity<sup>[98]</sup> of the Forest. There is also a loss of edge habitats and longer transitions between different habitats, both of which have an impact on the wildlife species living in the Forest.

In addition, wood-pasture habitats are affected by increased air pollution, which has a direct impact on tree health and growth, as well as fungi and flora; plant pests and diseases; and climate change and extreme weather.

Wood-pasture restoration requires highly trained arborists<sup>[99]</sup> and specialist equipment, which is expensive to purchase or hire. We are also legally obliged to protect certain species, including bats, when carrying out tree works. The lack of active commoners and the cost of re-establishing grazing infrastructure present further challenges. These limitations on financial and human resources restrict the areas of wood-pasture that can be actively managed.

### What are we doing to address these issues?

Assisted by grants from the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) and financial support from Natural England through the Environmental Stewardship Scheme, we:

- ▶ have raised an average income of over £270,000 in habitat grants each year since 2008
- ▶ have re-pollarded more than 2,000 veteran Hornbeam pollards in the last 30 years
- ▶ have cut back and balanced the crowns of over 1,300 ancient Beech and Oak pollards since 2004, including over 1,000 Keystone trees
- ▶ have restored and managed 226 hectares of wood-pasture since 2008
- ▶ will be restoring and managing a further 160 hectares of wood-pasture across 18 Forest compartments by the end of 2018
- ▶ have "haloed" over 1,000 ancient Oak pollards since 2004
- ▶ are creating hundreds of new pollards every year to ensure a new generation of trees of equivalent wildlife value and to close the age-gap between tree generations
- ▶ bought, with a 75% grant, specialist hi-lift equipment for our tree work
- ▶ have 4 teams of knowledgeable, highly-trained staff carrying out most of the habitat restoration and tree work
- ▶ are in the fourteenth year of extensive grazing over more than 150 hectares of wood-pasture and heath
- ▶ carry out annual ecological monitoring of the Forest's special habitats and species
- ▶ involve volunteers in projects from managing cows through to ecological monitoring
- ▶ carry out research projects with internationally-renowned universities on wood-pasture
- ▶ maintain a Veteran Tree<sup>[100]</sup> Register of important Oaks, Beeches and other rare trees, including Wild Service or pollarded Holly

88. An historic land-use which involved both the harvesting of wood from the trees and the grazing of domestic livestock on the same land. The density of trees on such land can vary widely from an open park-like structure through to a denser, more wooded structure of many trees per hectare. [\[back\]](#)

89. A tree cut regularly at or above head height to produce a crop of branches. Trees in Epping Forest were traditionally cut this way by commoners with the rights of common of estover, so that the branches re-grew above the reach of grazing animals. The result of such regular harvesting of branches is to rejuvenate the tree and pollarded trees usually live to greater ages than trees of the same species left uncut. [\[back\]](#)

90. Area identified by English Nature under the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949 for protection by reason of the rarity of its nature conservation, wildlife features or geological interest. [\[back\]](#)

91. Site designated according to the Habitats Directive 93/43/EEC on the conservation of natural habitats and wild fauna and flora. SAC defines a site of Community Importance designated by member states through a statutory, administrative and/or contractual act, where the necessary conservation measures are applied for the maintenance or restoration, at a favourable conservation status, of the natural habitats and/or the populations of the species for which the site is designated. [\[back\]](#)

92. Any pursuit engaged upon during leisure time, other than pursuits to which people are normally highly committed i.e. shopping, housework, child care etc. [\[back\]](#)

93. A person who owns or occupies at least half an acre of unencumbered or open land in a Forest parish and has the rights of common of pasture (grazing). [\[back\]](#)

94. The Conservators are the Mayor, Aldermen and Members of the City of London Corporation assembled in Common Council. The Conservators are charged with the responsibility of safeguarding the Forest under the Epping Forest Act 1878. The City of London is the organisation that owns Epping Forest. The authority of the Conservators is vested in the City of London's Epping Forest and Commons Committee. [\[back\]](#)

95. Reducing the height of trees, or clearing younger trees, surrounding a veteran tree, allowing more light to reach the tree. [\[back\]](#)

96. Organisms are named and classified by a system of taxonomy according to similarities in structure and origin. Species are the taxonomic group whose members can interbreed. [\[back\]](#)

97. The gradual thinning of heavy top branches. Pollarding ceased when the Epping Forest Act 1878 removed the commoners' rights of estover (to cut fuel wood in the Forest). When pollarding a tree is not possible or might be too great a shock for a tree, then crown reduction is used to stabilise the tree. [\[back\]](#)

98. The term given to the variety of life and the natural process of which living things are a part. The term includes living organisms, the genetic differences between them and the communities in which they occur. [\[back\]](#)

99. A specialist in the cultivation and care of trees and shrubs, including tree surgery, the diagnosis, treatment, and prevention of tree diseases, and the control of pests. [\[back\]](#)

100. Tree which by virtue of its great age, size or condition, is of exceptional value whether in cultural terms, for its landscape contribution or for the benefit of wildlife. A veteran tree has features which increase its value as habitat for wildlife (dead wood, cavities etc.) irrespective of its chronological age. [\[back\]](#)

## 2.3 Encouraging commoners' grazing rights

### *Grazing is a key process in maintaining the distinctive Forest landscape*

*Commoners' grazing rights are an important part of Epping Forest's cultural history. They are also vital to the long-term future of wood-pasture<sup>[101]</sup> in the Forest. However, in recent decades, several factors have discouraged the exercise of these rights and the number of commoners' cattle has fallen dramatically. In fact in recent years, only the Conservators<sup>[102]</sup> own herd has been able to ensure the continuation of this valuable tradition.*

#### Overview

Epping Forest has been grazed by cattle for over 1,000 years. The office of Reeve, a Parish appointment made to ensure proper control of commoners' grazing, was created during Anglo-Saxon times and still exists today. In the Victorian era, according to conservationist Edward North Buxton, cattle were free "to wander all over the Forest" and this continued through the 20th century, although mainly across the southern half of the Forest, up until 1996.

Cattle graze differently to the deer found in the Forest, which tend to browse. Over the centuries, grazing cattle have ensured that a mosaic of open habitats of grass and heath have been maintained around and underneath the pollarded<sup>[103]</sup> trees creating the Forest's ancient wood-pasture habitat with its rich wildlife.

Historic grazing rights enabled 'commoners' (defined as people or organisations who own or occupy at least half an acre of undeveloped land within the Forest parishes) to graze their livestock in the Forest. These grazing rights, known as 'commonage', were instrumental in saving the Forest from destruction in the 19th century, and were consequently enshrined within the 1878 Epping Forest Act<sup>[104]</sup>.

Today commoners' grazing rights are still protected by law. Unfortunately, commoners' grazing in the Forest declined steadily during the 20th century, and as a result of changing markets and increasing costs, risks and restrictions, there are now no commoners turning out cattle onto Forest land.

#### Major issues and challenges

The grazing of cattle is vital to the future of wood-pasture habitat in Epping Forest and the continued 'favourable condition'<sup>[105]</sup> of the Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)<sup>[106]</sup>. Grazing increases the structural diversity of habitats, making more room for flowers and insect species<sup>[107]</sup>, and can keep open areas under the pollarded trees, along stream-sides, in small glades and on steep slopes that mowing cannot reach.

Following public consultation in 2005, we set out a series of plans and commitments in our Grazing Strategy, updated in 2008 after further public consultation. A long-term aim of this strategy is to encourage commoners to exercise their grazing rights again in the future. However, a number of factors currently limit our ability to do this. For example, commoners are not allowed to fence their animals in, which risks cattle being injured on roads. The potential legal liability for damage caused by straying

animals is also likely to act as a strong deterrent. 'Invisible fencing' may prove effective in overcoming some of these difficulties, but is still in a trial period.

The removal of winter grazing rights on the Forest in 1977, in addition to the more recent restrictions following the BSE and Foot and Mouth crises, has challenged the viability of free-grazing cattle. More animal diseases (such as Bluetongue and the Schmallenberg Virus) mean that biosecurity for cattle herds is a major issue.

Finally, we need to find better ways of communicating with the commoners to ensure they are aware of their rights and the options for grazing in the future.

### What are we doing to address these issues?

To encourage commoners to exercise their grazing rights, we are currently:

- ▶ implementing our Grazing Strategy
- ▶ introducing innovative 'invisible fencing', alongside the recent installation of cattle grids by the highways authority
- ▶ maintaining wooden fencing along some 'A' roads as part of the Grazing Strategy
- ▶ continuing to protect the rights of commonage across the whole Forest
- ▶ pursuing routes and options for direct communication with Forest commoners
- ▶ continuing the City of London's right to graze the 'surplus' of the Forest
- ▶ ensuring we can accommodate commoners who want to exercise their rights to graze

101. An historic land-use which involved both the harvesting of wood from the trees and the grazing of domestic livestock on the same land. The density of trees on such land can vary widely from an open park-like structure through to a denser, more wooded structure of many trees per hectare. [\[back\]](#)

102. The Conservators are the Mayor, Aldermen and Members of the City of London Corporation assembled in Common Council. The Conservators are charged with the responsibility of safeguarding the Forest under the Epping Forest Act 1878. The City of London is the organisation that owns Epping Forest. The authority of the Conservators is vested in the City of London's Epping Forest and Commons Committee. [\[back\]](#)

103. A tree cut regularly at or above head height to produce a crop of branches. Trees in Epping Forest were traditionally cut this way by commoners with the rights of common of estover, so that the branches re-grew above the reach of grazing animals. The result of such regular harvesting of branches is to rejuvenate the tree and pollarded trees usually live to greater ages than trees of the same species left uncut. [\[back\]](#)

104. The Act of Parliament passed in 1878 to protect and conserve Epping Forest as an open space unenclosed and unbuilt upon for the recreation and enjoyment of the public. [\[back\]](#)

105. This is a formal term, used by Natural England, the government's nature conservation agency in England, used to define the state of a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). In those SSSIs found to be in favourable or recovering condition, the habitats and species are being conserved by appropriate management. Unfavourable condition would indicate that there is a current lack of management or there are damaging impacts (which may be outside the control of the owner) which need to be addressed. [\[back\]](#)

106. Area identified by English Nature under the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949 for protection by reason of the rarity of its nature conservation, wildlife features or geological interest. [\[back\]](#)

107. Organisms are named and classified by a system of taxonomy according to similarities in structure and origin. Species are the taxonomic group whose members can interbreed. [\[back\]](#)

## 2.4 Grasslands and Heathlands

***The grasslands and heathlands of the Forest require constant management to maintain their rich biodiversity***<sup>[108]</sup>

*These areas of more open land are intimately interlinked within the wood-pasture*<sup>[109]</sup> *landscape of the Forest. The heathlands form an integral part of the protected European Special Area of Conservation (SAC)*<sup>[110]</sup> *designation. Over the last*

25 years many of the smaller grasslands and heaths have been restored through works aiming to restore the Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)<sup>[111]</sup> to favourable condition<sup>[112]</sup>.

## Overview

There are over 550 hectares of open grasslands and heaths, some covering very large areas like Wanstead Flats and Chingford Plain. Others form small glades (or "slades" when lying along Forest streams) amongst the pollarded<sup>[113]</sup> trees, with evocative place-names such as Hangboy Slade and Genesis Slade and Almshouse Plain, Sandpit Plain, Pear-tree Plain and Ludgate Plain. There are also outlying meadows and pastures which follow the routes of the old green lanes such as Fernhills Meadow, Yates's Meadow and Sheppard's Meadow and the Sergeants' Green, Severs Green and Gibbon's Bush Green.

Most of these sites used to be grazed by commoners'<sup>[114]</sup> cattle and ponies, which maintained a variety of 'sward' heights and allowed a wide range of insects from butterflies to grasshoppers to thrive. However, as the numbers of grazing animals declined during the 20th century, and deer retreated to the north of the Forest, many areas became overgrown by scrub and trees.

Acid grassland<sup>[115]</sup>, one of the most common types found in the Forest, is a UK Biodiversity Action Plan (UK BAP) Priority Habitat. In the last 25 years, many areas have been restored, and some plant species<sup>[116]</sup> have reappeared. For example, Heather has enjoyed a successful revival at Big View, Deershelter Plain and Long Running, Lousewort has reappeared at Almshouse Plain, Spiny Rest-Harrow has come back to Yardley Hill and Adder's-tongue can be found once again near Fairmead. However, not all of the plant species once present on the Forest's grasslands and heathland have reappeared.

Constant effort on these sites now means that Epping Forest contains a greater area of grasslands and heaths of conservation importance than any other single site in Essex and encompasses up to 10% of London's acid grassland.

## Major issues and challenges

- ▶ The amount of nitrogen from car exhausts and industry that is being deposited on the Forest is damaging the habitat, especially the nutrient poor heaths and acid grasslands, where plants like Heather (specifically protected under the Epping Forest Act<sup>[117]</sup>) and Sundew are highly sensitive to this pollutant.
- ▶ Mixtures of grass and scrub, such as at Chingford Plain, are the richest habitats for songbirds in the Forest, so we need to strike a balance between scrub and grass
- ▶ Where grazing has not been re-established, mowing is the only substitute to keep the site open. Mechanical cutting removes all the sward in one go and so removes valuable habitat for invertebrates. Rotations - cutting different sections each year - are undertaken to reduce the impact but this is a limited option.
- ▶ Cutting generates waste that needs to be removed to prevent the smothering of grassland and the introduction of unwanted extra nutrients.
- ▶ Difficult ground conditions and anthills make mechanical management impossible in some areas and for these sites only grazing or restoration by hand by volunteers and staff can sustain biodiversity
- ▶ Skylarks and Meadow Pipits nest amongst longer grasses in larger grasslands, but in recent years have declined and now only survive on Wanstead Flats, having been lost from Chingford Plain and Yates's Meadow
- ▶ As well as disturbance, heavy recreational<sup>[118]</sup> use can have a negative impact on plant diversity with nutrients from dog-fouling eliminating sensitive plants and promoting coarse grasses
- ▶ On the larger sites like Wanstead Flats and where vegetation is thick, fire can be a real threat to the survival of grassland and heathland species

## What are we doing to address these issues?

In response to the challenge of managing grassland and heathland in Epping Forest:

- ▶ we have raised grants under the Single Payment Scheme and Natural England's Stewardship Scheme which contribute significantly to annual grassland management costs
- ▶ conservation mowing by our staff over the last 25 years or more (of up to 150 hectares, or 370 acres, each year) has led to the reestablishment of rare species<sup>[119]</sup> such as Lousewort
- ▶ we are re-establishing grazing over more areas in line with the Grazing Strategy
- ▶ we are managing scrub to either remove it or 'coppice' it
- ▶ we encourage 'clean it up' policies for dog owners
- ▶ we have tried to reduce the impacts of disturbance to ground-nesting birds through signage and the use of volunteer wardens

108. The term given to the variety of life and the natural process of which living things are a part. The term includes living organisms, the genetic differences between them and the communities in which they occur. [\[back\]](#)

109. An historic land-use which involved both the harvesting of wood from the trees and the grazing of domestic livestock on the same land. The density of trees on such land can vary widely from an open park-like structure through to a denser, more wooded structure of many trees per hectare. [\[back\]](#)

110. Site designated according to the Habitats Directive 93/43/EEC on the conservation of natural habitats and wild fauna and flora. SAC defines a site of Community Importance designated by member states through a statutory, administrative and/or contractual act, where the necessary conservation measures are applied for the maintenance or restoration, at a favourable conservation status, of the natural habitats and/or the populations of the species for which the site is designated. [\[back\]](#)

111. Area identified by English Nature under the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949 for protection by reason of the rarity of its nature conservation, wildlife features or geological interest. [\[back\]](#)

112. This is a formal term, used by Natural England, the government's nature conservation agency in England, used to define the state of a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). In those SSSIs found to be in favourable or recovering condition, the habitats and species are being conserved by appropriate management. Unfavourable condition would indicate that there is a current lack of management or there are damaging impacts (which may be outside the control of the owner) which need to be addressed. [\[back\]](#)

113. A tree cut regularly at or above head height to produce a crop of branches. Trees in Epping Forest were traditionally cut this way by commoners with the rights of common of estover, so that the branches re-grew above the reach of grazing animals. The result of such regular harvesting of branches is to rejuvenate the tree and pollarded trees usually live to greater ages than trees of the same species left uncut. [\[back\]](#)

114. A person who owns or occupies at least half an acre of unencumbered or open land in a Forest parish and has the rights of common of pasture (grazing) [\[back\]](#)

115. Typically consists of fine leaved grasses such as common bent, mat grass and wavy hair grass, together with herbs such as heath bedstraw, sheep's sorrel, and tormentil. Acid grasslands are typically found on nutrient poor, free draining and acidic soils (pH 4 to 5.5) overlying silica-rich or silicic rocks (formerly known as acid igneous rocks), sands and gravels. [\[back\]](#)

116. Organisms are named and classified by a system of taxonomy according to similarities in structure and origin. Species are the taxonomic group whose members can interbreed. [\[back\]](#)

117. The Act of Parliament passed in 1878 to protect and conserve Epping Forest as an open space unenclosed and unbuilt upon for the recreation and enjoyment of the public. [\[back\]](#)

118. Any pursuit engaged upon during leisure time, other than pursuits to which people are normally highly committed i.e. shopping, housework, child care etc. [\[back\]](#)

119. Species which have a restricted world range and/or that occur naturally in relatively low numbers. [\[back\]](#)

## 2.5 Reviewing amenity mowing

### ***Accessibility or sustainability: the future of amenity mowing***

*There are many fragmented, peripheral and small grassy areas in Epping Forest, including its town and village greens, which presents a management dilemma. Through regular mowing, grass is kept neat and tidy and enables recreational<sup>[120]</sup> and amenity uses; taller grass, on the other hand, looks more natural, is of greater wildlife value, but may not fit with the image of 'a green'.*

### **Overview**



Epping Forest contains many open grassland habitats, most of which are managed for conservation interest by cutting or grazing. However, there are a number of grassy areas that are routinely mown to enable people to walk, ride, sit, relax, play and enjoy the Forest's open spaces.

We do not currently have the capacity to carry out all grass cutting in Epping Forest. Some of the mowing is done by Local Authorities, while some of it is done by external contractors, which represents a significant yearly cost.

Many people are divided on the issue of mowing. Members of the public frequently comment on cut or uncut grass, depending on whether they want to see more sustainable, ecologically-valuable grasslands, or neater, more accessible areas.

### Major issues and challenges

With high [visitor numbers](#) to Epping Forest, amenity grass areas provide opportunities for public enjoyment, particularly in popular spots. Mowing keeps areas of the Forest open and grassy, as seen in the achievements of the annual mowing programmes carried out by the City of London's grassland team since the 1990s.

However, frequent mowing is expensive and, in the current economic climate, increasingly hard to justify. Amenity mowing, unlike conservation mowing, does not remove grass cuttings but leaves them in the sward; this encourages coarse grass growth and reduces the number of flowers. Mowing also lacks the subtleties of grazing and impacts on the biodiversity<sup>[121]</sup> of the mown area.

Longer grass, on the other hand, enables the right conditions for many species<sup>[122]</sup> to thrive, providing a home for a range of insects, animals and invertebrates. But in the more suburban areas of Epping Forest, uncut grass can look untidy; it also attracts [litter](#), which is a fire risk, and dog fouling, giving the impression of an unmanaged and neglected site.

### What are we doing to address these issues?

In response to this dilemma, we currently:

- ▶ Mow grass three times a year on key amenity sites as part of our maintenance programme
- ▶ Review and modify grass cutting priorities and approaches on sites from time to time
- ▶ Encourage 'clean it up' policies for [dog](#) walkers/owners

120. Any pursuit engaged upon during leisure time, other than pursuits to which people are normally highly committed i.e. shopping, housework, child care etc. [\[back\]](#)

121. The term given to the variety of life and the natural process of which living things are a part. The term includes living organisms, the genetic differences between them and the communities in which they occur. [\[back\]](#)

122. Organisms are named and classified by a system of taxonomy according to similarities in structure and origin. Species are the taxonomic group whose members can interbreed. [\[back\]](#)

## 2.6 High forest

### *Developing the diversity of High Forest*

*Some areas of 'High Forest' would benefit from further management, promoting a better age range of trees, increasing open wildlife habitats and enhancing trails for visitors. Other areas with important old-growth characteristics and dense concentrations of trees may require an approach of minimum intervention. In both cases, the aims are the preservation of the Forest's natural aspect<sup>[123]</sup>, resilience to climate change<sup>[124]</sup> and tree diseases, and protection of biodiversity<sup>[125]</sup>.*

### Overview

'High forest' is defined as an area of mainly closed, shading high canopy<sup>[126]</sup> dominated by mature trees. Epping Forest has large areas of high forest which have developed from:

- ▶ old, relict areas of pollarded<sup>[127]</sup> wood-pasture that without pollarding have infilled with young trees and developed full canopy cover
- ▶ secondary woodland<sup>[128]</sup> that has grown up through natural regeneration<sup>[129]</sup> on previously open habitats like grasslands and heaths
- ▶ secondary woodland in which tree species<sup>[130]</sup> have been selected and planted

The different types of high forest include:

- ▶ the Beech pollard areas in the north of the Forest (for example, Epping Thicks)
- ▶ mixed Oak woodland on old grassy plains like Blackbush Plain (adjacent to Bury Wood) or in the Lower Forest at Epping Plain
- ▶ the planted woodlands in the Forest (for example, Warren Plantation and the woods in Wanstead Park)

The first two of these types include ancient trees and often contain lots of decaying wood, forming so-called old-growth woodland habitats, which are now very rare in Europe. The planted woodlands in the latter category are very different and contain mature but relatively young, straight-grown trees.

Epping Forest's Beech woodland is protected as a key feature of the Special Area of Conservation (SAC)<sup>[131]</sup> and Epping Forest boasts the most important ancient Beech woodland in the UK, outside the New Forest. Its Beech areas contain an internationally significant Beech saprotrophic<sup>[132]</sup> (decayed wood-consuming) fungi community, cushion-moss 'carpets' that are the most extensive in the UK and are home to an exceptional range of insect species, particularly flies.

### Major issues and challenges

The age structure of the woodlands is often too uniform with not enough different generations of trees in each place. The number of tree diseases is increasing, threatening species like Ash and Oak. Non-native<sup>[133]</sup> tree species have also established themselves as part of the canopy and non-native plants are spreading across the ground flora too. Furthermore, in some places there is a lack of tree regeneration for reasons such as pollution or over-shading by older trees. The increasing deer population is also having an impact, as unlike cattle, deer 'browse' rather than graze.

### What are we doing to address these issues?

- ▶ We are managing some of the most important individual ancient Beech and Oak pollards through the Keystone Tree Strategy, carrying out crown restoration to prevent their physical collapse
- ▶ Some 'high forest' areas within the Forest have been selected and left as minimum intervention areas to protect the old-growth characteristics
- ▶ Some trails through the woodlands are managed to provide sunlit areas for insects, such as hoverflies, to feed
- ▶ We are also conducting research on the fungal decay process in the Beech trees to improve our understanding of their wildlife value
- ▶ To try to limit some of the adverse impacts on the Forest, we are highlighting pollution threats and trying to reduce the effects of cars and roads whilst improving public transport access links

123. No official definition of this term exists. A precursor to 'natural beauty', it was coined by Robert Hunter, who drafted the Epping Forest Act with the City of London's solicitor, Sir Thomas James Nelson. However, there is no definition of the 'natural aspect' within the Act and the papers and notes Hunter compiled have since been lost. While it is clear it relates principally to the Forest's natural landscape, the same section of the Act also makes reference to 'earthworks', 'woodbanks' and 'pollards', which are manmade features of Forest. [\[back\]](#)

124. Any change in climate over time, whether due to natural variability or as a result of indirect human activity. [\[back\]](#)
125. The term given to the variety of life and the natural process of which living things are a part. The term includes living organisms, the genetic differences between them and the communities in which they occur. [\[back\]](#)
126. The cover of branches and foliage formed by tree crowns. [\[back\]](#)
127. A tree cut regularly at or above head height to produce a crop of branches. Trees in Epping Forest were traditionally cut this way by commoners with the rights of common of estover, so that the branches re-grew above the reach of grazing animals. The result of such regular harvesting of branches is to rejuvenate the tree and pollarded trees usually live to greater ages than trees of the same species left uncut. [\[back\]](#)
128. Woodland that has grown up on land that was without tree cover in the past [\[back\]](#)
129. A term for the regeneration of woodland by natural means without sowing or planting. The browsing of wild animals can inhibit natural regeneration. [\[back\]](#)
130. Organisms are named and classified by a system of taxonomy according to similarities in structure and origin. Species are the taxonomic group whose members can interbreed. [\[back\]](#)
131. Site designated according to the Habitats Directive 93/43/EEC on the conservation of natural habitats and wild fauna and flora. SAC defines a site of Community Importance designated by member states through a statutory, administrative and/or contractual act, where the necessary conservation measures are applied for the maintenance or restoration, at a favourable conservation status, of the natural habitats and/or the populations of the species for which the site is designated. [\[back\]](#)
132. An organism, especially a fungus or bacterium, that lives and feeds on dead organic matter [\[back\]](#)
133. Defined as a plant or animal species that have been transported accidentally through human activity or purposefully introduced from their native ranges into new ecosystems where they did not evolve. [\[back\]](#)

## 2.7 Management of scrub and "low forest"

### 'Coppicing<sup>[134]</sup>' to enhance scrub variety for birds and insects and to restore traditional management to woods

*We manage scrub areas across the Forest by coppicing to encourage regrowth of a thicker structure as shelter for nesting birds and habitats for feeding insects. We would also like to reintroduce coppicing to the small number of woodlands with distinct identities around the edge of the Forest to rejuvenate their woodland flora.*

#### Overview

'Low forest', although not a term usually used in British ecology, can be considered as the opposite of 'high forest'. While wood-pasture<sup>[135]</sup> is maintained by pollarding, low forest is woodland or scrubland where a significant proportion of the canopy<sup>[136]</sup> and woody growth is regularly removed by coppicing, often sustained over many centuries.

In Epping Forest, two small, distinct areas of coppice woods can be found at Bluehouse Grove and the Hatch Grove in Chingford. The low forest here is dominated by Hornbeam and has different and denser ground flora than the rest of the Forest's wood-pasture, especially bluebells and wood anemones. These 'low forest' sites also often support standards (canopy trees, often Oak) which were selectively felled for timber.

Elsewhere in the Forest, coppicing was carried out irregularly as an alternative to pollarding and, as animals will often graze coppice regrowth, where the absence of deer or livestock allowed.

Since 1998, coppicing has been introduced to the Forest to manage the areas of thorn scrub and young secondary woodland<sup>[137]</sup> that have either filled in previously open pollarded areas or that have colonised old, under-grazed grasslands.

When actively coppiced, these sites can support diverse woodland bird and butterfly communities, as birds like thick regrowth in which to nest and butterflies benefit from newly cut areas with sunny glades and flowers. We want to preserve this special biodiversity<sup>[138]</sup> through active management, where possible, because many butterfly and bird species<sup>[139]</sup> have declined drastically in the last 30 - 40 years.

#### Major issues and challenges

- ▶ The lack of coppicing has meant deterioration in the structure of scrub and woodland, which becomes "leggy", shaded and dark, with fewer nest sites and a lack of sunlight

- ▶ The UK-wide decrease in numbers of woodland birds, especially migrants like the Nightingale and Willow Warbler, represents a trend also found in the Forest
- ▶ In low forest areas, ground trampling, air pollution, disturbance, dog mess and litter, are additional problems

### What are we doing to address these issues?

We currently coppice up to 2 hectares (around 5 acres) of thorn scrub annually in blocks across the central area of the Forest as part of a management initiative entitled "Project Nightingale" introduced in 1998.

We began some coppicing of Bluehouse Grove and Hatch Grove within the Forest over 10 years ago but have not continued this management approach recently due to other priorities.

134. The regular cutting back of trees close to the ground which re-grow to produce numerous straight shoots. [\[back\]](#)

135. An historic land-use which involved both the harvesting of wood from the trees and the grazing of domestic livestock on the same land. The density of trees on such land can vary widely from an open park-like structure through to a denser, more wooded structure of many trees per hectare. [\[back\]](#)

136. The cover of branches and foliage formed by tree crowns. [\[back\]](#)

137. Woodland that has grown up on land that was without tree cover in the past. [\[back\]](#)

138. The term given to the variety of life and the natural process of which living things are a part. The term includes living organisms, the genetic differences between them and the communities in which they occur. [\[back\]](#)

139. Organisms are named and classified by a system of taxonomy according to similarities in structure and origin. Species are the taxonomic group whose members can interbreed. [\[back\]](#)

## 2.8 The Warren Plantation

### *Tree diversity and the potential for commemorative plantings*

*The Warren Plantation contains a wide variety of planted tree species<sup>[140]</sup> and could continue to provide space for new plantings and an increased range of species. The site has the potential to attract more visitors, but currently provides a refuge for Forest deer and important bat feeding and roosting areas. We want to hear your thoughts on the management of the Warren Plantation as one of the few planted areas incorporated within the Forest.*

### Overview

Warren Plantation has historic association with the parkland at Copped Hall as a Pleasure Ground and is part of the original designed landscape there, now a Grade II\* listed park and garden. It contains a wide range of conifer species and some selected deciduous species, the latter planted to commemorate various events since the City bought the land in 1992. It is one of the few areas within Epping Forest where trees can be planted in commemoration, but the active management of the area as a plantation is currently limited.

### Major issues and challenges

The sloping nature of the Warren Plantation site poses a key challenge, as does its location opposite the M25. The resulting noise and pollution affects the visitor value of the plantation and nitrogen pollution may harm the trees and other plants. Another issue is safeguarding the plantation's use as a habitat and breeding ground by bats, including protected rare species<sup>[141]</sup>. Any work on the trees would need to be sensitive to bat roosts and any damage or disturbance would need to be avoided. Lack of disturbance is also important for breeding deer, as the Plantation is a key area during the autumn rut. Conversely, these deer may damage trees within the plantation.

We will also need to carefully manage invasive non-native species<sup>[142]</sup> and tree diseases. The existing larch trees pose a potential problem because of their susceptibility to Sudden Oak Death<sup>[143]</sup> disease which, despite its name, is a major threat to Beech. We will also need to strike the right balance between limited human intervention and thinning the existing tree cover.

## What are we doing to address these issues?

- ▶ Currently, we manage the Warren Plantation by occasional thinning of trees to maintain space around the special plantings. Otherwise the management is relatively limited.
- ▶ We monitor the area annually, especially the Rhododendrons and the Larch plantings, to check for any indications of diseases - especially Phytophthora-related diseases such as Sudden Oak Death

140. Organisms are named and classified by a system of taxonomy according to similarities in structure and origin. Species are the taxonomic group whose members can interbreed. [\[back\]](#)

141. Species which have a restricted world range and/or that occur naturally in relatively low numbers. [\[back\]](#)

142. Defined as a plant or animal species that have been transported accidentally through human activity or purposefully introduced from their native ranges into new ecosystems where they did not evolve. [\[back\]](#)

143. Popular name given to the fungus phytophthoramorum, which infects foliar (leaf) host such as Rhododendron and Viburnum and fatally infects bark canker hosts, principally oaks. First identified in Germany in 1993, and then in US in 2001, SOD threatens a number of British Deciduous varieties. [\[back\]](#)

## 2.9 Wetland habitats

### *Managing lakes, ponds, bogs and streams in Epping Forest*

*The Forest's regionally important network of wetlands<sup>[144]</sup> supports a wide range of wildlife and forms an important part of the Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)<sup>[145]</sup>. The larger water bodies are also the main focus for a significant number of visitors to the Forest, providing a place to view wildlife and a gateway into the surrounding Forest. As some of the most heavily-visited sites, and with water as a limited resource, maintaining the condition of wetlands presents some special management challenges.*

#### Overview

There are over 100 ponds in and 10 bogs in Epping Forest, making this a network of regional importance for both wildlife and visitors to the Forest. The ponds range from small ephemeral gravel workings to large bodies of permanent shallow water.

Each of these ponds supports a great diversity of animal and plant life. However, they are all different and many of the scarcer species<sup>[146]</sup> only find a foothold in a small proportion of the lakes and ponds in the Forest. There is consequently no one-size-fits-all approach and each lake, pond and bog needs to be surveyed and understood both as part of a network and as a separate entity, with its own individual management requirements.

Among the rare species<sup>[147]</sup> supported by the wetlands in Epping Forest are 5 out of the 6 amphibians native to the UK, including Great Crested Newts, found in up to 30 ponds across the Forest. Many of the fish are native species<sup>[148]</sup> but have often been introduced or "stocked" for angling. However, there are natural populations and some are important for conservation, including Crucian Carp. The ponds also support a wide range of invertebrates, including the spectacular damsel and dragonflies of which there are at least 20 species.

Climate change<sup>[149]</sup>, encroachment by scrub and vegetation<sup>[149]</sup> and silting up are likely to become bigger issues in the future. Measures such as clearance of vegetation and desilting are expensive. Under the last management plan, a deliberate choice was made to put major desilting works on hold. However, new sources of external funding have seen some of the major water bodies in the Forest restored in the last decade, including Jubilee Pond in 2013 and Highams Park Lake in 2014. We now need to consider how we tackle ponds and wetlands under this new plan and how to prioritise any works.

#### Major issues and challenges

- ▶ Some of the larger water bodies are subject to falling water levels and climate change seems likely to exacerbate the situation for more of the wetlands or to cause more frequent and wider fluctuations in levels.
- ▶ The encroachment of vegetation presents a threat to open water habitats but also an opportunity to develop other transitional habitat like willow carr and wet scrub
- ▶ Nitrogen pollutants and heavy metals washed off roads are currently the two main problems for Forest wetlands. The nitrogen pollution causes an increase in coarse vegetation growth which outcompetes more sensitive species adapted to the nutrient-poor conditions found naturally in many of the Forest ponds
- ▶ Invasive non-native alien species (INNS) are one of the greatest threats, as aquatic plants and animals are the most often introduced alien species in the Forest, with roadside ponds and lakes attracting deliberate dumping of unwanted exotic species. These species often spread rapidly both within and between ponds and have significant adverse impacts on native vegetation and animals. Some alien water plants, like New Zealand Pygmyweed, or *Crassula helmsii*, can create a smothering blanket of vegetation in small ponds which can affect the condition and health of the whole pond ecosystem.

### What are we doing to address these issues?

In response to the challenge of managing wetland habitats in Epping Forest, we have:

- ▶ created 4 new ponds, completely desilted and restored a further 9 ponds (including Highams Park Lake in 2014) and totally re-excavated and re-shaped Jubilee (formerly Model Yacht) Pond during the last 20 years
- ▶ carried out, with the help of volunteer task forces, regular vegetation clearance on selected ponds and bogs to keep them open and/or wet
- ▶ undertaken detailed surveys of Great Crested Newt and other amphibian populations across the pond network to determine management works required to sustain them
- ▶ conducted a detailed survey across 140 ponds (including the Buffer Lands<sup>[150]</sup> ponds) of the invasive plant species, *Crassula*, in order to assess the level of work required to control the spread

144. Transitional areas between wet and dry environments; wetlands range from permanently or intermittently wet land to shallow water and water margins. The term can include marshes, swamps, bogs, some shallow waters and the intertidal zones. When applied to surface waters, it is generally restricted to areas shallow enough to allow the growth of rooted plants. [\[back\]](#)

145. Area identified by English Nature under the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949 for protection by reason of the rarity of its nature conservation, wildlife features or geological interest. [\[back\]](#)

146. Organisms are named and classified by a system of taxonomy according to similarities in structure and origin. Species are the taxonomic group whose members can interbreed. [\[back\]](#)

147. Species which have a restricted world range and/or that occur naturally in relatively low numbers. [\[back\]](#)

148. Species that have arrived and inhabited an area naturally, without any deliberate assistance by humans. For the UK native is taken to mean those species that were present after the last post-glacial recolonisation and before historic times. [\[back\]](#)

149. Any change in climate over time, whether due to natural variability or as a result of indirect human activity. [\[back\]](#)

150. 735 hectares (1816 acres) of land owned and managed by the City of London around the perimeter of the Forest to preserve the landscape setting and context of the Forest. Buffer land is currently exempt from many of the requirements of the legislation governing the management of the Forest, but is also not protected in the same way. [\[back\]](#)

## 2.10 Managing protected species

*In addition to managing important habitats, the Conservators<sup>[151]</sup> must also ensure both rare and legally-protected species<sup>[152]</sup> are monitored and managed*

*Much of the Forest is a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)<sup>[153]</sup> and Special Area of Conservation (SAC)<sup>[154]</sup> and is home to a range of native species<sup>[155]</sup> now very rare in the UK. Across the whole Forest, there are further species that are specially protected from disturbance and damage to their habitats because they are either rare, sometimes internationally, or in severe decline and thereby vulnerable to further changes in the environment.*

## Overview

The natural landscape of Epping Forest is rich in wildlife and one element of preserving its natural aspect<sup>[156]</sup> is to conserve the native species that live in its various habitats. Some of these species are rare and some, including some birds and bats, are legally protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 and the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 because of their vulnerability to disturbance and because population levels are in decline across the country. Other species in decline, such as bumble bees, are not afforded legal protection, but it is still vital to look after them, as they play a key role in the Forest's ecosystem.

The Forest's internationally-renowned wood-pasture<sup>[157]</sup> habitats are key to this wealth of species, especially insects and fungi. The importance of nature conservation<sup>[158]</sup> to the Forest has resulted in more than two thirds of it being declared a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and a Special Area of Conservation (SAC). The Forest and Buffer Lands<sup>[159]</sup> also contain 37 Local Wildlife Sites or Sites of Nature Conservation Importance (SINC).

Examples of some of the legally-protected rare and special species reliant on Epping Forest for their survival in the area - and even in the UK - include Forster's Knot-hole Moss (for which the Forest is the UK stronghold), Oak Polypore bracket fungus and Coral-tooth Fungus. There are many other rare species<sup>[160]</sup> reliant on the Forest's special habitats that are difficult to single out because so little is known about their ecology; these include the hundreds of rare fungi and insects found in the Forest. Though these species are not specifically protected under law, they are often found in SSSI and SAC habitats, which are protected.

Vulnerable species widespread in Epping Forest include 16 species of bat and Great Crested Newts, which all have strong legal protection as European Protected Species. All nesting birds are also protected under the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981. In Epping Forest, ground-nesting species, such as Skylarks, are amongst the most vulnerable. Other bird species are listed for extra protection (under the same Act) from impacts like disturbance, including birds like Hobbies, Kingfishers and Barn Owls that regularly breed in the Forest or for which the Forest is an important feeding area.

## Major issues and challenges

Beyond their duties to preserve the natural aspect of the Forest, the Conservators need to protect the species listed under species legislation from disturbance and damage to their breeding places. The challenges faced in this task include:

- ▶ The impact of visitors to the Forest
- ▶ A lack of public awareness of special protection
- ▶ Threat from outside development<sup>[161]</sup> and pollution
- ▶ Threat from invasive non-native species (INNS)<sup>[162]</sup>

There are also a number of external factors which present challenges when managing protected species:

- ▶ Threats from pests and disease
- ▶ The impact of climate change<sup>[163]</sup>
- ▶ Natural succession<sup>[164]</sup> significantly changing habitats

The Forest has lost many species over the last 100 years for a variety of reasons. Where a suitable habitat is available and resources allow, it may be possible to re-establish some of these species. Elsewhere in Essex, re-introductions have been

particularly successful with butterfly species and there are certain species that could be considered suitable for Epping Forest, for example the Brown Hairstreak butterfly.

### What are we doing to address these issues?

Given our statutory <sup>[165]</sup> designations and duties to manage protected species, we currently:

- ▶ Manage habitats actively, including ponds home to Great Crested Newts
- ▶ Retain standing and fallen deadwood for fungi, insects and beetles
- ▶ Maintain a Scarce Species Register of fungi, animals and plants- a map-based inventory to keep track of vulnerable species within the Forest
- ▶ Implement our Bat Protection Policy and run regular bat habitat risk assessment training for our staff
- ▶ Carry out bat surveys and assess potential tree roost sites
- ▶ Work with voluntary groups and knowledgeable local naturalists to help us with our survey and mapping work
- ▶ Utilise the skills and expertise of our in-house staff, who attend regular training and workshops
- ▶ Actively monitor and manage invasive non-native species (INNS) (e.g. Japanese Knotweed)
- ▶ Monitor and, where possible, act on pests and diseases
- ▶ Comment on planning development issues that have the potential to impact upon the Forest and its wildlife
- ▶ Carry out pollution and tree-health studies on the Forest
- ▶ Maintain and build upon an established database of species records to ensure accurate information is readily available and link to other recorders through partnership groups like Greenspace Information in Greater London (GiGL).

151. The Conservators are the Mayor, Aldermen and Members of the City of London Corporation assembled in Common Council. The Conservators are charged with the responsibility of safeguarding the Forest under the Epping Forest Act 1878. The City of London is the organisation that owns Epping Forest. The authority of the Conservators is vested in the City of London's Epping Forest and Commons Committee. [\[back\]](#)

152. Plant and animal species protected under the Conservation Regulations 1994 and Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. [\[back\]](#)

153. Area identified by English Nature under the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949 for protection by reason of the rarity of its nature conservation, wildlife features or geological interest. [\[back\]](#)

154. Site designated according to the Habitats Directive 93/43/EEC on the conservation or natural habitats and wild fauna and flora. SAC defines a site of Community Importance designated by member states through a statutory, administrative and/or contractual act, where the necessary conservation measures are applied for the maintenance or restoration, at a favourable conservation status, of the natural habitats and/or the populations of the species for which the site is designated. [\[back\]](#)

155. Species that have arrived and inhabited an area naturally, without any deliberate assistance by humans. For the UK native is taken to mean those species that were present after the last post-glacial recolonisation and before historic times. [\[back\]](#)

156. No official definition of this term exists. A precursor to 'natural beauty', it was coined by Robert Hunter, who drafted the Epping Forest Act with the City of London's solicitor, Sir Thomas James Nelson. However, there is no definition of the 'natural aspect' within the Act and the papers and notes Hunter compiled have since been lost. While it is clear it relates principally to the Forest's natural landscape, the same section of the Act also makes reference to 'earthworks', 'woodbanks' and 'pollards', which are manmade features of Forest. [\[back\]](#)

157. An historic land-use which involved both the harvesting of wood from the trees and the grazing of domestic livestock on the same land. The density of trees on such land can vary widely from an open park-like structure through to a denser, more wooded structure of many trees per hectare. [\[back\]](#)

158. The preservation, management and enhancement of natural plant and animal communities as representative samples of their kind. [\[back\]](#)

159. 735 hectares (1816 acres) of land owned and managed by the City of London around the perimeter of the Forest to preserve the landscape setting and context of the Forest. Buffer land is currently exempt from many of the requirements of the legislation governing the management of the Forest, but is also not protected in the same way. [\[back\]](#)

160. Species which have a restricted world range and/or that occur naturally in relatively low numbers. [\[back\]](#)

161. The carrying out of building, engineering, mining or other operations in, on, over or under land, or the making of any material change in the use of any buildings or land. [\[back\]](#)

162. Any non-native animal or plant that has the ability to spread, causing damage to the environment, the economy, our health and the way we live. [\[back\]](#)



163. Any change in climate over time, whether due to natural variability or as a result of indirect human activity. [\[back\]](#)
164. A predictable and directional change in biological communities which commences in an area free of vegetation and develops eventually into a climax community. [\[back\]](#)
165. Denotes something that is defined in legislation. [\[back\]](#)

## 2.11 Controlling non-native invasive species

### *New control measures needed to protect the Forest and its wildlife*

*We need to control the spread of certain species<sup>[166]</sup> of plants and animals within Epping Forest. If we don't, long established native species<sup>[167]</sup> may become threatened and, in some cases, disappear altogether. However, this can be a significantly resource-intensive process.*

#### Overview

Non-native species<sup>[168]</sup> are foreign plants and animals that have been introduced to the UK - either deliberately or accidentally - by humans. Some cause no significant harm, while others damage the environment by affecting the ecological balance and appearance of our natural habitats. We call these non-native damaging species 'invasive'. They compete with and often displace important local native species, leading to losses in biodiversity<sup>[169]</sup> and changes in Forest character.

There are a number of non-native species<sup>[170]</sup> in Epping Forest that have either impacted negatively on the local biodiversity, or have the potential to do so. These high-risk species include:

Animals	Plants
▶ Signal crayfish	▶ New Zealand pigmyweed
▶ Carp/brown goldfish	▶ Floating pennywort
▶ Red-necked terrapins	▶ Parrot's feather
▶ Ring-necked parakeet	▶ Himalayan balsam
▶ North American mink	▶ Japanese knotweed
▶ Grey squirrel	▶ Rhododendron ponticum
▶ Reeves Muntjac Deer	▶ Spanish bluebell
	▶ Turkey oak

The introduction and spread of non-native invasive species can be difficult to prevent or control. In Epping Forest, a number of factors have contributed to their presence. These include the deliberate release or introduction of unwanted pets into the wild, fly-tipping and the dumping of garden waste on Forest land, the spread of garden species from adjacent properties and the unlawful dumping of nursery-grown aquatic plants and fish in Forest ponds. Lack of public awareness of well-intentioned releases is also a problem.

#### Major issues and challenges

The non-native invasive species listed above, and others, pose a serious threat to Epping Forest's native plants and animals.

The American mink, for example, feeds on ground-nesting birds, fish and small mammals, and is responsible for a significant decline in UK water vole populations. Plants such as Himalayan Balsam and Japanese Knotweed form dense canopies that block out sunlight and restrict native plant growth. Species such as Reeves Muntjac Deer cause loss of wild flowers,

particularly in sensitive ancient woodland habitats, while the Spanish bluebell can hybridise with our native bluebell flower and change the appearance of woodlands.

Some of these species could also spread disease. *Rhododendron ponticum*, for instance, can become a host to a pathogen (phytophthora ramorum or Sudden Oak Death<sup>[171]</sup>) that is a serious threat to the wider countryside. Turkey oaks, meanwhile, can displace or hybridise native oak species and act as a host for the Knopper Gall Wasp, which reduces the fertility and regeneration of new native oak trees.

The grey squirrel, a common sight in Epping Forest, displaced the native red squirrel in the 1960s and continues to be a problem. It preys on native birds, occupies bird nesting sites and strips bark, causing widespread and in some cases fatal damage to trees. *Crassula helmsii* (New Zealand pigmyweed) inhabits 13% of Epping Forest's freshwater habitats. In ponds where it has been recorded, the estimated percentage cover ranged from under 1% to 100%. *Crassula* is devastating for individual pond ecosystems, killing submerged plants, blocking sunlight and depleting oxygen. Forest's ponds are often made cloudy by non-native Common Carp digging up roots and sediment. The Common Carp also destroys underwater plant species and threatens the habitat of the smaller native Crucian Carp.

These species represent major management challenges and costs. Monitoring and control measures can be difficult and expensive - particularly in freshwater environments, which are notoriously complex and problematic to restore.

### What are we doing to address these issues?

In response to the threat from non-native invasive species in Epping Forest, we currently:

- ▶ Target and prioritise the most high-risk species, including:
  - ▶ Mink: control measures include trapping by Forest Keepers<sup>[172]</sup> in Wanstead Park, with ongoing liaison and collaboration with local authorities, land owners and environmental organisations
  - ▶ Himalayan Balsam: control measures are carried out by staff and volunteers, who pull plants from the ground before they have a chance to seed
  - ▶ Japanese Knotweed: all knotweed sites have been mapped. We are now three years into a five-year contract with an external contractor for chemical control
  - ▶ Reeves Muntjac Deer: culling occurs on Forest Buffer Land<sup>[173]</sup> using licensed deer stalkers
  - ▶ Rhododendron: ad-hoc removal occurs in certain areas
  - ▶ Spanish Bluebell: ad-hoc removal occurs, generally in the south of the Forest
  - ▶ Turkey Oak: removal by felling occurs regularly as part of wood pasture restoration
  - ▶ Carp/Brown Goldfish: surveys of ponds conducted annually, with non-native fish removed
  - ▶ Terrapins: trapped and removed from Connaught Water and Strawberry Hill Pond as agreed by a licence for removal from Natural England
- ▶ Keep up-to-date with the latest research on potential new non-native threats
- ▶ Continue to monitor and control (where necessary) those species which are currently mid- to low-risk
- ▶ Train our staff in the skills and techniques required to carry out specific control measures

166. Organisms are named and classified by a system of taxonomy according to similarities in structure and origin. Species are the taxonomic group whose members can interbreed. [\[back\]](#)

167. Species that have arrived and inhabited an area naturally, without any deliberate assistance by humans. For the UK native is taken to mean those species that were present after the last post-glacial recolonisation and before historic times. [\[back\]](#)

168. Defined as a plant or animal species that have been transported accidentally through human activity or purposefully introduced from their native ranges into new ecosystems where they did not evolve. [\[back\]](#)

169. The term given to the variety of life and the natural process of which living things are a part. The term includes living organisms, the genetic differences between them and the communities in which they occur. [\[back\]](#)

170. Defined as a plant or animal species that have been transported accidentally through human activity or purposefully introduced from their native ranges into new ecosystems where they did not evolve. [\[back\]](#)

171. Popular name given to the fungus *Phytophthora ramorum*, which infects foliar (leaf) host such as *Rhododendron* and *Viburnum* and fatally infects bark canker hosts, principally oaks. First identified in Germany in 1993, and then in US in 2001, SOD threatens a number of British Deciduous varieties. [\[back\]](#)

172. Staff members whose role is to assist the public to enjoy the Forest safely and to protect the Forest from inappropriate damage or abuse. The Forest Keepers are also attested constables and enforce the Epping Forest byelaws. [\[back\]](#)

173. 735 hectares (1816 acres) of land owned and managed by the City of London around the perimeter of the Forest to preserve the landscape setting and context of the Forest. Buffer land is currently exempt from many of the requirements of the legislation governing the management of the Forest, but is also not protected in the same way. [\[back\]](#)

## 2.12 Monitoring plant pests and diseases

### *Plant pests and diseases pose a threat to Forest species<sup>[174]</sup> and the wider environment*

*In recent years a number of potentially serious plant pests and diseases have reached, and in some cases have become established in, the UK. Aided mainly by globalisation and to some extent by climate change<sup>[175]</sup>, their presence and spread now threaten our native habitats and species.*

#### Overview

The arrival of certain plant pests and diseases in the UK presents potentially devastating consequences for our native wildlife, landscapes and the wider environment, including the horticultural and forestry industries.

While new controls have come into effect requiring the statutory<sup>[176]</sup> notification of imports of specified species, an increase in finding new pests and diseases suggest the UK's trees and plants face unprecedented threats. Indeed, not since Dutch Elm Disease in the 1970s have our natural habitats been so at risk from foreign blights and infections. What's more, scientific research suggests that climate change will lead to increased pest and disease activity in the future, with associated costs of control also likely to increase.

Many non-native pests and diseases have been introduced to the UK through the horticultural trade. Epping Forest has a number of nurseries and many private gardens bordering its land, and is particularly vulnerable to windborne pathogens and spores. Fly-tipping of garden waste poses further risks, and once pests and diseases become established within a wider natural environment, such as Epping Forest, they can be extremely difficult to control or eradicate.

#### Major issues and challenges

There are a number of pests and diseases of concern which are already found in Epping Forest. These include:

- ▶ Acute Oak Decline (AOD) and Chronic Oak Dieback (COD): Both conditions are caused by a combination of factors, including drought stress, poor soil conditions, insect, bacterial and fungal attack. AOD is the condition of more concern as the symptoms develop rapidly resulting in tree mortality. Symptoms include "bleeding" of a dark liquid from the bark and canopy<sup>[177]</sup> dieback. Both of these conditions are evident within the Forest and are currently being monitored.
- ▶ Horse chestnut leaf miner: moth larvae which feed between the upper and lower surfaces of leaves, causing browning and premature leaf-fall. While damage is mainly visual, it can make trees vulnerable to secondary infections and is very difficult to control.
- ▶ Horse chestnut bleeding canker: a bacterial infection that causes tree crowns to thin, twigs and branches to die back, and in some cases whole trees to die. Already evident along Forest avenues; it is very costly to monitor, control and prevent spreading further. Some trees may need to be completely removed and replaced with different species. The London Borough of Redbridge currently looks after horse chestnuts in the Woodford area.

- ▶ Massaria disease of London plane: four pathogens have the potential to significantly damage London plane trees if they arrive in the UK. One of these, *Massaria platani*, has recently become widespread in the capital and throughout the London suburbs, including Epping Forest.
- ▶ Brown-tail moth: a defoliating caterpillar of broadleaved trees; currently a small population is present at Theydon Green. Covered in hairs which contain a toxin; when shed, these hairs can be a risk to human health.
- ▶ Gypsy moth: similar to the brown-tail moth in terms of its associated health risks. The first outbreak occurred in 1995 in the area of South Woodford close to Walthamstow Forest. Since its discovery, this species has now become established across Greater London, occurring as a low population.
- ▶ Oak Mildew: caused by the fungus *Erysiphe alphitoides*; attacks young leaves and soft shoots, causing them to shrivel and blacken. Common across the Forest, it can lead to poor tree health and decline. This fungus has also been linked to acute oak decline.

Other pests and diseases of serious concern, but not yet found in Epping Forest, include:

- ▶ Sudden oak death (*Phytophthora ramorum*)<sup>[178]</sup>: a pathogen which has the potential to devastate the wider landscape; has caused the death of more than a million native Oaks in the US and is already established in the UK. While English Oaks are more resistant, our Beech trees are much more susceptible, and this disease has the potential to devastate our Beech population (Epping Forest holds 85-90% of the UK's ancient and veteran Beech pollards<sup>[179]</sup>). The main host species are the Rhododendron and Larch, both of which will need to be rigorously managed to prevent the likelihood of the pathogen becoming established in the Forest.
- ▶ Oak processionary moth: a defoliating caterpillar of broadleaved trees; covered in hairs which contain a toxin; when shed, these hairs can be a risk to human health. The defoliation could also lead to the loss of Oaks when combined with other factors and diseases. Currently found in south and south-west London.
- ▶ Chalara fraxinea (ash dieback): a serious Ash disease; causes thinning canopies, twig and branch death, sometimes whole tree death. Known to be established in the UK in 2012, including Essex, and likely to reach the Forest in coming years.

In a time of budgetary and resource constraints, monitoring these pests and diseases is costly and complex. The size of the Forest makes surveying and monitoring additionally difficult, with the potential to miss signs of infection.

### What are we doing to address these issues?

In response to the threat from plant pests and diseases, we currently:

- ▶ Implement measures to further control Brown-tail moth at Theydon Green, with positive results
- ▶ Support the Forestry Commission in its annual monitoring of Gypsy moth
- ▶ Manage and monitor local populations of Rhododendron and Larch, the main host species for *Phytophthora ramorum*
- ▶ Monitor all current pests and diseases, including host species
- ▶ Look to increase existing internal biosecurity measures where possible
- ▶ Keep up-to-date with the latest research and potential new threats
- ▶ Maintain the existing annual hazardous tree surveys to ensure potential tree and branch failure is identified and managed
- ▶ Identifying rare *Rhododendron ponticum* cultivars<sup>[180]</sup> in heritage landscapes such as the Warren House gardens and Knighton Wood

174. Organisms are named and classified by a system of taxonomy according to similarities in structure and origin. Species are the taxonomic group whose members can interbreed. [\[back\]](#)

175. Any change in climate over time, whether due to natural variability or as a result of indirect human activity. [\[back\]](#)
176. Denotes something that is defined in legislation. [\[back\]](#)
177. The cover of branches and foliage formed by tree crowns. [\[back\]](#)
178. Popular name given to the fungus phytophtho raramorum, which infects foliar (leaf) host such as Rhododendron and Viburnum and fatally infects bark canker hosts, principally oaks. First identified in Germany in 1993, and then in US in 2001, SOD threatens a number of British Deciduous varieties. [\[back\]](#)
179. A tree cut regularly at or above head height to produce a crop of branches. Trees in Epping Forest were traditionally cut this way by commoners with the rights of common of estover, so that the branches re-grew above the reach of grazing animals. The result of such regular harvesting of branches is to rejuvenate the tree and pollarded trees usually live to greater ages than trees of the same species left uncut. [\[back\]](#)
180. A plant selected for specific characteristics (whether useful or ornamental) that are distinct, uniform and stable, and are retained when the plant is propagated by appropriate means. [\[back\]](#)

## 2.13 Monitoring the Forest's carrying capacity

### *Balancing conservation and enjoyment*

*Epping Forest receives 4.2 million visits each year. While we're pleased with the site's continued popularity, the weight of visitor numbers is putting pressure on our natural habitats. Unless we strike a balance between encouraging public access and protecting our green spaces, the Forest could be irrevocably damaged.*

#### Overview

The term 'carrying capacity<sup>[181]</sup>' refers to the number of individuals that can be supported in a given area without causing damage to the physical, ecological and socio-cultural environment. Exceeding an area's carrying capacity often results in ecological degradation and change. From a tourism perspective, it can also lead to an "unacceptable decrease in the quality of a visitor's satisfaction".

Visits to green spaces in the UK have increased in recent years, and Epping Forest is no exception. The Epping Forest Visitor survey shows that approximately 4.2 million visits were made in 2014. The majority of these visits were to our 'honey-pot' areas: Wanstead Flats, Wanstead Park, Leyton Flats, Chingford Plain, Barn Hoppitt, Connaught Waters and High Beach. Other areas, such as the Lower Forest, received only 10% of the number of visits recorded in these areas.

The problem is, due to excessive footfall our most popular sites are now suffering from soil erosion and damage, plus reduced vegetation cover. The situation is particularly serious at Pillow Mounds in High Beach and Hollow Ponds in Leyton. Throughout the Forest, meanwhile, off-road cyclists are creating very extensive new tracks as they ride through woodland areas. Over time these tracks can widen, leading to fragmentation, degradation, soil erosion and the loss of habitat continuity.

#### Major issues and challenges

We need to strike a balance between encouraging visitors to the Forest and preventing habitat damage and the disturbance of wildlife. We are committed to enhancing the visitor experience within the Forest, but we have to monitor activities such as horse riding, mountain biking and dog walking which are causing rapid ecological change in some areas.

Unfortunately, we don't fully understand the present carrying capacity of our sites. A site's threshold depends on the wildlife it supports, its soil type, hydrology, topography and vegetation, and the type of visitor activity taking place. In addition, it is not only the activity at any one time but rather the cumulative effects that can be damaging. Consequently, it can be difficult to gauge the amount of activity an area can withstand before it starts to deteriorate.

We also do not yet have a defined policy or process for dealing with sites once they start to become damaged. If we were to define an upper threshold in certain areas, how would we manage visitor numbers in our most popular sites? Should these sites become 'sacrifice areas' which continue to attract high numbers, sparing the rest of the Forest? Should other areas be targeted for methods to reduce visits at sensitive times of year, e.g. the bird breeding season? Should we launch marketing campaigns to promote other spaces? Or should we limit car park size and location to protect the Forest from over use?

Ultimately, we have a legal obligation to make sure that specific habitats are protected under the Epping Forest Act 1878<sup>[182]</sup>. As a Special Area of Conservation (SAC)<sup>[183]</sup> and a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)<sup>[184]</sup>, we also have responsibilities to maintain habitats and biodiversity<sup>[185]</sup> to standards set by the UK Government and the EU.

### What are we doing to address these issues?

In response to this situation, we currently:

- ▶ Carry out on-going assessments of access and options
- ▶ Look at whether most popular areas can cope with their current level of visitors
- ▶ Assess how people use the Forest through our Visitor Surveys
- ▶ Try to understand how damage is caused and which activities are causing the most damage
- ▶ Maintain 33km of surfaced trails to support all-year-round use; this reduces pressure on adjacent habitats
- ▶ Put up seasonal signage and distribute information to aid the protection of ground-nesting birds

181. Attempts made to measure the maximum amount of use that a resource can accommodate. • Ecological capacity is the maximum level of use consistent with no reduction in the valued ecological attributes of an area; • Physical capacity is the maximum level of use that can be accommodated in space or time; • Perceptual capacity refers to the point at which enjoyment falls due to feelings of overcrowding. Burton (1974) [\[back\]](#)

182. The Act of Parliament passed in 1878 to protect and conserve Epping Forest as an open space unenclosed and unbuilt upon for the recreation and enjoyment of the public. [\[back\]](#)

183. Site designated according to the Habitats Directive 93/43/EEC on the conservation of natural habitats and wild fauna and flora. SAC defines a site of Community Importance designated by member states through a statutory, administrative and/or contractual act, where the necessary conservation measures are applied for the maintenance or restoration, at a favourable conservation status, of the natural habitats and/or the populations of the species for which the site is designated. [\[back\]](#)

184. Area identified by English Nature under the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949 for protection by reason of the rarity of its nature conservation, wildlife features or geological interest. [\[back\]](#)

185. The term given to the variety of life and the natural process of which living things are a part. The term includes living organisms, the genetic differences between them and the communities in which they occur. [\[back\]](#)

## 2.14 Preserving tranquillity

***Transport, urban development<sup>[186]</sup>, noise and light pollution threaten the unique peace and quiet of Epping Forest***

*We want to safeguard the features and qualities that make Epping Forest a place people visit to 'get away from it all'. But given the site's proximity to London, protecting its rural tranquillity<sup>[187]</sup> is a major undertaking.*

### Overview

'Tranquillity' is a term used to describe the peace, quiet and 'naturalness' of the countryside. It is the quality that enables people to feel they have escaped the noise and bustle of the city. In 2003, a detailed survey of opinions across Forest parishes, at stakeholder workshops and in focus groups revealed that the quality of tranquillity was the most valued attribute of the Forest.

For hundreds of years Epping Forest has provided a tranquil environment where people can walk, think, relax and engage in all number of recreational<sup>[188]</sup> activities. With a rich natural history and cultural heritage, the Forest also provides opportunities for educational and even spiritual enrichment.

However, its location on the edge of a vast and rapidly-expanding metropolis means that the Forest has always been vulnerable to the encroachments of modern life and urban development. We need to act now to secure the tranquillity of

Epping Forest for future generations, or risk it becoming a thing of the past.

## Major issues and challenges

There are a number of factors that impact the tranquillity of Epping Forest. These include:

- ▶ Transport
  - ▶ The site is dissected by a number of major roads and parts of the Forest are bordered by the M25, North Circular (A406) and M11, all of which contribute to noise and light pollution in the Forest
  - ▶ A significant number of motorists use the Forest's minor roads to avoid traffic on the surrounding major roads
  - ▶ Not all areas of the Forest are easy to access by public transport, which encourages visitors to travel by car and increases the intrusive impacts of car parking
  - ▶ With the rapid development of highways, there is a risk the Forest could become 'landlocked' in a road-dominated landscape
  - ▶ The flight paths of four major airports pass overhead, increasing noise pollution levels. A projected rise in air traffic will exacerbate these impacts
- ▶ Visitor numbers
  - ▶ Visits to green spaces in the UK have increased in recent years, and Epping Forest is no exception. The 2014 Epping Forest Visitor Survey shows that approximately 4.2 million visits are made the Forest each year. The majority of these visits were to our 'honey-pot' areas: Wanstead Flats, Wanstead Park, Leyton Flats, Chingford Plain, Barn Hoppitt, Connaught Water and High Beach.
  - ▶ Increased visitor numbers put pressure on our natural habitats and bring additional noise and disturbance. Mountain bikers, for instance, often ride through trackless and otherwise tranquil woodland areas and dogs off leads penetrate further into habitats than most people and can disturb ground-nesting birds as well as generating more associated noise.
- ▶ Development
  - ▶ The Epping Forest Act of 1878<sup>[189]</sup> bids the Conservators<sup>[190]</sup> to both preserve the Forest's natural aspect<sup>[191]</sup> and keep it unenclosed and undeveloped as an open space. However, we are regularly approached by utility companies and other authorities who want to use Forest land to expand roads or install underground pipes and cables. These infrastructure developments bring with them major noise pollution and visual disturbance.
  - ▶ Surrounded by local communities, the risk of further residential housing development is an on-going concern with the adverse impacts of noise, light pollution.

## What are we doing to address these issues?

In order to safeguard the tranquillity of Epping Forest, we:

- ▶ are monitoring (and in some cases contributing to) policy developments which look to protect tranquil open spaces, such as Environmental Noise Regulations, Draft Aviation Policy Framework, the London Mayor's Ambient Noise Strategy
- ▶ are using Buffer Land<sup>[192]</sup> to preserve the setting and context of the Forest and act as a barrier to development
- ▶ have agreed a Forest Transport Strategy with Essex County Council, implemented in partnership since 2009, which amongst other actions has reduced speed limits to 40 miles per hour on roads passing through the Forest in Essex
- ▶ have, in the same Forest Transport Strategy, sought to improve ease of access by public transport and will seek to reduce or limit increases in traffic volumes in the Forest
- ▶ are enabling activities that contribute to the Forest's tranquil and spiritual aura, such as weekly Yoga and Tai Chi lessons at The View

186. The carrying out of building, engineering, mining or other operations in, on, over or under land, or the making of any material change in the use of any buildings or land. [\[back\]](#)
187. Composite feature which seeks to characterise elements of wildness, solitude, peace and quiet, relating principally to low levels of built development, traffic, noise and artificial lighting. [\[back\]](#)
188. Any pursuit engaged upon during leisure time, other than pursuits to which people are normally highly committed i.e. shopping, housework, child care etc. [\[back\]](#)
189. The Act of Parliament passed in 1878 to protect and conserve Epping Forest as an open space unenclosed and unbuilt upon for the recreation and enjoyment of the public. [\[back\]](#)
190. The Conservators are the Mayor, Aldermen and Members of the City of London Corporation assembled in Common Council. The Conservators are charged with the responsibility of safeguarding the Forest under the Epping Forest Act 1878. The City of London is the organisation that owns Epping Forest. The authority of the Conservators is vested in the City of London's Epping Forest and Commons Committee. [\[back\]](#)
191. No official definition of this term exists. A precursor to 'natural beauty', it was coined by Robert Hunter, who drafted the Epping Forest Act with the City of London's solicitor, Sir Thomas James Nelson. However, there is no definition of the 'natural aspect' within the Act and the papers and notes Hunter compiled have since been lost. While it is clear it relates principally to the Forest's natural landscape, the same section of the Act also makes reference to 'earthworks', 'woodbanks' and 'pollards', which are manmade features of Forest. [\[back\]](#)
192. 735 hectares (1816 acres) of land owned and managed by the City of London around the perimeter of the Forest to preserve the landscape setting and context of the Forest. Buffer land is currently exempt from many of the requirements of the legislation governing the management of the Forest, but is also not protected in the same way. [\[back\]](#)

## 2.15 Responding to climate change

### ***Greater resilience is needed to protect Forest species<sup>[193]</sup> and habitats from the effects of climate change<sup>[194]</sup>***

*Action is required to make Epping Forest better adapted to deal with the high rainfall events, droughts, warmer temperatures and increased storm frequency likely to be associated with global climate change.*

#### **Overview**

Our climate is changing. It has in fact changed many times in the history of our planet in response to natural causes. However, since the early 1900s our climate has changed at a rapid rate due to persistent changes in atmospheric composition and land use, for which humans are responsible.

At present, it is difficult to say if the weather events we have been experiencing in recent years have been caused directly by climate change, or by some other climatic variation. It may be several decades before we know if these changes are temporary or part of a newly established pattern. Indeed, it is important to distinguish between short-term weather variability and long-term change in atmospheric conditions.

However, one thing is certain; the recent changes we have experienced have been extreme. During the last few years, summers have been notably wetter. Summer 2012 was just 6mm short of the wettest summer for 100 years; spring 2012 was 0.80C warmer than the long-term trend between 1971 and 2000, and the winter 0.60C warmer than average. Of the six hottest years in the last hundred, five were in the decade between 2000 and 2010.

For Epping Forest, these changes present major challenges, altering the balance and abundance of different species and threatening natural habitats which are designated both nationally as Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), and internationally as Special Areas of Conservation (SACs).

#### **Major issues and challenges**

The main climatic changes anticipated for our planet are high rainfall across short periods of time, droughts, warmer winters and summers, increased storm events, and an increase in temperature of 2-30C above the long-term average.

These changes present a number of critical challenges for Epping Forest, including:



- ▶ Increase in the incidence and severity of plant pests and diseases; warmer and wetter winters, with 10-30% more precipitation, will provide the perfect conditions for the spread of diseases and pests in plants. In fact, Oak trees seem to be vulnerable to these changes already
- ▶ Increase in non-native invasive species<sup>[195]</sup> (particularly from mainland Europe), which will be encouraged and supported by our increasingly warmer climate
- ▶ Restricted growth and germination of Beech trees, a dominant tree species in Epping Forest. It is predicted that the future climate will not be suitable for shallow-rooted Beech, which could lead to a loss of Epping Forest's internationally-recognised pollards<sup>[196]</sup>
- ▶ Heightened risk of 'windthrow'<sup>[197]</sup> (the uprooting or breaking of trees in strong winds) due to storms, wet soil and reduced tree anchorage
- ▶ Restrictions on habitat management due to wet soils and warmer temperatures in winter and summer; when grounds are saturated, our machinery cannot access certain parts of the Forest. Grass cannot be cut and trees cannot be climbed for monitoring or management
- ▶ Increased pressure on our drainage system due to high rainfall and rising water levels

Key habitats within the Forest may also be adversely affected, including:

- ▶ Water bodies
  - ▶ Higher summer temperatures could lead to oxygen depletion, which would affect aquatic habitats, especially in small ponds
  - ▶ Algal blooms
  - ▶ Storms could create surges as water runs off the land, which in turn could increase turbidity, reducing light levels below the surface
  - ▶ Flooding may lead to aquatic animals becoming stranded when waters subside
  - ▶ More frequent droughts would mean that small ponds could dry out
  - ▶ Greater pressure on large raised reservoirs<sup>[198]</sup>
- ▶ Grassland
  - ▶ Grassland may become less tolerant of cutting when summers are hot, leading to potential grass burn-off
  - ▶ Generally warmer, wetter weather in winter and autumn is likely to lead to increased grass growth throughout the year. This will increase the dominant grasses at the expense of the scarcer, slower-growing flowering plants, reducing the biodiversity<sup>[199]</sup> of the grassland plains
  - ▶ Drought periods could enhance an already high category incidence of fire risk
- ▶ Heathland
  - ▶ Wet heath habitats could dry out and fires could become more prevalent
  - ▶ Drier soils could enable different plant species to succeed, meaning that the composition of heathland could change, possibly becoming less species-rich
- ▶ Woodland
  - ▶ Changes in soil moisture may promote different tree species which might out-compete native Forest species, changing the character of the Forest as we know it now

- ▶ Drought periods could enhance an already high category incidence of fire risk

### What are we doing to address these issues?

In response to the present and future threats of climate change to Epping Forest, we currently:

- ▶ Participate in the Carbon Reduction Commitment (CRC) Energy Efficiency Scheme
- ▶ Implement the City of London's Open Spaces Department's Sustainability Policy to ensure we consider the ecological, environmental and social impacts of activities on our open spaces and surrounding environment.
- ▶ Deliver a dedicated habitat management programme which works to restore and maintain habitats to high standards, making them more resilient to climate change
- ▶ Have a 'Green Team' consisting of members of staff, responsible for regular sustainability audits

193. Organisms are named and classified by a system of taxonomy according to similarities in structure and origin. Species are the taxonomic group whose members can interbreed. [\[back\]](#)

194. Any change in climate over time, whether due to natural variability or as a result of indirect human activity. [\[back\]](#)

195. Defined as a plant or animal species that have been transported accidentally through human activity or purposefully introduced from their native ranges into new ecosystems where they did not evolve. [\[back\]](#)

196. A tree cut regularly at or above head height to produce a crop of branches. Trees in Epping Forest were traditionally cut this way by commoners with the rights of common of estover, so that the branches re-grew above the reach of grazing animals. The result of such regular harvesting of branches is to rejuvenate the tree and pollarded trees usually live to greater ages than trees of the same species left uncut. [\[back\]](#)

197. The uprooting or breaking of trees in strong winds. [\[back\]](#)

198. A natural or artificial lake for the storage of water for industrial and domestic purposes and for the regulation of inland waterways. [\[back\]](#)

199. The term given to the variety of life and the natural process of which living things are a part. The term includes living organisms, the genetic differences between them and the communities in which they occur. [\[back\]](#)

### 3: Protection of the unspoilt Forest

In this theme, consultees will discover how we attempt to protect the unspoilt nature of Epping Forest and the key issues we face in this area of our work. We have been protecting the Forest since 1878, when the Epping Forest Act<sup>[200]</sup> bound us to act as Conservators<sup>[201]</sup> of the "natural aspect"<sup>[202]</sup> of the Forest. Today, this means responding to planning applications that may have an adverse impact on the Forest, maintaining Buffer Land<sup>[203]</sup> to safeguard the context and setting of the Forest, ensuring that Forest boundaries are maintained, trying to recover land lost to development<sup>[204]</sup> and protecting the land from the effects of utility infrastructure, highway development and pollution.

This theme also examines the role the Forest plays in larger conservation schemes such as the All London Green Grid and the Green Arc. As the areas surrounding Epping Forest grow increasingly urbanised and the pressure for development mounts, we are working harder than ever before to preserve the unspoilt nature of the Forest so that it can be enjoyed by future generations.

The **management issues** identified within this theme are:

- ▶ [Planning](#)
- ▶ [Buffer Land](#)
- ▶ [Forest boundaries](#)
- ▶ [Covenanted land](#)

- ▶ [Public utility infrastructure](#)
- ▶ [All London Green Grid and the Green Arc - for information only](#)
- ▶ [Epping Forest Transport Strategy](#)
- ▶ [Cars and car parks](#)
- ▶ [Pollution](#)

200. The Acts of Parliament passed in 1878 and 1880 to protect and conserve Epping Forest as an open space unenclosed and unbuilt upon for the recreation and enjoyment of the public. [\[back\]](#)

201. The Conservators are the Mayor, Aldermen and Members of the City of London Corporation assembled in Common Council. The Conservators are charged with the responsibility of safeguarding the Forest under the Epping Forest Act 1878. The City of London is the organisation that owns Epping Forest. The authority of the Conservators is vested in the City of London's Epping Forest and Commons Committee. [\[back\]](#)

202. No official definition of this term exists. A precursor to 'natural beauty', it was coined by Robert Hunter, who drafted the Epping Forest Act with the City of London's solicitor, Sir Thomas James Nelson. However, there is no definition of the 'natural aspect' within the Act and the papers and notes Hunter compiled have since been lost. While it is clear it relates principally to the Forest's natural landscape, the same section of the Act also makes reference to 'earthworks', 'woodbanks' and 'pollards', which are manmade features of Forest. [\[back\]](#)

203. 735 hectares (1816 acres) of land owned and managed by the City of London around the perimeter of the Forest to preserve the landscape setting and context of the Forest. Buffer land is currently exempt from many of the requirements of the legislation governing the management of the Forest, but is also not protected in the same way. [\[back\]](#)

204. The carrying out of building, engineering, mining or other operations in, on, over or under land, or the making of any material change in the use of any buildings or land. [\[back\]](#)

### 3.1 Planning and protection

***Epping Forest seeks greater protection from encircling development<sup>[205]</sup> which would isolate it from surrounding countryside and increase the penetration of noise and pollution into its open spaces.***

*As local authorities come under increasing pressure to find land for development, the protection and management of the Forest needs to be more firmly integrated into local planning policies and decisions.*

#### Overview

The idea of protecting London's green spaces dates back to the 16th century. In 1580, Elizabeth I proclaimed a three-mile wide cordon sanitaire around the city on which she banned development. It could be considered as the origins of a Green Belt approach. Following the rapid industrialization of the country in the 19th Century and the growth of the cities during the early 20th Century, a post-war consensus developed which led to the enshrining of the Metropolitan Green Belt as a key part of the Town and Country Planning Act of 1947. Since this Act and under subsequent planning legislation, this approach has continued to protect Epping Forest from development pressure including highways, residential and commercial buildings and [utilities](#).

The Conservators<sup>[206]</sup> have fought many battles over the years against such encircling and fragmenting developments, mainly relating to the building of major roads and the developments that follow from them, such as the A406 North Circular, M25, M11, the more recent M11 link road and Northern Gateway Access Road (NGAR). Where land has been taken from the Forest for these roads, despite best efforts to defend it, we try to get the relevant authority to acquire more land for us on the [fringes of the Forest](#), allowing us to preserve the extent of the green space.

Nonetheless, the fragmenting effect of these major roads that have crossed or enclosed the Forest in the last 40 years have brought with them intense development pressure as well as an increase in associated traffic, and we now need to secure greater protection through enhanced recognition and more integrated policies ("joined-up thinking" about an open spaces network) in the local planning system.

## Major issues and challenges

The 1878 Epping Forest Act<sup>[207]</sup> placed the care of the Forest in the hands of the City of London Corporation, bidding them to act as Conservators and to keep the Forest "un-inclosed and unbuilt on, as an open space for the recreation<sup>[208]</sup> and enjoyment of the public." That is still our aim today, although our land falls within four local planning authorities and only one of them currently has policies in place to protect the Forest.

Among the impacts of encircling development is the disconnection of Epping Forest from the surrounding countryside, especially Lea Valley and the Roding Valley. Not only does this process have ecological effects on the flora and fauna of Epping Forest, but it also destroys the tranquillity<sup>[209]</sup> of the Forest fringes and means an increasing number of areas in the Forest are suffering from the negative effects of pollution. In the last hundred years, air pollution has caused the loss of lichens and several butterfly species<sup>[210]</sup> from the Forest and the high levels of nitrogen generated by traffic are damaging the Forest's Beech trees and its unique flora and fauna. Furthermore, encircling development increases the threat of future encroachment on Forest land.

We continue to respond to planning consultations and seek to protect the Forest from development. However, because the 1878 Act predates the planning acts, the Conservators are not currently statutory<sup>[211]</sup> consultees in the planning process. This means that local authorities are not obliged to consult the Conservators regarding applications for planning permission that may affect the Forest and its environs. What's more, although the Forest is protected under the 1878 Act and this protection has been significantly enhanced by the designation of much of the Forest as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)<sup>[212]</sup> and, more recently, as a Special Area of Conservation (SAC)<sup>[213]</sup>, this often only sees protection of its immediate boundaries.

In many respects, the Forest is treated like much smaller sites without the same level of importance, and landscape protection is through piecemeal or one-off decisions rather than forward-looking policies. The Forest, unfortunately, does not have the same broader landscape-scale protections incorporated within a wider policy agenda such as other landscapes in the UK, like National Parks or Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

### What are we doing to address these issues?

In response to these planning and protection issues, we are currently:

- ▶ Consulting with local authorities as they revise their Local Plans to try to secure extra protection for the Forest
- ▶ Working with London Borough of Redbridge as they go through their Plan to update their consultation process.

205. The carrying out of building, engineering, mining or other operations in, on, over or under land, or the making of any material change in the use of any buildings or land. [\[back\]](#)

206. The Conservators are the Mayor, Aldermen and Members of the City of London Corporation assembled in Common Council. The Conservators are charged with the responsibility of safeguarding the Forest under the Epping Forest Act 1878. The City of London is the organisation that owns Epping Forest. The authority of the Conservators is vested in the City of London's Epping Forest and Commons Committee. [\[back\]](#)

207. The Acts of Parliament passed in 1878 and 1880 to protect and conserve Epping Forest as an open space unenclosed and unbuilt upon for the recreation and enjoyment of the public. [\[back\]](#)

208. Any pursuit engaged upon during leisure time, other than pursuits to which people are normally highly committed i.e. shopping, housework, child care etc. [\[back\]](#)

209. Composite feature which seeks to characterise elements of wildness, solitude, peace and quiet, relating principally to low levels of built development, traffic, noise and artificial lighting. [\[back\]](#)

210. Organisms are named and classified by a system of taxonomy according to similarities in structure and origin. Species are the taxonomic group whose members can interbreed. [\[back\]](#)

211. Denotes something that is defined in legislation. [\[back\]](#)

212. Area identified by English Nature under the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949 for protection by reason of the rarity of its nature conservation, wildlife features or geological interest. [\[back\]](#)

213. Site designated according to the Habitats Directive 93/43/EEC on the conservation of natural habitats and wild fauna and flora. SAC defines a site of Community Importance designated by member states through a statutory, administrative and/or contractual act, where the necessary conservation measures are applied for the maintenance or restoration, at a favourable conservation status, of the natural habitats and/or the populations of the species for which the site is designated. [\[back\]](#)

### 3.2 Buffer Land use and maintenance

*The City of London owns and manages land around the perimeter of the Forest as 'buffer land'<sup>[214]</sup> to preserve the landscape setting and context of the Forest.*

*This buffer land, much of it farmed by tenants, also provides ecosystem services and wildlife habitats to reduce the isolation of the Forest and acts as a physical barrier to encroaching development<sup>[215]</sup>. Buffer land is currently exempt from many of the requirements of the legislation governing the management of the Forest, but is also not protected in the same way. The question is whether this buffer land should continue to be managed separately or whether the City of London should seek to designate the most ecologically valuable areas as 'Forest'.*

#### Overview

Over the past 54 years, the City of London Corporation has acquired 14 parcels of land outside the Epping Forest Act<sup>[216]</sup>, totaling 735 hectares, on the perimeter of the Forest. This buffer land serves to prevent development changes from adversely affecting the Forest. It also provides both additional and complementary wildlife habitats to the Forest and valuable recreational<sup>[217]</sup> links between the Forest and the wider countryside, including the Lea Valley. These purposes were encapsulated in the Buffer Lands Policy adopted by the Conservators<sup>[218]</sup> in 1994. The buffer lands have also supported the grazing of the Forest and the Epping Forest Grazing Strategy for the last 13 years, a key element in protecting the Forest's landscape and wildlife habitats.

Much of the buffer land is farmed and grazed, which attracts financial support through agri-environment grants and means the buffer lands are a valuable source of income supporting the management of the Forest.

466 hectares of buffer land are tenanted for agricultural purposes or grazed, while the remainder is divided between woodland, copses and scrub, hay meadows and conservation margins for insects and birds, the Deer Sanctuary, golf courses and other non-agricultural uses. Unlike the Forest, there is no open right of access. However, ramblers can walk across much of the buffer land using the public rights of way, while horse-riders and cyclists can use public bridleways.

The buffer land includes:

- ▶ Galley Hill Wood: To the north west of Epping Forest, this ancient woodland, one of the largest in SW Essex, of coppiced Hornbeam provides shelter for fallow deer and has no public access.
- ▶ Monkams: Also to the north west of the Forest, this large field was formerly part of Waltham Park. Walkers and horse-riders have permissive open access.
- ▶ Copped Hall Park: An historic Grade II\* landscape that once formed the grounds of the ruined Copped Hall; the beautiful countryside can be enjoyed using public rights of way and footpaths.
- ▶ Ravens Farm: Nineteen hectares of farmland separated from Copped Hall Park by a boundary of Forest land.
- ▶ Warlies Park: Ceded to the City of London by ministerial intervention on the dissolution of the Greater London Council, Warlies Park is rolling parkland with magnificent views that can be enjoyed by walkers and horse-riders.
- ▶ Woodredon Estate: An area of farmland which the public can enjoy using public footpaths and bridleways.
- ▶ Coopersale: Grassland adjacent the Lower Forest with public access that attracts a number of bird species<sup>[219]</sup> to nest in the hedges of Hornbeam, Ash, Elder, Hawthorn and Field Maple scrub.
- ▶ Swaines Green: A series of small damp sedgy pastures with well-developed scrub and glades to the west of Epping Forest, which walkers are free to use.

- ▶ Great Gregories Farm: Farmed grassland grazed in the autumn by the Forest's cattle and a woodland recently planted by the Conservators to screen the M25, with public footpaths across the area.
- ▶ Birch Hall Fields: Three steeply-sloping wet meadows, with a diverse flora including the rare Marsh Horsetail, adjoining the Deer Sanctuary at Theydon Bois. You can see deer from the perimeter fence and enjoy fantastic views over Epping Forest.

### Major issues and challenges

The protection and sympathetic management of the buffer lands enhances the Forest and its surrounding landscape and provides valuable income, mainly from agri-environment grants, which helps to support conservation efforts on both the Forest and the buffer land itself.

Our buffer lands have a key part to play in achieving the goals of the Green Arc and linking to London's Green Grid and helping to protect the benefits of the Green Belt and access to the countryside for all.

Unfortunately the buffer land areas are relatively little known and under-appreciated given their extent and landscape importance. Limited public access and poor signage have contributed to this. We need to do more to promote the sites for the enjoyment of walkers, horse-riders and cyclists whilst ensuring that significant areas remain undisturbed to provide havens for wildlife, like skylarks, deer and badgers. However, we also need to manage the deer population to prevent damage to the flora and trees of the important ancient woodlands that are scattered across the buffer lands.

The land may provide further opportunities to financially support the work of Epping Forest. Areas could be used for community farming, for the teaching of woodland skills, or even for commercial recreational ventures such as Go Ape and other Sustainable Alternative Natural Greenspaces (SANGs)<sup>[220]</sup> to alleviate the recreational pressures on the Forest.

Alternatively, some areas of buffer land could be incorporated into Epping Forest through legislation, which would extend the protection given to the Forest, ensure the conservation of wildlife and the 'natural aspect'<sup>[221]</sup> and result in open access to the land for the public.

In determining the future of the buffer lands, the resource implications of dedicating areas as Forest land need to be considered, and the balance between wildlife conservation and relieving pressure on the Forest by providing wider recreational opportunities reviewed.

We have limited funds to purchase more land in the future. We are unable to use the capital of the Epping Forest Fund for the purchase of buffer land, because it would be contrary to the Epping Forest Act 1878.

### What are we doing to address these issues?

To encourage better use of the Forest's buffer land, we are currently:

- ▶ Promoting recreational opportunities on buffer land to the general public; in 2006 we released a leaflet called Buffer Land of Epping Forest outlining the areas that have access for walkers, cyclists and horse-riders
- ▶ Organising walks and tours of the buffer land areas
- ▶ Managing wildlife conservation areas, including two recently created hay meadows and farmland conservation margins for insect pollinators and birds.
- ▶ Managing agricultural tenancies to provide income and ensure good farmed land management
- ▶ Managing the buffer lands to provide support for the cattle grazing of the Forest

214. 735 hectares (1816 acres) of land owned and managed by the City of London around the perimeter of the Forest to preserve the landscape setting and context of the Forest. Buffer land is currently exempt from many of the requirements of the legislation governing the management of the Forest, but is also not protected in the same way. [\[back\]](#)

215. The carrying out of building, engineering, mining or other operations in, on, over or under land, or the making of any material change in the use of any buildings or land. [\[back\]](#)

216. The Acts of Parliament passed in 1878 and 1880 to protect and conserve Epping Forest as an open space unenclosed and unbuilt upon for the recreation and enjoyment of the public. [\[back\]](#)

217. Any pursuit engaged upon during leisure time, other than pursuits to which people are normally highly committed i.e. shopping, housework, child care etc. [\[back\]](#)

218. The Conservators are the Mayor, Aldermen and Members of the City of London Corporation assembled in Common Council. The Conservators are charged with the responsibility of safeguarding the Forest under the Epping Forest Act 1878. The City of London is the organisation that owns Epping Forest. The authority of the Conservators is vested in the City of London's Epping Forest and Commons Committee. [\[back\]](#)

219. Organisms are named and classified by a system of taxonomy according to similarities in structure and origin. Species are the taxonomic group whose members can interbreed. [\[back\]](#)

220. Green space of a quality and type suitable to be used as mitigation for development. [\[back\]](#)

221. No official definition of this term exists. A precursor to 'natural beauty', it was coined by Robert Hunter, who drafted the Epping Forest Act with the City of London's solicitor, Sir Thomas James Nelson. However, there is no definition of the 'natural aspect' within the Act and the papers and notes Hunter compiled have since been lost. While it is clear it relates principally to the Forest's natural landscape, the same section of the Act also makes reference to 'earthworks', 'woodbanks' and 'pollards', which are manmade features of Forest. [\[back\]](#)

### 3.3 Maintaining forest boundaries

#### ***The City of London must maintain the boundaries of Epping Forest and consider seeking compensation for lost Forest land***

*As the land surrounding Epping Forest faces increasing development<sup>[222]</sup> pressure, it is important that we uphold the Forest boundaries. We have recently plotted boundary information from more than 1,500 historic title deeds and we are working to settle disputes and protect against encroachment.*

#### **Overview**

Epping Forest, with its long, thin shape and a 271km boundary, is particularly vulnerable to poorly planned developments on its borders. That is one of the reasons why the City of London Corporation as Conservators<sup>[223]</sup> of the Forest continues to buy up and manage Buffer Land<sup>[224]</sup> to the north of the Forest. However, a 'hard' border of transport networks and urban development edges most of the central and southern areas of the Forest. This brings with it problems of encroachment, pollution and littering. We now have accurate and comprehensive boundary information and will use this in upholding our borders.

Over the years, some Forest land has been 'lost'. Under the 1878 Epping Forest Act<sup>[225]</sup>, the City of London Corporation gained the power to "maintain and make roads, footpaths, and ways, and to dedicate roads to the public, subject to the law of highways, and to afford facilities and grant rights of way for access to enclosures".

At times, this has resulted in Forest land being ceded to highway improvement or other statutory<sup>[226]</sup> uses. In some cases, exchanges have been made and the Forest has acquired capital or land in return. But in other cases, no exchanges or payments have been made. On occasion, facilities have fallen out of use and still the land has not been returned to the Forest.

#### **Major issues and challenges**

The City of London's title to Epping Forest is made up of more than 1,500 deed packets. Many of these deeds contain plans that do not conform to Ordnance Survey (OS) mapping, which is used by the Land Registry. However, after painstaking research, we now have full and complete boundary information for the first time since the City of London acquired Epping Forest in 1878. As a result, all the land is now registered with the Land Registry.

The registration process threw up title queries and encroachments both against and in favour of the City. It may not be possible to settle these issues without resorting to litigation or Land Registry adjudication.

The Forest also faces a challenge of defining its boundaries to the public and finding a way to signify the special quality of the Forest environment.

We also need to make a comprehensive assessment of land previously 'lost' to development and its strategic and management value to the Forest. This would involve working with local authorities and statutory undertakers to secure the return of Forest land that is no longer required where appropriate, or acquire compensatory land, or an alternative financial compensation, that would benefit the Forest.

### What are we doing to address these issues?

In order to uphold the Forest boundaries, we currently:

- ▶ Make site visits and compare our plans with the ground conditions, taking photographic evidence for future reference
- ▶ Make sure we are aware of any new developments in or near the Forest boundaries
- ▶ Train our Keepers to know the boundaries of the areas they manage
- ▶ Liaise with the City's Cartographic team
- ▶ Liaise with Land Registry
- ▶ Closely review all highway dedication agreements
- ▶ Seek legal support to discover if any rights have been acquired with regards to 'lost' Forest land

222. The carrying out of building, engineering, mining or other operations in, on, over or under land, or the making of any material change in the use of any buildings or land. [\[back\]](#)

223. The Conservators are the Mayor, Aldermen and Members of the City of London Corporation assembled in Common Council. The Conservators are charged with the responsibility of safeguarding the Forest under the Epping Forest Act 1878. The City of London is the organisation that owns Epping Forest. The authority of the Conservators is vested in the City of London's Epping Forest and Commons Committee. [\[back\]](#)

224. 735 hectares (1816 acres) of land owned and managed by the City of London around the perimeter of the Forest to preserve the landscape setting and context of the Forest. Buffer land is currently exempt from many of the requirements of the legislation governing the management of the Forest, but is also not protected in the same way. [\[back\]](#)

225. The Acts of Parliament passed in 1878 and 1880 to protect and conserve Epping Forest as an open space unenclosed and unbuilt upon for the recreation and enjoyment of the public. [\[back\]](#)

226. Denotes something that is defined in legislation. [\[back\]](#)

## 3.4 Covenanted Land associated with Epping Forest

### *Covenanted landowners must understand development<sup>[227]</sup> restrictions*

*In the late 19th century, local landowners were required to enter into binding covenants with the City of London Corporation to ensure that their land, which surrounded Epping Forest, was not further developed. We must highlight the existence of these covenants to current and future owners to prevent development disputes.*

#### Overview

In 1851, Hainault Forest, Epping Forest's nearest neighbour, was sold off in chunks to various lords of manors. These lords enclosed the land and converted it for agriculture and development. In just six weeks, 3,000 acres of forest was cleared.

This set a precedent that presented a real threat to Epping Forest as the Crown began to sell forestal rights and large areas of Epping Forest were fenced off. In 1871, in an effort to protect the Forest from further enclosure, William Cowper-Temple, the MP for South Hampshire and a member of the Open Spaces and Footpaths Preservation Society, brought a resolution to the House of Commons "that measures be adopted ... for preserving as an open space accessible to Her Majesty's subjects for purposes of health and recreation<sup>[228]</sup>, those parts of Epping Forest which have not been enclosed with the assent of the Crown or by legal authority".



This resulted in the first Epping Forest Act of 1871. The Act established a Board of Commissioners to consider which land should remain part of a publicly managed Forest and which of the existing enclosures would not be challenged. After the Epping Forest Act 1878<sup>[229]</sup> was finally passed, protecting the Forest, arbitration proceedings were held to determine the fate of each parcel of land around the Forest. In exchange for the chance to retain previously enclosed land, the Arbitrator required a number of landowners to enter into binding covenants with the City of London Corporation to ensure that the land in their ownership was not further developed in order to protect the Forest.

Today, despite the existence of these covenants, owners frequently seek to develop sections of their land. Every time this happens, the Conservators<sup>[230]</sup> are forced to take legal action to prevent the proposed developments from taking place.

### Major issues and challenges

Contesting development proposals for covenanted land is costly and time consuming. It is therefore necessary for us to highlight the binding terms of the covenants to both existing landowners and potential purchasers. We hope this will prevent any misunderstandings regarding additional development of land in the future.

### What are we doing to address these issues?

In order to protect the covenanted land surrounding Epping Forest, we currently:

- ▶ Respond to and challenge where necessary any development proposals
- ▶ Map the areas concerned and document the terms of the relevant covenants
- ▶ Liaise with the Comptroller and City Solicitor
- ▶ Seek redress through legal action to prevent the further development of land covered by restrictive covenants around the Forest
- ▶ Are always consistent in our approach when challenged

227. The carrying out of building, engineering, mining or other operations in, on, over or under land, or the making of any material change in the use of any buildings or land. [\[back\]](#)

228. Any pursuit engaged upon during leisure time, other than pursuits to which people are normally highly committed i.e. shopping, housework, child care etc. [\[back\]](#)

229. The Acts of Parliament passed in 1878 and 1880 to protect and conserve Epping Forest as an open space unenclosed and unbuilt upon for the recreation and enjoyment of the public. [\[back\]](#)

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## 3.5 Limiting public utility infrastructure development

### *Epping Forest must resist attempts by utility companies to use 'cheap' Forest land*

*Epping Forest is often viewed as a cheap and convenient alternative for public utility infrastructure to the urban environment. Buried beneath the Forest is a warren of underground services, including high-pressure gas, extra high-voltage electricity, telecommunications, water mains and desalination pipelines.*

#### Overview

The Epping Forest Act of 1878<sup>[231]</sup> bids the Conservators<sup>[232]</sup> to both preserve the Forest's natural aspect<sup>[233]</sup> and keep it unenclosed and undeveloped as an open space. However, we are regularly approached by utility companies and other authorities who want to use Forest land to expand a road or install underground pipes and cables.

We understand the importance of supplying utilities to adjacent urban areas. However, companies cannot use the Forest just because it is cheaper and more convenient than laying services in the surrounding built-up area. The Forest is a protected site both for recreation<sup>[234]</sup> and for wildlife. The excavations involved can damage Forest habitats, often permanently. For example, many important road verge grasslands and their rare plants have been lost as a result of excavations and cable-laying. Fractured water mains have also flooded Forest Land in recent years and killed several ancient trees.

The installations of services often impose future restrictions that limit the management of Forest land by the Conservators to the detriment of the natural aspect and public amenity. The installations can also result in pollution damage to the Forest.

### Major issues and challenges

Utility companies should prove there is an overwhelming need to use Forest land rather than the surrounding areas. If no alternative exists, then we must ensure that companies work to industry-agreed standards with the best interest of the Forest in mind.

Liaising with utility companies can be lengthy and time-consuming, as can the installation process, as staff are required to monitor the process from start to finish.

Some utilities and services in the past were laid without proper documentation and, therefore, can be accidentally damaged. For example, an oil-cooled electricity cable was recently damaged inadvertently during the setting up of a temporary entertainment venue in a Forest car park, which led to pollution of a Forest water course and temporary closure of the car park as a Forest facility.

When services are dug up, the damage to Forest Land is repeated and, once installed, there are regularly requests to upgrade the services and enlarge the excavations, requiring further Forest Land. The very presence of potentially hazardous services (e.g. electricity cables) in the Forest requires many of our maintenance operations, especially involving breaking ground (e.g. fencing, ditch maintenance), to be screened in advance and these preparatory investigations are costly in both time and staff resources.

The utility companies have statutory<sup>[235]</sup> powers to enter land to provide services. While compulsion is unusual, the Conservators do not possess express powers under the Epping Forest Acts 1878 and 1880 to enter into formal agreements in these circumstances. Such powers would allow us to implement some measure of control over the installation process.

### What are we doing to address these issues?

We have a designated officer to liaise with utility companies and map future requested services. However, we lack the resources to fully map historical and existing services.

Comprehensive heads of terms are now negotiated with each utility company before an installation is allowed. This allows us to be in control during the installation and re-instatement of the Forest Land and also for any future maintenance that is required. However, even with such controls, damage to habitat is unavoidable and limiting or preventing installations remains preferable.

We now have a breaking-ground policy in place - before any internal ground works are carried out, such as installing new fence posts or clearing a ditch, a services check is carried out using information available from all the utility companies.

We are currently considering proposals for legislative changes that would grant the City of London the power to enter into a formal agreement with utilities providers concerning utility infrastructure. This would give the Conservators more control over such installations, pre-empt any use of the providers' formal powers of entry and allow us to seek compensation for enhancing the Forest.

231. The Act of Parliament passed in 1878 to protect and conserve Epping Forest as an open space unenclosed and unbuilt upon for the recreation and enjoyment of the public. [\[back\]](#)

232. The Conservators are the Mayor, Aldermen and Members of the City of London Corporation assembled in Common Council. The Conservators are charged with the responsibility of safeguarding the Forest under the Epping Forest Act 1878. The City of London is the organisation that owns Epping Forest. The authority of the Conservators is vested in the City of London's Epping Forest and Commons Committee. [\[back\]](#)

233. No official definition of this term exists. A precursor to 'natural beauty', it was coined by Robert Hunter, who drafted the Epping Forest Act with the City of London's solicitor, Sir Thomas James Nelson. However, there is no definition of the 'natural aspect' within the Act and the papers and notes Hunter compiled have since been lost. While it is clear it relates principally to the Forest's natural landscape, the same section of the Act also makes reference to 'earthworks', 'woodbanks' and 'pollards', which are manmade features of Forest. [\[back\]](#)

234. Any pursuit engaged upon during leisure time, other than pursuits to which people are normally highly committed i.e. shopping, housework, child care etc. [\[back\]](#)

235. Denotes something that is defined in legislation. [\[back\]](#)

### 3.6 All-London Green Grid and Green Arc - For information

*Now for information only*

#### ***Epping Forest pledges to continue working towards a green network for London and Essex***

*The All London Green Grid (ALGG) is a city-wide scheme to create green corridors between the capital's open spaces for people and wildlife. It includes sections of Epping Forest that fall within London boroughs. Epping Forest is also an active participant in the Green Arc, which is a similar scheme for enhancing the green belt in Hertfordshire and Essex.*

#### **Overview**

London is peppered with oases of green spaces and waterways, the locations of which have developed in a largely unplanned way. The idea of the All London Green Grid (ALGG) is to create a 'green infrastructure'; a network of corridors and links that join many of these places together. The protection of these green areas is documented in the All London Green Grid Supplementary Planning Guidance, in which Epping Forest is named as an 'iconic' open space. The Forest is one of 12 green and open spaces that make up the ALGG. The ALGG creates opportunities for people and wildlife to travel safely between the capital's parks, nature reserves and waterways.

The Green Arc is a similar, but more expansive, scheme of which Epping Forest was a founder. It is designed to reinvigorate the original green belt vision of a publicly accessible and interconnected arc of land surrounding London, creating new opportunities for recreation<sup>[236]</sup> and new wildlife habitats. The north-east (NE) of London is the only quadrant of the arc outside Greater London that has an active Green Arc group, which could demonstrate the importance and value of this type of protection work to the other three quadrants around London.

The aspirations of both the ALGG and The Green Arc are reflected in the previous Epping Forest Management Plan's Vision Statement which states: "Epping Forest will be highly-valued as part of a larger and fully accessible protected landscape area" and that "Epping Forest's position as a unique and ancient landscape for people and wildlife will be strengthened".

#### **Major issues and challenges**

Recent relaxation of development<sup>[237]</sup> policy and the current Green Belt reviews being undertaken by local planning authorities may adversely impact on both of these schemes.

New development proposals, especially new housing, threaten the green belt around Epping and Harlow. The City of London Corporation has responded by highlighting the effect this would have on the Green Arc and on the Forest itself, potentially severing the links between the Forest and its surrounding countryside and other green spaces as well as significantly increasing the recreational and environmental pressures on Forest land.

Additionally, the Green Arc is currently without a project officer. We are stretched to find time for our staff to support ALGG and Green Arc projects, attend meetings and help keep up the momentum of these projects in the face of the increasing pressures on land.

#### **What are we doing to address these issues?**

To enable our continued involvement in these schemes, we are currently:

- ▶ Working with key partners to focus the direction of the Green Arc and to rediscover its original purpose, ensuring projects delivered under the scheme are effective in meeting its aims.
- ▶ Working to influence green infrastructure plans to ensure the green belt is protected against pressures of development.
- ▶ Using mapping information to target efforts for green belt improvements and connectivity.
- ▶ Supporting the launch of demonstration sites within the NE quadrant of the Green Arc, of which Epping Forest may be one of the first, to showcase the potential benefits of increased connectivity between green spaces for visitors and wildlife.

#### **In the future, we plan to:**

- ▶ When opportunities arise, we will continue to work with partners to deliver projects which meet the Green Grid and Green Arc objectives; increasing connectivity between London's green spaces. Recently, the Conservators supported the 'Riding the Roding' project.

236. Any pursuit engaged upon during leisure time, other than pursuits to which people are normally highly committed i.e. shopping, housework, child care etc. [\[back\]](#)

237. The carrying out of building, engineering, mining or other operations in, on, over or under land, or the making of any material change in the use of any buildings or land. [\[back\]](#)

### **3.7 Developing a new Epping Forest Transport Strategy**

*Outlining measures to be implemented up to 2017, the existing Forest Transport Strategy agreed with Essex County Council in 2009 broke new ground in coordinating and implementing actions to reduce the detrimental impact of traffic and roads on the Forest.*

*We need to work with local authorities to continue transport planning based around the Forest to improve access and amenity for visitors and reduce adverse impacts on wildlife habitats.*

#### **Overview**

Dissected by a number of major roads and bordered by the M25, North Circular and M11, Epping Forest is particularly vulnerable to the impact of roads and traffic.

Over a decade ago, the Conservators<sup>[238]</sup>, working in partnership with Essex County Council and the London Boroughs of Waltham Forest and Redbridge, acknowledged that something has to be done to prevent the Forest becoming "land-locked" in a heavily developed and road-dominated landscape.

Following from this, together with Essex County Council, the Conservators formulated a strategy and action plan. This sought to implement improvements for the benefit of grazing, wood-pasture management, tranquillity<sup>[239]</sup>, and accessibility in Epping Forest.

#### **Major issues and challenges**

The road network and the burgeoning traffic pressures present a number of challenges for the Forest, including:

- ▶ The fragmentation of the Forest Landscape
- ▶ Air pollution in the Forest which is damaging native trees and plants
- ▶ Road noise impacting tranquillity

- ▶ Safety issues for Forest users seeking to cross the busy road network
- ▶ Access for fly-tipping
- ▶ Isolation of wildlife habitats and hazards for wildlife crossing roads
- ▶ Tree safety issues and vegetation maintenance obligations for highway structures and carriageways

It also has had a significant impact on the viability of cattle grazing by Commoners<sup>[240]</sup>.

### What are we doing to address these issues?

The current Forest Transport Strategy aims to:

- ▶ Ensure the Forest landscape is considered when transport developments are planned - making decisions more 'Forest-centric'
- ▶ Reduce fragmentation of the Forest for visitors and wildlife
- ▶ Improve air quality
- ▶ Enhance visitor safety and enjoyment of the landscape
- ▶ Enable integrated conservation management of Forest habitats including grazing
- ▶ Create distinctive gateways to welcome visitors and make drivers aware that they are entering the Forest
- ▶ Reduce the impact of traffic - lowering speeds and controlling access of HGVs along minor Forest roads
- ▶ Promote the use of sustainable and public transport options for visitors

Much has been achieved since the Strategy was launched in 2009:

- ▶ We have installed four cattle grids and 8 "invisible" or virtual grids to link with the invisible fence network
- ▶ Speed limits have been amended to slower limits on all major and minor roads parts of the Forest in Essex
- ▶ Three roads have been closed to vehicular traffic and newly redundant barrier gates on Forest paths and trails removed
- ▶ A weekend free shuttle bus service running between train and tube stations to the Forest was trialed in 2011 for Forest visitors
- ▶ Cycle racks have been installed in four car parks at popular Forest sites
- ▶ Plans for safer, better-marked road crossings which can act to calm traffic speeds are being discussed
- ▶ Verges have been cleared at Lower Forest to reduce road traffic collisions with deer
- ▶ Increased use of public transport by visiting schools and community groups
- ▶ Plans to position 'gateways' at key entry locations to the Forest, which mark the Forest as a special place, have been developed as part of the Heritage Lottery Funded Branching Out project

238. The Conservators are the Mayor, Aldermen and Members of the City of London Corporation assembled in Common Council. The Conservators are charged with the responsibility of safeguarding the Forest under the Epping Forest Act 1878. The City of London is the organisation that owns Epping Forest. The authority of the Conservators is vested in the City of London's Epping Forest and Commons Committee. [\[back\]](#)

239. Composite feature which seeks to characterise elements of wildness, solitude, peace and quiet, relating principally to low levels of built development, traffic, noise and artificial lighting. [\[back\]](#)

240. A person who owns or occupies at least half an acre of unencumbered or open land in a Forest parish and has the rights of common of pasture (grazing). [\[back\]](#)

### 3.8 Managing cars and car parks

#### ***Significant new measures needed to protect the Forest by reducing the impact of traffic***

*We need to implement ambitious changes as part of the Epping Forest Transport Strategy, and ensure that our car parks are efficient and fit for the future. If we don't, the health and character of the Forest could be threatened, and visitor enjoyment and safety could be compromised.*

#### **Overview**

Cars and car parks have a significant impact on Epping Forest. Around 45,000 vehicles pass through the Wake Arms roundabout in the heart of the Forest each weekday, and tens of thousands of vehicles travel up and down other roads. The resulting 'fragmentation' of the Forest into separate areas divided by busy roads, and associated traffic pollution, noise and speed can have a serious effect on visitors, wildlife, tranquillity<sup>[241]</sup> and vegetation.

At the same time, cars provide easier access to the Forest for a large majority of visitors, and some roads form part of essential transport networks and through routes.

The pressure that cars and car parking are placing on the Forest is considerable and we are considering introducing small charges for car parking across the Forest, or at strategic locations, to help manage non-Forest use.

#### **Major issues and challenges**

Research has identified excessive pollution from traffic around most roads in the Forest, at levels likely to impact the health of soil, vegetation and water, with potential knock on effects on wildlife. Vehicle speed, noise and pollution are reducing enjoyment and easy access to the Forest for visitors on foot, bicycle or horse, as well as presenting a safety risk to visitors and wildlife alike.

Development pressures, particularly from the Thames Gateway and the M11 corridor, could intensify these problems and result in significant damage to the health and character of the Forest. In recognition of these challenges, Essex County Council and the City of London have published a Transport Strategy to manage improvements through to 2016.

The Forest's 55 car parks, which have developed in a somewhat ad hoc way, do not provide the most efficient parking solutions. Car parks are surfaced and demarcated using a variety of materials. The regular re-grading of potholes and dusty gravel car parks can make them difficult and expensive to maintain. Car parking across the Forest is free, placing severe constraints on budgets for related maintenance. While car parks provide useful sites for amenities such as information boards and litter bins, they interrupt the continuity of the natural landscape, and can be a focus for litter, fly-tipping, vandalism and anti-social behaviour.

Government statistics indicate a growth in the number of vehicles on the roads. There has been a corresponding rise in residential parking schemes, on and off street parking charges and increased demand for commuter access to the Central Line and the Greater Anglia service to London Liverpool Street, which have all had an impact on Forest car parks. At busy times, cars also park along Forest verges, blocking sight lines for other drivers and impacting on the ecology of the Forest.

It appears that the creation of more car parking spaces has simply encouraged more car journeys, so an alternative approach that balances the improved access to the Forest offered by cars with an awareness of the environmental impact needs to be found.

#### **What are we doing to address these issues?**

As part of the Epping Forest Transport Strategy, we are currently working to:

- ▶ Introduce enhanced safety measures including speed limits, safe crossing points, warning signs and new junction layouts
- ▶ Install 'gateways' at key locations to signal entry into a special Forest environment and to slow traffic, along with Forest-specific road signage and visually sympathetic, noise-reducing road surface materials

- ▶ Introduce measures to slow, reduce and restrict traffic, including traffic calming <sup>[242]</sup> zones, quiet lanes where pedestrians have priority over vehicles and potential reclassifications and seasonal or permanent road closures.
- ▶ Provide 'car free' routes across the Forest, and sustainable transport hubs with interchanges for cycling and walking, extending into the Forest from local rail stations
- ▶ Close minor roads in the Forest
- ▶ Harmonise width and weight restrictions on minor Forest roads to discourage 'rat running'

241. Composite feature which seeks to characterise elements of wildness, solitude, peace and quiet, relating principally to low levels of built development, traffic, noise and artificial lighting.] [\[back\]](#)

242. Attempts to control the speed and movement of traffic to reduce conflict arising between pedestrians and vehicles by the introduction of features such as road humps, pavement widening and new surface materials. [\[back\]](#)

### 3.9 How we tackle pollution

#### *Epping Forest needs new measures to deal with pollution*

*Whether it's fumes from passing cars or dumped asbestos, we are constantly battling pollutants to keep our Forest healthy.*

#### Overview

Since Epping Forest was first granted protection in 1878, the London and Essex suburbs have continued to develop and grow around it. From this nineteenth century expansion until the 1950s, sulphur air pollution, and the impacts of the notorious London smogs, had extremely damaging impacts on Forest habitats and species <sup>[243]</sup> and, as a direct result, over one hundred lichen species became extinct. This air pollution probably helped to eliminate several butterfly species from the Forest too.

Since the Clean Air Acts of the 1960s, sulphur pollution has become less of an issue, replaced instead by nitrogen pollution resulting from increased traffic levels. Busy main roads border, or cut through, large sections of Forest and traffic pollution is the Forest's arch enemy. The noise, fumes and dirt generated are highly detrimental to the Forest and its wildlife. The prevailing south-westerly winds also mean that more nitrogen pollution from industry and traffic from the huge area of Greater London affects the Forest.

Lichens are sensitive natural indicators of air pollution and are used by scientists all over the world to monitor pollution. Studies of lichen in Epping Forest have seen the number of recorded species drop from initial levels of over 150 (and from nearly 90 at the end of the nineteenth century) to only 28 in 1970, when pollution levels were at their worst. Species numbers have now increased to more than 60, but it is not the same ancient woodland species that are recovering. Instead, many of the species that have recolonised are those that are tolerant to the prevailing nitrogen pollution. Lichens are particularly reduced close to roadsides, and only the most pollution-tolerant species survive in these areas of the Forest.

However, as well as air pollution, we also have to deal with spills of harmful pollutants, such as oil and asbestos, as well as light pollution which can disrupt animal behaviour and damage the natural aspect <sup>[244]</sup> of the Forest.

#### Major issues and challenges

##### *Road traffic*

Epping Forest is fragmented by busy roads. About 45,000 vehicles pass through the Wake Arms roundabout in the heart of the Forest each weekday, with tens of thousands of vehicles travelling up and down other roads. The traffic volumes threaten the air quality for both people and plants.

The Conservators<sup>[245]</sup> of Epping Forest recently co-sponsored a three-year PhD research project by Imperial College London, examining the levels of car exhaust pollutants (nitrogen dioxide and ammonia) across a wide area of the Forest.

An excess amount of nitrogen can alter soil chemistry, plant nutrition and biology and encourage pests and pathogens. Concentrations in the air at most roadside locations were found to exceed the internationally recommended limits above which plant health is threatened, and were sometimes up to three times higher. These elevated levels extended as far as 200 metres from the main roads. Furthermore, these nitrogen pollutants land on plants and soil and cause a fertilizing effect that damages native Forest plants like Heather. This study showed that the critical level of nitrogen deposition across the whole Forest area was above the internationally-recognized threshold (known as the Critical Load) at which plant communities are likely to be damaged. It also revealed that the Beech tree health condition was poor.

### ***Fly-tipping***

Fly-tipping in the Forest is also an issue, particularly when it involves hazardous waste such as asbestos, oil drums, fridges containing CFC, gas canisters and tyres. These waste materials are costly for the Forest to dispose of, and where substances leak into the soil, the soil has to be removed.

### **What are we doing to address these issues?**

In response to the problem of pollution in Epping Forest, we are currently:

- ▶ Using the Epping Forest Transport Strategy to make the Forest central to all decisions about future transport and highways developments<sup>[246]</sup>. Within the strategy is a commitment to improve the air quality in the Forest and encourage the use of sustainable and public transport options for visitors to the area
- ▶ Undertaking measures to reduce incidences of fly-tipping and responding promptly to reports from staff, volunteers and the public regarding possible hazardous waste
- ▶ Encouraging local police to increase stop and search and the checking of waste transfer licenses

243. Organisms are named and classified by a system of taxonomy according to similarities in structure and origin. Species are the taxonomic group whose members can interbreed. [\[back\]](#)

244. No official definition of this term exists. A precursor to 'natural beauty', it was coined by Robert Hunter, who drafted the Epping Forest Act with the City of London's solicitor, Sir Thomas James Nelson. However, there is no definition of the 'natural aspect' within the Act and the papers and notes Hunter compiled have since been lost. While it is clear it relates principally to the Forest's natural landscape, the same section of the Act also makes reference to 'earthworks', 'woodbanks' and 'pollards', which are manmade features of Forest. [\[back\]](#)

245. The Conservators are the Mayor, Aldermen and Members of the City of London Corporation assembled in Common Council. The Conservators are charged with the responsibility of safeguarding the Forest under the Epping Forest Act 1878. The City of London is the organisation that owns Epping Forest. The authority of the Conservators is vested in the City of London's Epping Forest and Commons Committee. [\[back\]](#)

246. The carrying out of building, engineering, mining or other operations in, on, over or under land, or the making of any material change in the use of any buildings or land. [\[back\]](#)

## **4: Regulation & management**

In this theme, consultees will find out about our work to meet our duties under particular areas of legislation, and the management regimes in place to deliver these duties. Our activities are governed by a wide range of legislation at a European and national level, as well as specific legislation such as the Epping Forest Act 1878<sup>[247]</sup>, which placed the Forest in the care of the City of London. It is our duty to preserve the Forest as an open space for the recreation<sup>[248]</sup> and enjoyment of the public.



As one might expect, the issues governed by legislation tend to be some of the more challenging and demanding aspects of our work. They require us to balance competing priorities and interests, and to deliver robust systems to deal with pressures on the Forest as both a public space and a natural and heritage environment. The issues range from managing the Forest's water resources to dealing with litter and dog mess, providing licenses for activities and events, and ensuring public safety through emergency planning. Throughout, we aim to develop our on-going strategy in close alignment with relevant legislation, while meeting the needs and concerns of current Forest visitors and protecting the Forest for future generations.

### Proposed legislative changes

The City of London is considering proposals for a Various Powers Act, amending the legislation governing Epping Forest, to respond to modern pressures across our Open Spaces. These proposals include clarifying the general management powers, providing greater flexibility to generate revenue for the benefit of our Open Spaces in a way that does not undermine their use for public recreation and enjoyment, and providing more effective tools to deal with crime and nuisance.

Following informal consultation with key stakeholders earlier this year, final proposals for these changes will be consulted on as part of the parliamentary process in the autumn.

Along with legislation, the Epping Forest byelaws<sup>[249]</sup> are a further valuable mechanism which helps support the management and regulation of the Forest. By virtue of its physical size and the variety of habitats found within it, Epping Forest attracts a great range of recreational use. Some of these uses can bring different users into conflict with one another. Byelaws act as a code of conduct which sets out how visitors can enjoy the Forest without damaging it and how different users can conduct themselves to prevent conflict with others.

We are currently considering some limited changes to the byelaws to provide more efficient and effective tools for the management and regulation of the Forest, but as this is a complex and lengthy legal process, this will be the subject of a separate consultation.

The **management issues** identified within this theme are:

- ▶ [Water management](#)
- ▶ [Drainage](#)
- ▶ [Litter](#)
- ▶ [Fly-Tipping](#)
- ▶ [Licensing](#)
- ▶ [Emergency plan](#) - for information
- ▶ [Public sex environments](#)

247. The Act of Parliament passed in 1878 to protect and conserve Epping Forest as an open space unenclosed and unbuilt upon for the recreation and enjoyment of the public. [\[back\]](#)

248. Any pursuit engaged upon during leisure time, other than pursuits to which people are normally highly committed i.e. shopping, housework, child care etc. [\[back\]](#)

249. Regulation made by a local authority in consultation with central government. [\[back\]](#)

## 4.1 Strategic Water Management

*Our regionally important network of water resources requires intensive management to meet the duties of legislation and the rising challenges of climate change<sup>[250]</sup>.*

Action is required to manage Epping Forest's valuable wetlands<sup>[251]</sup> and water courses, which provide vital services including wildlife habitats, recreation<sup>[252]</sup>, and drought and flood alleviation.

## Overview

There are over 100 lakes and ponds, and 10 bogs, in Epping Forest, which are fed by and flow into a number of streams and rivers. Some of the rivers have a large catchment area, or carry a considerable volume of water, and while some of the ponds are small gravel workings, others are large areas of open water. The ditch network across the Forest is also extensive and has developed over many years largely to drain areas of Forest such as trails, with knock-on effects further downstream and impacts on the surrounding habitats.

Many of these lakes and ponds are man-made. Some recent and some ephemeral, they nonetheless make up a network of regional importance, supporting a wide range of wildlife, creating a valuable recreational resource for visitors (especially anglers), and providing increasingly important 'ecosystem services', such as drought resilience and flood alleviation, which may help to mitigate the impacts of climate change. Some of the water bodies are of historic importance too, such as the lake cascade which runs through Wanstead Park.

Water management across the Forest is a complex area of responsibility governed by a growing body of legislation, which requires careful collaboration, planning and implementation with a range of partners. By taking an integrated, systematic approach, we aim to safeguard the health of the Forest's most important water courses in the face of increasing longer term pressures, mid-term threats, and current funding constraints.

## Major issues and challenges

Today, the Forest's water resources are affected by significant challenges, including:

- ▶ The knock-on effects of road and railway construction in the last 100 years, which have profoundly restricted the flow of groundwater to many ponds and lakes in the southern area of the Forest.
- ▶ Climate change, which affects rainfall and water levels and can produce extreme weather events, requiring new vigilance in water management as well as compliance with related legislation.
- ▶ Managing water flow across the Forest to restore and enhance habitats whilst reducing the impacts of extreme rainfall events downstream and in the surrounding area
- ▶ The need to maintain bodies of water which are designated as 'raised dam reservoirs<sup>[253]</sup>' to specific standards, as set out in the Reservoirs Act 1975, and the Flood and Water Management Act 2010.
- ▶ A duty to meet the requirements of an increasing range of new legislation.
- ▶ Colonisation of bank-sides and water courses by invasive animal and plant species, which threaten native species<sup>[254]</sup>.
- ▶ The need to monitor and maintain fish populations and sustain the variety of native and rare species<sup>[255]</sup>, such as the scarce Crucian Carp.

## What are we doing to address these issues?

Water management across the Forest is an increasingly demanding task, requiring considerable planning and resource. Current water management measures include:

- ▶ Working with the Environment Agency to implement the Water Framework Directive which seeks to improve the quality of water bodies and water courses through River Basin Management Plans.
- ▶ Managing controlled pumping of groundwater to maintain water levels in various ponds and lakes across the Forest under the terms of abstraction licences agreed with the Environment Agency, while working to reduce water loss through leakage.

- ▶ Meeting responsibilities as Riparian<sup>[256]</sup> owners to manage flow in water courses and maintain banksides. Most of the Forest's water courses including Loughton Brook and the River Ching are managed as 'main rivers' in partnership with the Environment Agency.
- ▶ Supporting Local Flood Management Schemes, including the hosting of:
  - ▶ Cripsey Brook Flood Storage Reservoir completed in 1998 on Forest as part of the Thornwood Village Flood Alleviation Scheme.
  - ▶ Staples Road Flood Storage Reservoir on Forest Land as part of the Loughton Brook Flood Alleviation Scheme.
- ▶ Maintaining statutory<sup>[257]</sup> responsibility for 5 Large Raised Reservoirs - Heronry Pond; Perch Pond and Ornamental Water at Wanstead Park; Highams Park Lake and Connaught Water, as well as a number of dammed water bodies including Baldwins Pond, Wake Valley Pond, Deer Sanctuary Pond and the Shoulder of Mutton Pond
- ▶ Guiding and developing the work of the volunteer Lakes and Ponds Task Force, which undertakes clearance, construction, maintenance and planting regimes.
- ▶ Managing aquatic vegetation to remove alien plants and maintain open fish swims - while ensuring that the banks of rivers and ponds sustain a rich diversity of wildlife.
- ▶ Monitoring and maintaining fish populations to support angling and manage a variety of native and scarce species<sup>[258]</sup>.

250. Any change in climate over time, whether due to natural variability or as a result of indirect human activity. [\[back\]](#)

251. Transitional areas between wet and dry environments; wetlands range from permanently or intermittently wet land to shallow water and water margins. The term can include marshes, swamps, bogs, some shallow waters and the intertidal zones. When applied to surface waters, it is generally restricted to areas shallow enough to allow the growth of rooted plants. [\[back\]](#)

252. Any pursuit engaged upon during leisure time, other than pursuits to which people are normally highly committed i.e. shopping, housework, child care etc. [\[back\]](#)

253. A natural or artificial lake for the storage of water for industrial and domestic purposes and for the regulation of inland waterways. [\[back\]](#)

254. Species that have arrived and inhabited an area naturally, without any deliberate assistance by humans. For the UK native is taken to mean those species that were present after the last post-glacial recolonisation and before historic times. [\[back\]](#)

255. Species which have a restricted world range and/or that occur naturally in relatively low numbers. [\[back\]](#)

256. Of or relating to, or located on, the banks of a stream or river. [\[back\]](#)

257. Denotes something that is defined in legislation. [\[back\]](#)

258. Organisms are named and classified by a system of taxonomy according to similarities in structure and origin. Species are the taxonomic group whose members can interbreed. [\[back\]](#)

## 4.2 Drainage assessment and repair

*Much of the Forest's network of drains, culverts and ditches were created to improve habitats for tree planting, access and recreational use. Others were built to safely pass on drainage water and safeguard against flooding. Recent weather patterns, possibly linked to climate change<sup>[259]</sup>, are placing an additional burden on drainage systems.*

*Action is required to assess the state of Epping Forest's drainage systems, and provide ongoing maintenance, adaptation and repair.*

### Overview

Epping Forest has an extensive network of drains, ditches and culverts (underground channels) which help to control the flow of water around streams, rivers, ponds and bogs as well as roads and other hard surfaces.

As climate change brings more extreme weather events and heavier downpours, ensuring that drainage is effective and well maintained will be an important priority, which could help to avoid potentially significant future costs and disruption.

Drainage can also be adversely affected by new building and construction, erosion, tree growth in water channels, and some recreational activities (such as horse riding or cycling). Therefore, maintaining good drainage systems requires ongoing planning, inspection and maintenance.

However, the benefits of drainage need to be carefully balanced against the ecological benefits of wetlands<sup>[260]</sup> and other aquatic habitats.

### Major issues and challenges

To date, much of our work on drainage has been reactive, working to resolve problems as and when they arise, and repairing and maintaining drains and culverts as we conduct other works, such as road resurfacing.

In the future, we aim to take a more proactive approach. This will involve mapping and assessing major drainage systems across the Forest, clearing debris and blockages, prioritising works and developing an ongoing action plan that is ecologically sensitive.

Many of the Forest's larger drainage systems were installed in Victorian times. While some will require upgrading or repair, others have drained moist and wet areas which could actually help to provide valuable habitats if drainage was reduced. Other drains, ditches, and culverts are hidden, blocked by significant tree growth, or are difficult to access.

Mapping, inspecting and assessing the need for drainage construction or maintenance is a significant task, and works are governed by a range of relevant and sometimes complex legislation such as the Land Drainage Act 1976, the Land Drainage Act 1991 (and associated byelaws<sup>[261]</sup>), and the Public Health Act 1936. Decision-making about drainage works is also influenced by factors including habitat creation, climate change, water management priorities, recreational activity, and of course, resource constraints and other competing priorities.

### What are we doing to address these issues?

To maintain Epping Forest's drainage systems, we currently:

- ▶ Repair and maintain drains, ditches and culverts in response to problems as they arise, or alongside other works such as repairs to roads or surfaced rides
- ▶ Meet our duties under relevant legislation
- ▶ Clearing ditches and culverts to prevent flood risks and health hazards
- ▶ Maintain in partnership two Flood Alleviation Schemes on Forest Land at Staples Pond and Thornwood

259. Any change in climate over time, whether due to natural variability or as a result of indirect human activity. [\[back\]](#)

260. Transitional areas between wet and dry environments; wetlands range from permanently or intermittently wet land to shallow water and water margins. The term can include marshes, swamps, bogs, some shallow waters and the intertidal zones. When applied to surface waters, it is generally restricted to areas shallow enough to allow the growth of rooted plants. [\[back\]](#)

261. Regulation made by a local authority in consultation with central government. [\[back\]](#)

## 4.3 Litter

***Litter is a growing problem in the Forest, requiring considerable awareness, effort and resources.***

*Action is needed to meet increasing challenges associated with litter, fly-tipping and dog mess across the Forest.*

## Overview

Litter is a growing problem across the UK. Today, five times the amount of litter is dropped than in the 1960s, with a 20% increase in fast food related rubbish in the last year alone. In 2013-14, local authorities in England collected 30 million tonnes at a cost of over £1 billion - and that figure doesn't include other landowners or highway authorities.

These statistics are reflected in the problem of littering in Epping Forest. The Forest's Conservators<sup>[262]</sup> employ three full-time and ten part-time staff solely to deal with litter and fly-tipping, as well as relying on invaluable help from volunteers and responsible visitors to clear up litter and dog mess. Together, we collect and dispose of over 300 tonnes of litter and fly tips each year, at an annual cost of nearly £300,000.

Littering is regularly cited by locals and visitors as a major concern. 7% of respondents to our 2014 Visitor Survey rated the cleanliness of the Forest as 'poor' and another 4% made further comments about litter in their feedback. However, it's not an easy issue to tackle. Social factors, apparent privacy, and simple lack of thought all contribute to this growing problem.

Litter, is unsightly, unhygienic and polluting, and can pose a threat to wildlife, water courses and sensitive habitats. Although a wide range of legislation to control litter and other waste is in place, tackling the problem requires significant time and resources, strong collaboration with neighbouring local authorities, and, crucially, the engagement and vigilance of all of the Forest's visitors.

## Major issues and challenges

The amount of litter dropped in the UK has risen by 500% since the 1960s, and this increase has been mirrored at Epping Forest.

Today, staff and volunteers clear litter from 55 car parks each week, and empty 62 bins at least twice weekly. But increasing the number of available bins is not always straightforward; some visitors find them intrusive, and their contents can attract (and sometimes harm) wildlife.

Under the Environmental Protection Act 1990, a person who drops, throws, deposits or leaves anything that causes defacement in a public place is committing an offence. Despite this, and the efforts of Epping Forest's staff, volunteers and responsible visitors, the problem continues to grow, and will remain an important priority for the Forest's Conservators in the years ahead.

## What are we doing to address these issues?

To tackle litter, we currently:

- ▶ Clear car parks each week, and empty litter bins at least twice a week
- ▶ Take part in waste management strategy partnerships and relevant meetings with external partners
- ▶ Support the community partners who work to clear Forest litter from their local areas
- ▶ Actively recruit volunteer litter pickers to assist with litter collection
- ▶ Have a webpage dedicated to 'Keeping the Forest Tidy' and run a social media campaign using the hashtag #KeepTheForestTidy to raise awareness of the issue in Epping Forest
- ▶ Meet our obligations under relevant legislation, including the Control of Pollution (Amendment) Act 1989, the Environmental Protection Act 1990, the Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act 2005, the Hazardous Waste (England and Wales) Regulations 2005, the Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment (Amendment) Regulations 2009, and the Waste (England and Wales) Regulations 2011
- ▶ Are considering proposals to change the legislation governing Epping Forest. The City of London would like to be a 'litter authority', which would give us the power to issue Fixed Penalty Notices<sup>[263]</sup> for littering offences. The proposals also seek to bring the maximum fines under the byelaws<sup>[264]</sup> into line with the 'standard scale' which applies to equivalent byelaws elsewhere.

262. The Conservators are the Mayor, Aldermen and Members of the City of London Corporation assembled in Common Council. The Conservators are charged with the responsibility of safeguarding the Forest under the Epping Forest Act 1878. The City of London is the organisation that owns Epping Forest. The authority of the Conservators is vested in the City of London's Epping Forest and Commons Committee. [\[back\]](#)

263. A notice requiring the recipient to pay a fixed amount of money to the issuing authority for minor offences, including breaches of byelaws and Dog Control Orders. A fixed penalty notice is not a fine and does not result in a criminal conviction. The recipient can opt for the matter to be dealt with in court instead. [\[back\]](#)

264. Regulation made by a local authority in consultation with central government. [\[back\]](#)

#### 4.4 Fly-tipping

***Fly-tipping is an increasing challenge in Epping Forest that damages our unique environment that, together with litter disposal, costs over £250,000 a year. This is a drain on limited resources.***

*Action is needed to resolve the growing problems associated with fly-tipping, litter and dog mess across the Forest.*

##### Overview

Fly-tipping across the country has increased by around 20% in the last year alone. The Forest's proximity to London, and its network of secluded car parks and quiet lanes, make it a prominent target for illegal fly-tippers, especially since the introduction of the Landfill Tax in 1996 and the ever rising cost of using landfill.

The three full-time and ten part-time staff employed to deal with litter and fly-tipping in Epping Forest work to promptly deal with reports of fly-tips received from staff, volunteers and the public by phone, email or social media. In the past 12 months there have been over 557 fly-tips left in the Forest - averaging over 10 a week. Collection and dispose of fly tips and litter each year costs nearly £300,000.

Fly-tipping, litter and dog mess are unsightly, unhygienic and polluting, and can pose a threat to the flora and fauna of the Forest as well as to visitors.

##### Major issues and challenges

Fly-tipping in the Forest has increased by around 50% since 2007, and efforts to control fly-tipping in neighbouring areas can sometimes displace the problem into the Forest.

Disposal of abandoned cars or hazardous waste from fly-tipping can bring particular challenges, and the legal requirement to recycle white goods and other types of waste requires additional planning and resources.

Fly-tipping of controlled waste is a serious criminal offence which carries a fine of up to £50,000. Despite this, and the efforts of Epping Forest's staff, volunteers and responsible visitors, the problem continues to grow, and will remain a significant challenge for the Forest's Conservators <sup>[265]</sup> in the years ahead.

The Forest covers a large area; with limited staff and resources, we cannot patrol all fly-tip hotspots all of the time and rely on staff members, volunteers and responsible visitors to report any incidents they encounter.

Often, it is clear we have the right to dispose of objects left in the Forest, for instance in the case of general litter. However, in some cases, such as camping equipment or unlicensed signage, the legal position is less clear cut. **What are we doing to address these issues?**

To tackle fly-tipping, we currently:

- ▶ Take part in waste management strategy partnerships and relevant meetings with external partners
- ▶ Respond as promptly as possible to incidents of fly-tipping, including dealing with associated hazardous waste, and fulfil our legal duties for disposal and recycling

- ▶ Offer a £500 reward for information leading to the successful prosecution of any fly-tippers in the Forest
- ▶ Meet our obligations under relevant legislation, including the Control of Pollution (Amendment) Act 1989, the Environmental Protection Act 1990, the Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act 2005, the Hazardous Waste (England and Wales) Regulations 2005, the Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment (Amendment) Regulations 2009, and the Waste (England and Wales) Regulations 2011
- ▶ Are considering legislative changes that would see the City of London granted express powers to remove objects left in the Forest in circumstances where they appear to be abandoned, or which are not collected within a reasonable period.

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#### 4.5 Administering and managing licences

***Action is needed to ensure that short and long-term licences are administered in an efficient and profitable way to help provide the resources to care for the Forest***

*We need to ensure that the Forest provides an efficient licensing service for events, commercial or professional activities, and for longer term concessions, maximising potential income to support the management of the Forest while remaining alert to associated pressures and constraints.*

##### Overview

As the largest green space close to London, Epping Forest attracts requests for licences to undertake a wide range of activities. The Forest's Conservators<sup>[266]</sup> grant licences for short-term events (such as photography and filming or sponsored charity walks and cycles), for on-going leisure activities (such as horse riding or exercise groups) and for professional activities (such as team-building events or scientific research).

The Conservators also grant longer term licences for facilities such as mobile or static refreshment outlets, or boating on Forest ponds, as well as for prolonged access for repair and maintenance with those properties that might wish to manage vegetation on Forest land adjoining their property.

While a central part of the Epping Forest offer is public access and enjoyment, we feel that where licensed activity is commercial, it is reasonable for operators to share the benefits of their activity with the Forest to help secure its future. We would like to formalise this process more definitively to ensure that licensed activities do not take place to the detriment of the Forest and to generate income for the management of the Forest in line with its status as a charitable trust.

Short-term events also provide a great opportunity for new visitors to access and enjoy the Forest, and long-term concessions provide valuable amenities. Events, filming and research can also raise the profile of the Forest and help fulfil our commitment to outreach and to providing a rich and enjoyable visitor experience.

##### Major issues and challenges

Administering licensing requests can take considerable time and resources, and our role in managing events can involve special arrangements for health and safety, insurance, litter and recycling, signage and refreshments.

Some events can put pressure on the landscape, or can be disruptive to other Forest visitors. Most licensed events have a requirement for car parking, which can be problematic where space is limited.

Many of our longer term licences to provide facilities, such as refreshment outlets, are limited to three years at a time by legislation. This limitation provides uncertainty for the providers and makes it difficult to attract the long-term investment

needed to ensure high quality facilities.

### What are we doing to address these issues?

To ensure appropriate licensing arrangements for events, activities and concessions, we currently:

- ▶ Reactively respond to licensing requests, taking into account the impact on the Forest
- ▶ Ensure that we abide by relevant regulations, including the use and maintenance of an Event Safety Guide
- ▶ Charge for licences in line with a variable cost structure
- ▶ Are considering proposed changes to the legislation governing Epping Forest that would remove or extend the three year limitation on licences for facilities, which would bring Epping Forest in line with normal practice at other parks and open spaces.

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## 4.6 Ensuring effective emergency planning and response

*For information - no priority or proposal options*

### ***Developing and delivering a robust response to protect people, wildlife and habitats in the event of emergency.***

*We need to ensure that our emergency plan remains fully operational and up-to-date, and that all staff, volunteers and external partners are ready to swing into action if an emergency occurs.*

#### **Overview**

Epping Forest has a duty to protect staff, the public, and indeed its valuable plants and wildlife, in the event of emergency or major disruption. Our emergency plan covers events such as fires, floods, gas leaks, utility failures, civil unrest, significant fly-tipping or chemical spillage, pandemics, serious injury or fatality, and missing persons.

Our duties are laid out under a range of legislation including relevant local authority emergency plans, the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 and the Local Authorities Flood and Water Management Act 2010.

Our current emergency plan is based on clear risk assessment for likely emergency. It sets out a detailed framework and action plan for dealing with emergencies, assigning clear roles and responsibilities for specific types of incident, and acts as a 'live' management tool for emergency response.

#### **Major issues and challenges**

While actual emergencies are mercifully rare, Epping Forest is vulnerable to particular kinds of incident including floods, forest fires, falling trees, spillage from vehicles, injuries and falls, and vandalism. Specific risk assessments must also be undertaken for particular types of incident, such as forest fires.

The emergency plan must be continually updated in line with new legislation and emerging threats, and successful delivery relies on close partnership and collaboration with emergency services, local authorities and their emergency planning teams, relevant contractors and suppliers, and with staff and volunteers.

Ensuring that procedures are in place to cover all ten square miles of the Forest, some of which is rugged or difficult to access, is a challenging task, and some aspects of the emergency plan require staff to be resident within the Forest.



Developing and delivering a successful emergency plan for a wide range of eventualities calls for particular competencies and skills, and can involve significant time, effort and resources. Ensuring that staff and volunteers have the requisite training, rehearsal and support to implement our emergency plan will remain an important priority in the years ahead.

### What are we doing to address these issues?

To deliver effective emergency planning and response, we currently:

- ▶ Maintain a comprehensive, live emergency plan (incident management plan)
- ▶ Ensure that all staff, contractors and volunteers are fully informed of relevant emergency plans and procedures
- ▶ Undertake emergency response as required, using a clear command structure and prescribed protocols among suitably qualified and trained tiers of staff and volunteers
- ▶ Work closely with appropriate partners if an emergency situation escalates to particular levels

### In the future, we plan to:

- ▶ Review and update risk assessments
- ▶ Review and update policies and procedures which relate to the emergency plan, such as lone working and succession<sup>[267]</sup> arrangements
- ▶ Using highways and trails as the basis for designated 'fire breaks' designed to arrest the progress of Forest fires
- ▶ Agree Flood Emergency Plans with local authorities for all Large Raised Reservoirs<sup>[268]</sup> designated under the Flood and Water Management Act 2010.

267. A predictable and directional change in biological communities which commences in an area free of vegetation and develops eventually into a climax community. [\[back\]](#)

268. A natural or artificial lake for the storage of water for industrial and domestic purposes and for the regulation of inland waterways. [\[back\]](#)

## 4.7 Managing Public Sex Environments

### *Striking the right balance when dealing with sexual activity within the Forest*

*We need to strike a balance in dealing with this complex and sometimes emotive issue, recognising that some sexual activities are not illegal - but can cause alarm or distress to Forest visitors.*

#### Overview

W. Somerset Maugham's first novel 'Liza of Lambeth' (1897) (in which Liza enjoys a dalliance on Chingford Plain) gives a sense of Epping Forest's long tradition as a place of sexual adventure for some visitors.

Today, the Forest remains a popular area for casual sexual encounters, with a number of locations (known as Public Sex Environments) increasingly promoted through the internet as sites for sexual activity. While this is not illegal, an awareness that this is happening can cause many visitors distress, particularly if approached by participants.

#### Major issues and challenges

There is no law specifically prohibiting the seeking of potential sexual partners in public places. Sexual activity in public toilets and 'flashing' (public exposure of genitals with the intention to cause alarm or distress) is a crime, but under the Sexual Offences Act 2003, sex in public places is legal, unless it is witnessed or there is a reasonable chance that at least two

members of the public might see what's happening. However, for many Forest visitors such activities are considered to be an inappropriate use of the Forest, which can create alarm or distress, or result in 'no-go' areas.

The Essex and Metropolitan Police Authorities have adopted guidance from the Association of Chief Police Officers with regard to the management of Public Sex Environments. As the Epping Forest Acts 1878<sup>[269]</sup> and 1880 apply the authority of these police forces to Epping Forest, the Conservators<sup>[270]</sup> have also confirmed the guidance as the basis for addressing the issue within the Forest.

This outlines an approach to policing that seeks to balance the rights of the general public with those of people engaging in consensual sexual activity. The guidance also highlights the fact that people seeking sex in public places can themselves become victims of crime.

The guidance recommends a staged approach to policing, progressing from monitoring complaints, information and dissuasion to a range of prevention measures, police patrols and ultimately, enforcement. The Committee agreed to use this guidance as the basis for its own approach.

### What are we doing to address these issues?

In response to the use of locations across the Forest as Public Sex Environments, we currently:

- ▶ Use guidance from the Essex and Metropolitan Police Authorities and the Association of Chief Police Officers (see above) to inform a balanced approach to managing this issue
- ▶ Work with local police forces to share information and to inform our management and monitoring strategy for Public Sex Environments
- ▶ Jointly patrol Public Sex Environments with the police and observers from the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) community
- ▶ Work with the Terence Higgins Trust and other groups to deliver outreach work with Forest user groups in these areas

269. The Act of Parliament passed in 1878 to protect and conserve Epping Forest as an open space unenclosed and unbuilt upon for the recreation and enjoyment of the public. [\[back\]](#)

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## 5. Heritage

In this theme, consultees will learn about the importance we place on preserving the historic environment of Epping Forest and the parks, gardens, monuments and buildings within it. English Heritage defines the historic environment as everything around us resulting from the "interaction between people and places through time, including all surviving remains of past human activity, whether visible or buried, and deliberately planted or managed flora". This means that the whole landscape of the Forest can be considered of historical significance and we are therefore careful that our activities respect the heritage of the Forest.

This theme considers how we manage the two Grade II\* registered parks within our boundaries and other planted historic landscapes. We also examine the issues around the preservation of our scheduled ancient monuments<sup>[271]</sup>, such as Loughton Camp and Ambresbury Banks. This section also explores the issue of protecting our historic buildings such as Queen Elizabeth Hunting Lodge and The Temple at Wanstead Park and the management and preservation of our archives and social history. A key issue is the balance we strike between ecology and conservation.

The **management issues** identified within this theme are:

- ▶ [Preserving the historic environment](#)
- ▶ [Preserving parks and gardens of special historic interest<sup>\[272\]</sup>](#)
- ▶ [Preserving scheduled ancient monuments](#)
- ▶ [Managing archives, museum collections and social history](#)
- ▶ [Maintaining Epping Forest's buildings - for information](#)

271. A structure defined by Historic England for protection under the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979. [\[back\]](#)

272. Parks and Gardens containing historic features dating from 1939 or earlier and registered by Historic England in three grades as with historic buildings. [\[back\]](#)

## 5.1 Preserving the historic environment

### *Heritage values should also be considered in the management of Epping Forest*

*A rich and varied historic environment, Epping Forest has ancient and modern sites to preserve, maintain and manage.*

#### Overview

Preserving Epping Forest's heritage has always been one of the priorities of the City of London Conservators. The 1878 Epping Forest Act<sup>[273]</sup> requires the Conservators<sup>[274]</sup> to not only preserve the "natural aspect<sup>[275]</sup>" of the Forest, but also to "preserve and protect the ancient earthworks called Ambresbury Banks and all other ancient remains, and the Purlieu Bank, and such other Forest marks and boundaries, if any, as still exist in the Forest..."

Epping Forest is a rich and diverse historic environment, with a range of heritage landscapes, buildings and monuments. These vary from scheduled monuments and listed buildings<sup>[276]</sup> to earthworks that have no national designation and the landscape itself, which is the result of human activity over the centuries. The "historic environment" is defined by English Heritage as: "all aspects of the environment resulting from the interaction between people and places through time, including all surviving physical remains of past human activity, whether visible or buried, and deliberately planted or managed flora."

There are several individuals, local groups and societies with an interest in the historic environment, many of whom are actively undertaking research and survey work.

Historic and archaeological sites in Epping Forest include:

- ▶ Purlieu Bank and other boundaries and boundary markers
  - ▶ Purlieu banks were used as borders to mark the part of the Forest where the King had exclusive hunting rights
- ▶ The Pillow Mounds at High Beach, constructed as artificial rabbit warrens before rabbits became so widespread in the UK
- ▶ Extensive, uncatalogued ditches and woodbanks spread across Epping Forest
- ▶ 'Saddles and trough' remains of veteran tree<sup>[277]</sup> plates that are often associated with settlement by early man
- ▶ Vestiges of the First and Second World Wars, including defensive structures such as anti-tank ditches and tethers for barrage balloons
- ▶ The Lawrence of Arabia hut

*TE Lawrence, the famous soldier, writer and scholar, owned 18 acres at the top of Pole Hill. The hut he built there with his friend Vyvyan Richards has since been moved and is now located in the grounds of Epping Forest's administrative offices to protect it from vandalism.*

- ▶ Plough ridges on Chingford Plain and Whitehall Plain, from farming in the 19th century
- ▶ Six Heritage Landscapes , including Highams Park Lake, Eagle Pond at the former Wanstead Infant Orphan Asylum (now Snaresbrook Crown Court), Knighton Wood, Birch Hall Park, Wanstead Park and Copped Hall Park. The two latter landscapes are Grade II\* listed Parks and Gardens
- ▶ Two Scheduled Ancient Monuments : Loughton Camp and Ambresbury Banks
- ▶ Chingford and Woodford golf courses, which are early examples of golf course design and were once more extensive
- ▶ Green lanes and ancient tracks
- ▶ Water bodies, particularly Hollow Pond and Connaught Water, as all the lakes and ponds in Epping Forest are manmade
- ▶ Significant views and vantage points (such as the sight lines along the Meridian from Pole Hill linking the obelisk to Greenwich)

### Major issues and challenges

Emphasis on natural conservation in the previous management plans has resulted in less focus on managing the Forest for its historic value. In many cases, not enough is known about historic and archaeological sites, so more research and survey is needed. The historic environment of Epping Forest is of local, regional and in some cases national and international significance. Specific projects focused on certain historic features of the Forest may also be eligible for external funding.

Given the size of Epping Forest, further assessment will be expensive. However, recent work by Historic England at Wanstead Park has validated LIDAR (Light Detection and Ranging)<sup>[278]</sup> remote sensing technology as a means of providing topographical information to an accuracy of 50mm.

Historic sites and the associated buried archaeology are under threat from erosion, tree roots, undergrowth, vandalism and obscurity. We therefore need to consider improved management and maintenance to ensure they are protected and conserved, and interpretation is improved where appropriate.

### What are we doing to address these issues?

Work is ongoing to include all historic and archaeological sites in a heritage register. We are commissioning research and conservation management plans for selected heritage features and there is progress to ensure cyclical maintenance of significant sites.

273. The Act of Parliament passed in 1878 to protect and conserve Epping Forest as an open space unenclosed and unbuilt upon for the recreation and enjoyment of the public. [\[back\]](#)

274. The Conservators are the Mayor, Aldermen and Members of the City of London Corporation assembled in Common Council. The Conservators are charged with the responsibility of safeguarding the Forest under the Epping Forest Act 1878. The City of London is the organisation that owns Epping Forest. The authority of the Conservators is vested in the City of London's Epping Forest and Commons Committee. [\[back\]](#)

275. No official definition of this term exists. A precursor to 'natural beauty', it was coined by Robert Hunter, who drafted the Epping Forest Act with the City of London's solicitor, Sir Thomas James Nelson. However, there is no definition of the 'natural aspect' within the Act and the papers and notes Hunter compiled have since been lost. While it is clear it relates principally to the Forest's natural landscape, the same section of the Act also makes reference to 'earthworks', 'woodbanks' and 'pollards', which are manmade features of Forest. [\[back\]](#)

276. A building of architectural or historical importance, graded according to its merit (I, II\*, II) and subject to special controls. [\[back\]](#)

277. Tree which by virtue of its great age, size or condition, is of exceptional value whether in cultural terms, for its landscape contribution or for the benefit of wildlife. A veteran tree has features which increase its value as habitat for wildlife (dead wood, cavities etc.) irrespective of its chronological age. [\[back\]](#)

278. A remote sensing method that uses light in the form of a pulsed laser to measure variable distances to the ground. The resulting information can be used to produce 3 dimensional maps. [\[back\]](#)

## 5.2 Preserving parks and gardens of special historic interest

*Imprinted in the landscape of Epping Forest are the remnants of historic parks and gardens, purchased by the Conservators<sup>[279]</sup> between 1880 and 1995*

*Forest land has seen a number of uses over the years and at times parts of the Forest have been separated to form landscaped parks or gardens. Some have returned to Forest, but the subtly altered land continues to tell its unique story.*

### Overview

The historic environment of Epping Forest tells the tale of all who have lived, hunted and farmed there for hundreds of years. Some of these stories can be discovered in the previously designed landscapes and old gardens that make up part of the Forest.

Two of the parks and gardens that are now part of the Forest are included in Historic England's national register as Grade II\* Registered Parks and Gardens:

### Wanstead Park

70% of the Grade II\* Registered Park and Garden is Epping Forest land. In its long history, it has been the deer park of Wanstead Manor, a grand Regency garden and a Repton<sup>[280]</sup> landscape. Although the Palladian manor is long gone, there remain two 18th century buildings, the Temple and the Grotto, and over 150 garden features. The park receives 217,000 visits a year.

### Copped Hall

Purchased by the Conservators between 1992 and 1995, this historic parkland straddles Forest and Buffer Land<sup>[281]</sup>. Part of the area falls within the Warren Plantation, a 'pleasure ground' which was planted later than the parkland. You can find traces of historic parkland planting, such as the Rhododendrons along the driveway.

Other historic parks and gardens in the Forest include:

### Knighton Wood

The land at Knighton Wood was enclosed for private ownership during the 1500s. The last owner was Edward North Buxton, who created a picturesque woodland garden. The generosity of the Buxton estate, combined with local subscriptions, saw the land returned to the Forest in 1930. This history is demonstrated by the more exotic plants and trees found in the area.

### Highams Park

Locally listed, Highams Park is part of an 18th-century designed landscape by Repton on the grounds of Highams House (now Woodford County High School). The area is split between owners, and the part that was acquired by public subscription in 1890 for Epping Forest is dominated by Highams Park Lake. Repton formed the lake by damming the River Ching and it is now a statutory<sup>[282]</sup> notified Category A Large Raised Reservoir<sup>[283]</sup>. Apart from the lake, many aspects of the designed landscape have been largely lost due to residential development<sup>[284]</sup> and the growth of secondary woodland<sup>[285]</sup>.

### Pauls' Nursery

The land of this former nursery was returned to the Forest in 1921, but you can still find several specimen trees, horticultural plants, and a potting shed associated with the nursery.

## Major issues and challenges

### Wanstead Park

- ▶ The condition of the Park has been identified as deteriorating by Historic England and it is now on their 'Heritage at Risk' Register.
- ▶ The divided land ownership, and land uses, of the registered park between 4 organisations - the City of London, Wanstead Sports Grounds Association, the Church of England and the London Borough of Redbridge (currently leased) - has contributed to the loss of the overall parkland design.

### Copped Hall

- ▶ The part that overlaps with the Warren Plantation is the most altered from the original
- ▶ The Rhododendrons are over-mature and will eventually die off

### Knighton Woods

- ▶ Many of the trees planted by Buxton are coming to the end of their lives while the snowdrop and daffodil plantings have been shaded out or dug up by early visitors.
- ▶ The Rhododendrons are over-mature and are being shaded out by the trees
- ▶ The garden history is not communicated to the public

### Highams Park

- ▶ The original landscape is fragmented between different owners (City of London, London Borough of Waltham Forest and Woodford County High School), which has contributed to an overall loss of design and makes it difficult for visitors to appreciate the historic value of the site

### Pauls' Nursery

- ▶ The Pauls' Nursery site is at a crossroads which could see the site either fully returned to Forest character or the remaining plantings reinvigorated to maintain the site's unique character

Undefined boundary and features make it difficult for visitors to appreciate the site

Many of the landscapes contain Rhododendrons, which act as potential host plants for Phytophthora<sup>[286]</sup> and could pose a future threat to Epping Forest.

### What are we doing to address these issues?

We are currently working on conservation management plans for most of the sites, which will help us make decisions about the future preservation of them. For example:

- ▶ An updated management plan for Knighton Woods will help us decide whether to slow the loss of the historic garden and let it disappear more gradually, or let the woodland reversion occur at a natural pace. We have similar decisions to make about Pauls' Nursery.
- ▶ A Conservation Statement for Wanstead Park was completed in 2011. Further studies into heritage aspects of the site have taken place. These, along with information from a public engagement exercise, are being used to inform the development of a holistic, long-term plan for the whole parkland.

We are also using specialist consultants to identify and catalogue unusual tree, plant and shrub<sup>[287]</sup> plantings, especially the Rhododendron associated with many of these sites, to help assess the significance of remaining garden features.

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280. Humphry Repton (1752-1818) was the leading English landscape designer of the late 18th/early 19th centuries. He accepted over 400 commissions in his thirty year career and is responsible for the gardens at many of England's historic country houses including Hylands House, Longleat House, Woburn Abbey and, of course, Wanstead and Higham's Park in Epping Forest. [\[back\]](#)

281. 735 hectares (1816 acres) of land owned and managed by the City of London around the perimeter of the Forest to preserve the landscape setting and context of the Forest. Buffer land is currently exempt from many of the requirements of the legislation governing the management of the Forest, but is also not protected in the same way. [\[back\]](#)

282. Denotes something that is defined in legislation. [\[back\]](#)

283. A natural or artificial lake for the storage of water for industrial and domestic purposes and for the regulation of inland waterways. [\[back\]](#)

284. The carrying out of building, engineering, mining or other operations in, on, over or under land, or the making of any material change in the use of any buildings or land. [\[back\]](#)

285. Woodland that has grown up on land that was without tree cover in the past. [\[back\]](#)

286. Phytophthora are a large group of pathogens that cause diseases in plants, including many species of tree. The name is derived from Greek and literally means 'plant destroyer' from phyto (plant) and phthora (destroyer). [\[back\]](#)

287. A low growing perennial plant with a persistent woody stem and low branching habit. [\[back\]](#)

### 5.3 Preserving scheduled ancient monuments

#### *Balancing the conservation of archaeology and ecology when managing ancient earthworks*

*There are two Scheduled Ancient Monuments<sup>[288]</sup> within Epping Forest, both Iron Age camps. As we work to preserve these sites, it is essential we strike a balance between public access, heritage conservation and habitat management.*

#### Overview

The 1878 Epping Forest Act<sup>[289]</sup> instructs the Conservators<sup>[290]</sup> to "at all times as far as possible preserve ... the ancient earthworks called Ambresbury Banks and all other ancient remains".

The Iron Age hill forts of Ambresbury Banks and Loughton Camp have also been designated as Scheduled Ancient Monuments (SAMs). This means they are statutorily protected under the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979.

#### Ambresbury Banks

Banks as high as two metres encircle an area of about 11 acres, which is now covered in woodland. The discovery of pottery dates the camp to about 700BC. Historic England have assessed the condition of the monument and classed it as being at 'low risk' of deterioration.

#### Loughton Camp

Situated north-west of the town of Loughton and covering an area of 10 acres, these earthworks date back to about 500BC. The camp sits on high ground. It is currently described by Historic England as being in 'a medium-declining condition'.

#### Major issues and challenges

- ▶ The buried archaeology of both hill forts is vulnerable to damage by root growth and uprooting trees. There is some erosion along the top of the ramparts, although cycling and horse riding are prohibited on the camps under the Epping Forest byelaws<sup>[291]</sup>.
- ▶ Interpretation signage needs improvement to help visitors understand why the sites are important and how they can help to look after them.
- ▶ The hill forts have become habitats of high biodiversity<sup>[292]</sup> value, the management of which may conflict with the protection of heritage features

- ▶ There are many veteran pollards<sup>[293]</sup> on both hill forts and the risk of these trees falling, causing damage to the monument, increases with time.
- ▶ Each year, the area around Loughton Camp receives 63,000 visits and the area around Ambresbury Banks has 74,500.
- ▶ Historic England have assessed the condition of the monuments and classed them as being at 'low and medium risk' of deterioration. If Historic England decides the hill forts are not being well protected, there is a danger they will be published on the At Risk Register. Active management is required to prevent further decline of the archaeological remains.

### What are we doing to address these issues?

Both hill forts now have draft conservation management plans and the Conservators will be working with Historic England on the most appropriate methods for managing these sites. In addition, Natural England is providing expert guidance to make sure appropriate consideration is given to the habitats on these features. A recent survey on the hill forts, designed to gauge what visitors value about the sites, will also be used to inform this process.

Some restrictions currently apply to visitors undertaking activities on these sites, such as cycling and horse-riding, that may contribute to damage of Scheduled Ancient Monuments.

288. A structure defined by Historic England for protection under the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979. [\[back\]](#)

289. The Act of Parliament passed in 1878 to protect and conserve Epping Forest as an open space unenclosed and unbuilt upon for the recreation and enjoyment of the public. [\[back\]](#)

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291. Regulation made by a local authority in consultation with central government. [\[back\]](#)

292. The term given to the variety of life and the natural process of which living things are a part. The term includes living organisms, the genetic differences between them and the communities in which they occur. [\[back\]](#)

293. A tree cut regularly at or above head height to produce a crop of branches. Trees in Epping Forest were traditionally cut this way by commoners with the rights of common of estover, so that the branches re-grew above the reach of grazing animals. The result of such regular harvesting of branches is to rejuvenate the tree and pollarded trees usually live to greater ages than trees of the same species left uncut. [\[back\]](#)

## 5.4 Managing the museum collection and archival material

### *Sharing collections and resources with the public*

*From stuffed birds and nests to Iron Age pottery and other 'Forest finds', the museum collection at Epping Forest is rich and varied. We need to define the Conservator's role as the custodians of Epping Forest's material heritage.*

#### Overview

With over nine centuries of Royal Forest history, and approaching 140 years of custodianship by the City of London, Epping Forest has a rich historical legacy, illustrated by the material heritage in our museum collection.

There has been a museum collection in Epping Forest since 1898, when the Essex Field Club decided to set up a local and natural history collection in Queen Elizabeth's Hunting Lodge. The collection included natural history specimens, particularly stuffed birds, eggs, bones and other specimens, and archaeological finds, and has since expanded to include archival material and ephemera associated with the Forest. A small number of volunteers are currently assisting with cataloguing the collection.

Recently hundreds of administrative records, including diaries kept by Forest Keepers<sup>[294]</sup>, Superintendents' correspondence since 1878, photographs, postcards and prints, were transferred to the London Metropolitan Archive. It took an archivist,



funded by the Heritage Lottery Funded Branching Out project<sup>[295]</sup>, assisted by a team of volunteers, 9 months to catalogue the collection, which is now called the Epping Forest Archive and is searchable online from the London Metropolitan Archive website using the reference CLA/077.

Objects from the Epping Forest museum collection are currently used in interpretation at The View, The Temple and High Beach Forest Centre, where they help to tell the story of the Forest, enhancing understanding of its rich history and diversity. However, the majority of the collection is in storage.

Given Epping Forest's long and extensive public interest, a significant number of private collections of Epping Forest material have been amassed over time, ranging from Repton red books to botanical records. Though in private ownership, such collections also contain valuable information on the history of the Forest that can inform future management.

### Major issues and challenges

Our role in curating the recent history of the Forest and facilitating numerous studies into its heritage needs to be properly directed.

Museum Accreditation (MA) is being sought for the existing collection. This external quality mark, administered by Arts Council England, would open up access to further training for staff and volunteers, funding for the work we do with the collection and partnerships with other museums.

Working towards MA has thrown up a number of challenges:

- ▶ The standard of current storage conditions and a documentation backlog
- ▶ Insufficient staff time and resources for documentation, collections care, research and improving access
- ▶ Poor historic documentation of object provenance
- ▶ The cost of collections care and management
- ▶ Lack of focus in the current collection

There is a new permanent exhibition of objects from the collection in The View, but there is limited display space for temporary exhibitions, restricting access to large sections of the collection.

### What are we doing to address these issues?

We have begun to work towards achieving Museum Accreditation by:

- ▶ Applying for and receiving "Working towards Accreditation" status, which has opened up some funding and training opportunities
- ▶ Forming a Heritage and Interpretation team of Information Assistants
- ▶ Progressing with our plans to improve storage for the collection
- ▶ Developing collections policies
- ▶ Beginning to address the documentation backlog, including using an online cataloguing system to provide public access to objects held in storage, which can be viewed at [www.ehive.com/account/4145](http://www.ehive.com/account/4145).

As part of the Branching Out project legacy, we are also:

- ▶ Regularly submitting documentation to LMA to keep the Epping Forest Archive up to date
- ▶ Holding at least 4 archive or collection-based events at The View each year.

294. Staff members whose role is to assist the public to enjoy the Forest safely and to protect the Forest from inappropriate damage or abuse. The Forest Keepers are also attested constables and enforce the Epping Forest byelaws. [\[back\]](#)

295. In 2009, the Conservators of Epping Forest embarked on an ambitious project, Branching Out, with support from the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF). The project aims to make the Forest more recognisable, welcoming and accessible. Over the past 5 years, we have successfully delivered almost the entire project, making numerous improvements to the Forest for our visitors. The four key areas of the project are: • Heritage - improvements to education and learning facilities and promotion of the Forest's history via a new Forest Centre, refurbished café and improved access to museum artefacts and archive materials • Access - creation of visitor hubs at High Beach, Connaught Water, Chingford Plain, Barn Hoppit and Jubilee Pond. • Grazing - devising a long term grazing strategy to restore the Forest's wood-pasture landscape. • Trees - an accelerated programme of ancient tree management to prevent the loss of Epping Forest's most special veteran 'keystone' trees. [\[back\]](#)

## 5.5 Maintaining Epping Forest's buildings - For information

### *The challenge of restoring and maintaining Epping Forest's historic buildings and statuary*

*From a historic hunting lodge to Second World War pillboxes, there is a diverse range of buildings within the Forest, each of which poses both maintenance obligations and interpretation opportunities*

#### Overview

"Queen Elizabeth's Lodge, with the garden thereof, is hereby vested in the Conservators<sup>[296]</sup>, for all the estate and interest of the Crown therein, and shall be preserved and maintained by them as an object of public and antiquarian interest..." So stated the 1878 Epping Forest Act<sup>[297]</sup>, making the City of London Corporation the UK's first ever conservation charity, predating the National Trust by sixteen years.

The Act also allowed the Conservators "to acquire or erect buildings suitable for lodges, or otherwise in their judgement necessary or convenient for recreation<sup>[298]</sup> or refreshment, and for use of the reeves or other officers engaged in the preservation and management of the Forest, and to maintain and repair the same and other buildings."

Since then, the number of buildings that Epping Forest is responsible for has grown to include:

- ▶ Various lodges used for staff and services
- ▶ Let properties, such as Grade II Butler's Retreat, on three-year leases
- ▶ Three Forest Centres: The View and Queen Elizabeth's Hunting Lodge, High Beach Forest Centre and the Temple
- ▶ One Field Studies Centre

Also in the Forest's care are a number of structures grouped together as "statuary". These include

- ▶ Four barrage balloon posts
- ▶ Four Second World War concrete bases for structures
- ▶ One well
- ▶ Four commemorative stone monuments
- ▶ One mounting block
- ▶ Boundary stones
- ▶ Four fountains
- ▶ One statue
- ▶ Two coal posts
- ▶ Four cattle troughs

- ▶ Three iron posts
- ▶ Three milestone
- ▶ Two obelisks
- ▶ Original parkland estate fencing
- ▶ Victorian sewage vents
- ▶ Conservator's cattle pounds

There are many privately-owned buildings in and around the Forest and some of these are bound by covenants with the City of London Corporation, preventing further development<sup>[299]</sup>.

We occasionally construct new buildings or structures such as the boardwalk at Connaught Water. We try and make these as sustainable as possible; for example, at The View we have installed solar panels and a rainwater harvester.

### Major issues and challenges

- ▶ The difficulty of finding resources for maintenance and restoration
- ▶ High energy consumption in our historic buildings
- ▶ Pressures from maintaining statuary in a public environment, including the risk of vandalism, age-deterioration and potential damage from Forest plants and trees
- ▶ The lack of research to improve our understanding of the historic structures
- ▶ The restrictions imposed by the Public Health Act 1875 via the Epping Forest Act on the length of tenancies, which limits the potential for vital investment

### What are we doing to address these issues?

In response to the challenge of maintaining buildings in Epping Forest, we currently:

- ▶ Develop conservation management plans for individual buildings to ensure that they are presented and managed to protect their inherent historic interest
- ▶ Ensure our structures are incorporated into 20-year maintenance plans. We will be able to keep the buildings in better condition once restoration work has been carried out.
- ▶ Have energy saving and energy generation measures to make our buildings more sustainable. For example, we use a bio-mass wood-chip boiler at High Beach Forest Centre, solar panels at Field Studies Centre and recycling facilities are in operation across all sites
- ▶ Read our utility meters on a monthly basis to ensure there are no leaks or wastage
- ▶ Are considering potential changes to the legislation governing Epping Forest to allow the hire of some buildings for events, as well as the letting of un-used buildings for private use.

### In the future, we plan to:

- ▶ Increase the income generated by hiring out our buildings for events, including weddings, to contribute towards their upkeep
- ▶ Further interpret the history and significance of each individual building and statue to visitors
- ▶ Develop a policy on future or emerging heritage features
- ▶ Encourage volunteers to be more actively involved in research and monitoring of the buildings and statuary

296. The Conservators are the Mayor, Aldermen and Members of the City of London Corporation assembled in Common Council. The Conservators are charged with the responsibility of safeguarding the Forest under the Epping Forest Act 1878. The City of London is the organisation that owns Epping Forest. The authority of the Conservators is vested in the City of London's Epping Forest and Commons Committee. [\[back\]](#)

297. The Act of Parliament passed in 1878 to protect and conserve Epping Forest as an open space unenclosed and unbuilt upon for the recreation and enjoyment of the public. [\[back\]](#)

298. Any pursuit engaged upon during leisure time, other than pursuits to which people are normally highly committed i.e. shopping, housework, child care etc. [\[back\]](#)

299. The carrying out of building, engineering, mining or other operations in, on, over or under land, or the making of any material change in the use of any buildings or land. [\[back\]](#)

## 6: Deer Management

This theme is all about the deer within Epping Forest and our efforts to manage them.

In this theme we consider how both fallow and muntjac deer are an important part of the Forest's heritage and identity, and how they greatly enhance the visitor experience. However, we also look at how expanding deer populations pose major problems in the Forest, causing damage to plants, trees and woodland habitats and coming into conflict with humans.

For example, as deer move further south they stray onto privately-owned land and residential gardens. At the same time, noise and activities can startle and disturb the deer, causing them to run out onto roads where - as this section also explains - deer-vehicle collisions have increased sharply in recent years.

Finally, this theme addresses the challenges we face in trying to control deer numbers in the Forest and ensure peaceful coexistence between deer and humans.

The **management issues** identified within this theme are:

- ▶ [The Deer Sanctuary](#)
- ▶ [Deer management and control](#)
- ▶ [Road traffic accidents](#)

### 6.1 Managing and controlling the Forest's deer

***Rigorous deer management and extended culling are required as herd ranges extend across the Forest, causing damage and coming into conflict with other wildlife and humans***

*Deer have been a feature of Epping Forest for hundreds of years, and their protection is enshrined within the Epping Forest Act 1878<sup>[300]</sup>. But growing numbers of deer are spreading across the Forest, its Buffer Lands<sup>[301]</sup> and neighbouring land.*

*Rising numbers of grazing deer pose risks to Forest plants, trees and habitats and can cause damage to grasslands, woodlands, agricultural crops and residential gardens. Lacking a natural predator, deer populations need to be controlled and the complex relationship between deer and humans carefully managed to ensure peaceful coexistence.*

#### Overview

The Epping Forest Act 1878 sets out clear duties to protect the Forest's deer, which it states are "to be preserved as objects of ornament". The Conservators<sup>[302]</sup> uphold this duty and are committed to protecting and enabling the free movement of deer herds within the Forest, and to maintaining the habitats that are essential to their wellbeing.

The presence of deer in Epping Forest greatly enhances the visitor experience. Visitors like to see deer roaming wild in their natural habitat, and to observe them from the perimeter fence of the Deer Sanctuary. However, deer and humans impinge on one another's space; as a result, the relationship between them often involves conflict.

Deer numbers in Epping Forest have fluctuated dramatically over the last century. There were around 200 fallow deer in the Forest in 1900, with a further 50 in adjoining copses. Over the last 70 years, numbers have varied between 50 and 200. The current wild deer population stands at approximately 330, with another 168 dark fallow deer in the Deer Sanctuary. However as their populations have expanded, deer have started to have a negative impact on plants, trees and woodland habitats, while the risk of road accidents has increased. Additionally, due to increased levels of disturbance from visitors, development<sup>[303]</sup> work and public utility infrastructure projects, the wild deer have extended the range of their movements within Epping Forest.

### Major issues and challenges

Through the browsing<sup>[304]</sup>, grazing and trampling of both agricultural crops and woodland shrubs<sup>[305]</sup>, deer spoil harvests, destroy plants and hamper tree regeneration. For example, muntjac deer - a non-native species - feed on brambles, ferns, ivy, grasses and tree-shoots. They also consume woodland plants of high conservation value, such as bluebells, orchids and primulas.

Elsewhere, deer moving further south become 'peri-urban', coming into conflict with humans as they stray onto privately-owned land and residential gardens. Once established in these areas, deer can cause significant damage. Electric fences on private tenanted land and farmland have been used to keep Forest deer off crops and gardens, but these can harm the deer. In fact, a number of adult bucks have been lost after becoming entangled in fences.

Deer also come into conflict with humans on the Forest's roads, where traffic has increased significantly in recent years. These roads have become thoroughfares for commuters and vehicles, including HGVs, accessing the M25 and other motorway networks. As a result, the number of deer-vehicle collisions (DVCs) has risen, with 123 DVCs in 2013-2014. These collisions can be serious, resulting in human injury, deer fatalities, and vehicle damage.

In order to address this broad range of issues, deer numbers within Epping Forest need to be managed. In particular, they need to be managed at levels that allow sufficient woodland regeneration through the unmolested growth of tree seedlings, plants and shrubs.

In the absence of natural predators, culling is the only effective measure for the control of deer populations on Buffer Land and throughout the Forest. Based on recent deer counts and damage assessment, revised cull numbers are needed to protect Buffer Land and Forest habitats, particularly ancient semi-natural woodland areas. However, legislative restrictions mean that culling can only be carried out during certain seasons, which severely limits its scope and efficacy.

### What are we doing to address these issues?

As part of our efforts to manage and control deer numbers on Buffer Lands, we currently:

- ▶ Carry out annual deer population counts and vegetation damage assessments over a wide area to ascertain local populations and help set correct cull numbers
- ▶ Promote understanding of deer herds and behaviour by leading events and writing articles for publication
- ▶ Carry out annual culls using licensed deer stalkers to control deer numbers
- ▶ Manage the deer population sensitively to keep more mature bucks within the herds
- ▶ Encourage cooperation between landowners to secure a gradual reduction of the overwintering wild fallow deer population; such cooperation had reduced the deer numbers steadily over the last ten years on the Buffer Lands, though numbers have increased again in the last year
- ▶ Use trained staff to respond swiftly and efficiently - providing cover 24 hours a day - to call-outs regarding injured deer, including deer-vehicle collisions (DVCs) and other deer welfare issues

300. The Act of Parliament passed in 1878 to protect and conserve Epping Forest as an open space unenclosed and unbuilt upon for the recreation and enjoyment of the public. [\[back\]](#)
301. 735 hectares (1816 acres) of land owned and managed by the City of London around the perimeter of the Forest to preserve the landscape setting and context of the Forest. Buffer land is currently exempt from many of the requirements of the legislation governing the management of the Forest, but is also not protected in the same way. [\[back\]](#)
302. The Conservators are the Mayor, Aldermen and Members of the City of London Corporation assembled in Common Council. The Conservators are charged with the responsibility of safeguarding the Forest under the Epping Forest Act 1878. The City of London is the organisation that owns Epping Forest. The authority of the Conservators is vested in the City of London's Epping Forest and Commons Committee. [\[back\]](#)
303. The carrying out of building, engineering, mining or other operations in, on, over or under land, or the making of any material change in the use of any buildings or land. [\[back\]](#)
304. A method of feeding by herbivores in which the leaves and peripheral shots are removed from trees and shrubs. [\[back\]](#)
305. A low growing perennial plant with a persistent woody stem and low branching habit. [\[back\]](#)

## 6.2 The future of the Deer Sanctuary

### *Uncertainty surrounds Epping Forest's Deer Sanctuary*

*The Deer Sanctuary at Theydon Bois provides safe grazing ground for Epping Forest's dark fallow deer. However, maintenance of the sanctuary uses up valuable resources and restricts in the area.*

#### Overview

In 1612, the Danish Ambassador to England presented King James I with a number of melanistic (dark) fallow deer from Denmark. Introduced to Epping Forest, it is thought these deer interbred with the local deer population to produce the dark fallow. The fallow deer, along with the muntjac, is the main deer species<sup>[306]</sup> found in the Forest today, but few of the wild deer have retained melanistic colouring.

In the mid-20th Century, dark fallow deer began to be killed in high numbers on the roads that intersect Epping Forest. The Epping Forest Act 1878<sup>[307]</sup> sets out clear duties to protect the Forest's deer, which it states are "to be preserved as objects of ornament". In accordance with the Act, in 1959 the Conservators<sup>[308]</sup> acquired approximately 40 hectares of land at Theydon Bois, creating the sanctuary that is currently home to 168 dark fallow deer.

The Deer Sanctuary remains a place of tranquillity<sup>[309]</sup> and unspoiled natural beauty. It provides a safe grazing ground for the melanistic fallow deer, away from people and roads. And while there is currently no public access to the sanctuary, deer can be observed from the perimeter fence in a semi-natural state.

#### Major issues and challenges

Despite the conservational function it fulfils, the Deer Sanctuary gives rise to a number of complex issues.

The management of the sanctuary is expensive. Ensuring the 80 acre enclosure provides the right conditions to support the deer's wellbeing, and maintaining the right structure of the herd (age and sex ratio) through culling, requires considerable time and effort.

What's more, the need to protect the deer from disturbance means that habitat management of the site is difficult. Much of the sanctuary is currently designated under the Entry Level Stewardship scheme, which means that grassland management is restricted. This in turn limits the number of deer that can be kept in the sanctuary. However, the scheme will expire in 2018 and it is not known if the Sanctuary will be eligible for any replacement scheme.

There is also uncertainty as to whether we need to conserve the dark fallow herd, which may not be as rare as originally thought. In fact, wild fallow deer are thriving in the Forest.

There is currently a lack of public awareness of work we do at the sanctuary. This is mainly because of the remote location of the site and because public access is prohibited, further compounded by the general lack of interpretation and general information.

The issues of costs, resources and conflicting interests have caused several stakeholders, including Natural England, to question the viability of the Deer Sanctuary, with some calling for its closure. Others, meanwhile, point out that the sanctuary was always intended to be a long-term project and believe its closure will be a source of regret in the future.

### What are we doing to address these issues?

As part of our current programme of work within the Deer Sanctuary, we are currently:

- ▶ Reviewing the future strategic direction of deer management in Epping Forest
- ▶ Working with Nottingham University to determine if the herd at the sanctuary is one of the oldest in the world, confirming the need for their conservation
- ▶ Providing guided walking tours through the sanctuary to enable people to view the deer, improving public awareness and learning.
- ▶ Managing the deer herd in the sanctuary along the recommendations of a consultant

306. Organisms are named and classified by a system of taxonomy according to similarities in structure and origin. Species are the taxonomic group whose members can interbreed. [\[back\]](#)

307. The Act of Parliament passed in 1878 to protect and conserve Epping Forest as an open space unenclosed and unbuilt upon for the recreation and enjoyment of the public. [\[back\]](#)

308. The Conservators are the Mayor, Aldermen and Members of the City of London Corporation assembled in Common Council. The Conservators are charged with the responsibility of safeguarding the Forest under the Epping Forest Act 1878. The City of London is the organisation that owns Epping Forest. The authority of the Conservators is vested in the City of London's Epping Forest and Commons Committee. [\[back\]](#)

309. Composite feature which seeks to characterise elements of wildness, solitude, peace and quiet, relating principally to low levels of built development, traffic, noise and artificial lighting. [\[back\]](#)

## 6.3 Minimising the incidence of deer-vehicle collisions

### *Measures needed to reduce deer casualties on Forest roads*

*With a continual rise in traffic over the last four decades, the mortality rate for deer on Epping Forest's roads is rising. Deer collisions also cause damage to vehicles and, occasionally, injury to humans.*

#### Overview

According to an RAC report published in 2008, car ownership rose from 19 million in 1971 to over 31 million in 2007. As more people have the option for independent travel, our roads have become busier and more journeys are made during leisure time. Epping Forest has not escaped this trend.

The roads in Epping Forest have become thoroughfares for commuters and vehicles, including HGVs, accessing the M25 and other motorway networks. As a result the number of deer-vehicle collisions (DVCs) has risen, with 123 DVCs in 2013-14. This represents a 92% increase on the average of 64 DVCs for the previous five years. Though this can be partially attributed to the 62% rise in the number of deer in the Forest, this still represents a worrying trend. Deer are either killed outright or left injured, in which case they have to be humanely destroyed.

Although the mortality rate is higher today than ever before, deer-related road accidents have always been an issue in Epping Forest. Back in the 1950s, a sharp rise in the number of dark fallow deer being killed on Forest roads prompted the

Conservators<sup>[310]</sup> to establish the Deer Sanctuary. Today, most dark fallow deer remain protected within this enclosure, but for the wild deer population the Forest's roads present a real and on-going danger.

### Major issues and challenges

The potential for disturbance and stress among the Forest's wild deer is high. Deer are easily startled by noise and activity, causing them to run out onto roads.

When deer leave the safety of the Forest, road collisions can be unavoidable. Unrestricted woodland growth to the edge of the highway means that deer are often not seen until the last minute by oncoming vehicle drivers.

Increased levels of disturbance have extended the range and movements of wild deer. There is now a growing population of muntjac deer in the south of the Forest, which is more residential and developed than the north. As they move further south and closer to the Forest perimeter they become 'peri-urban', coming into conflict with humans as they stray onto Forest Buffer Land<sup>[311]</sup> and privately-owned land or gardens.

### What are we doing to address these issues?

As part of our efforts to reduce collisions between deer and vehicles on Forest roads, we have already implemented a reduced speed limit on the majority of northern Forest roads to 40mph.

We are currently:

- ▶ Piloting further warning signage in key DVC areas
- ▶ Cutting back roadside vegetation to increase the visibility of deer by roadsides
- ▶ Piloting the use of deer-warning reflectors on roadsides in the northern parishes
- ▶ Carrying out annual culls using licensed deer stalkers in an attempt to control deer numbers - in particular targeting muntjac deer, which breed faster and cause more tree and flora damage
- ▶ Continuing to support the Deer Initiative's monitoring of Deer Vehicle Collisions
- ▶ Using trained staff to respond swiftly and efficiently - providing cover 24 hours a day - to call-outs regarding deer-vehicle collisions
- ▶ Assessing the future strategy of our deer management in Epping Forest

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311. 735 hectares (1816 acres) of land owned and managed by the City of London around the perimeter of the Forest to preserve the landscape setting and context of the Forest. Buffer land is currently exempt from many of the requirements of the legislation governing the management of the Forest, but is also not protected in the same way. [\[back\]](#)