



Epping
Forest

Registered Charity

Epping Forest Annual Review

2022-2023



English longhorn cows grazing on Warren Hill, Loughton

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Introduction

It is with great pleasure that we once again celebrate the impressive work that has taken place in Epping Forest, this time round between April 2022 and March 2023.



This year Epping Forest has been undertaking a corporate staff review, which we anticipate completing by Autumn 2023. Meanwhile, good progress has been made with many of the goals set last year which are on course for completion. Longer term projects are well under way, such as the preparation of the Countryside Stewardship grant application for submission in August 2023, as well as work towards delivering the many ongoing projects at Wanstead Park.

We continue to be grateful for the support we receive from our volunteers who undertake so many of the important tasks across the Forest. There are too many

groups and individuals to mention them all but as an example, Epping Forest Conservation Volunteers put in 4236 hours of practical conservation work in 2022.

Epping Forest Heritage Trust welcomed 9000 people to the Visitor Centre at High Beach and delivered hands-on conservation sessions two days a week, while Wren Wildlife and Conservation Group and The Friends of Wanstead Parklands continue to advocate for and animate Wanstead Park and Wanstead Flats as well as recording the wildlife found in this part of Epping Forest.

Daily monitoring of the Forest is undertaken to check on the condition of this unique environment. This year we were excited to discover a scarce lichen species on the heathlands, *cadonia portentosa*, which is only known from one other site, as well as finding one of the rarest mosses, *zygodont*.

It was a year of contrasts in the Royal household with the celebration of Her

Majesty Queen Elizabeth's Platinum Jubilee in the spring followed by the sad news of Her Majesty's death in the autumn. The Jubilee was celebrated by the planting of two trees as part of the Queen's Green Canopy and the Forest being dedicated as one of 70 Queen's Green Canopy Ancient Woodlands. In memory of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth, 70 trees were planted to create a commemorative grove at Wanstead Flats, the planting of which was completed by the Ranger of Epping Forest, HRH The Duke of Gloucester.

We are looking forward to this next year embracing new opportunities to continue to protect Epping Forest, allowing it to thrive, even in the face of adverse weather conditions and increased pressures in the surrounding environment.

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

Lord Mayor's Show 2022

Epping Forest was honoured to take part in the Lord Mayor's Show in 2022 to welcome in the 694th Lord Mayor of London, Alderman Nicholas Lyons.

The parade offers a great opportunity to bring Epping Forest to the City, showcasing the ever-increasing importance of this ancient woodland in today's world, to a wide-reaching audience.

The inclusion of the Forest's float, reaffirmed the City of London Corporation's pride, care and commitment to its many open spaces. This year the focus of the float was to celebrate the Forest's role as 'London's green lung'.



Charitable purpose

The purpose of the charity is the preservation of Epping Forest in perpetuity by the City of London Corporation as Conservators of Epping Forest, as an open space for the recreation and enjoyment of the public.

Our vision

Epping Forest is a thriving, biodiverse green space that benefits the City of London Corporation’s communities and enhances the wider environment as part of a larger, interconnected landscape.

Our mission

To conserve and protect Epping Forest as London’s largest biodiverse green space for the health, recreation and enjoyment of everyone.

Who we are

Epping Forest operates as a charitable trust (charity number 232990), which is managed and funded by the City of London Corporation (City Corporation) acting as the Conservators of Epping Forest under the Epping Forest Acts 1878 and 1880. Each year the City Corporation provides £4.2 million from its private investments, at no cost to local taxpayers, to support the management of 6,189 acres of Epping Forest and 1,821

acres of Buffer Land which forms London’s largest open space. The Epping Forest and Commons Committee is made up of 12 Members of the City of London Court of Common Council, and four Verderers, the latter elected locally by Epping Forest Commoners every seven years. Together they decide policy and strategy for the Forest, and act as the trustees for the charity.



Fallow doe



Our history

Epping Forest was placed in jeopardy by the sale of Royal Forest Rights from 1820 onwards. Given the importance of the Forest to Londoners, the City Corporation supported and funded local opposition to the continuing loss of Epping Forest land to encroachment from residential and commercial development. In 1874, the City Corporation funded and won a landmark court case which prevented the further enclosure of the Forest, and then proceeded to purchase 5,350 acres of the privately owned Forest for public benefit at a modern-day equivalent cost of £30.4 million.

The City Corporation sought legislation confirming them as the Conservators of Epping Forest in order to manage and regulate London's largest public open space for a range of public benefits including recreational access alongside nature, heritage and landscape conservation.

Epping Forest is now held in perpetuity by the Epping Forest charity to provide a wide range of public benefits from public recreation to nature conservation, with those benefitting from these services termed



Queen Elizabeth's Hunting Lodge circa 1800s

as the charity's beneficiaries. Many people have mistakenly interpreted Queen Victoria's public dedication celebrating the opening of the Forest as a Royal gift to the people, rather than the relinquishment of Royal Hunting Rights and Royal recognition of the City Corporation's purchase and commitment to the Forest. The Forest is therefore not publicly owned and administered but is held for public benefit reflecting both its founding and subsequent national legislation, while being jointly managed by City Corporation Aldermen, Common Councilmen and locally elected Verderers.

Our strategic aims

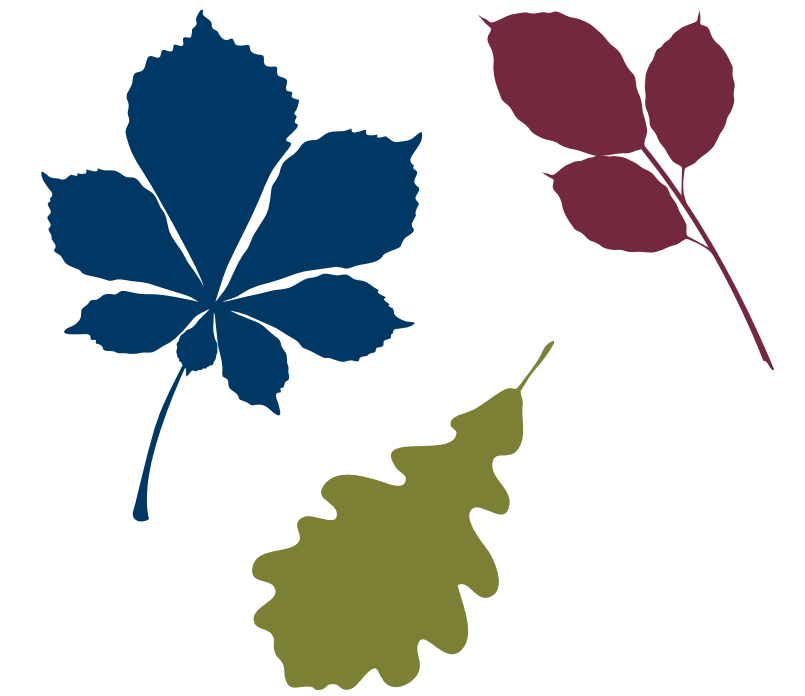
We aim to conserve, enhance and protect the Forest's special natural environment and its heritage.

We aim to welcome, encourage and inspire our visitors.

We aim to support, collaborate and innovate, sustainably managing the Forest for future generations.



Our key priorities



1. **A welcoming destination for all**
2. **A beautiful forest, sustaining an internationally and nationally important mosaic of wildlife habitats**
3. **An inspiring space benefitting peoples' health and providing opportunities for recreation and enjoyment**
4. **A range of special heritage landscapes which are protected and celebrated**
5. **A resilient environment, where challenges are embraced and opportunities explored**



Performance review of 2022–2023

Achievements towards strategic priorities

Queen’s Green Canopy



As part of the celebrations for Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth’s Platinum Jubilee, Epping Forest was dedicated as one of 70 Ancient Woodlands to honour the Platinum Jubilee.

Following the death of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth, a grove of 70 silver birch trees, to mark her 70 years of reign, was planted by volunteers from the City of London and North-East Sector Army Cadet Force. His Royal Highness the Duke

of Gloucester, Ranger of Epping Forest, visited to complete the planting of the grove which was dedicated as part of the Queen’s Green Canopy campaign. Wanstead Flats was chosen for the memorial planting in recognition of the grove that was established on the Flats in 1953 to mark The Queen’s Coronation.

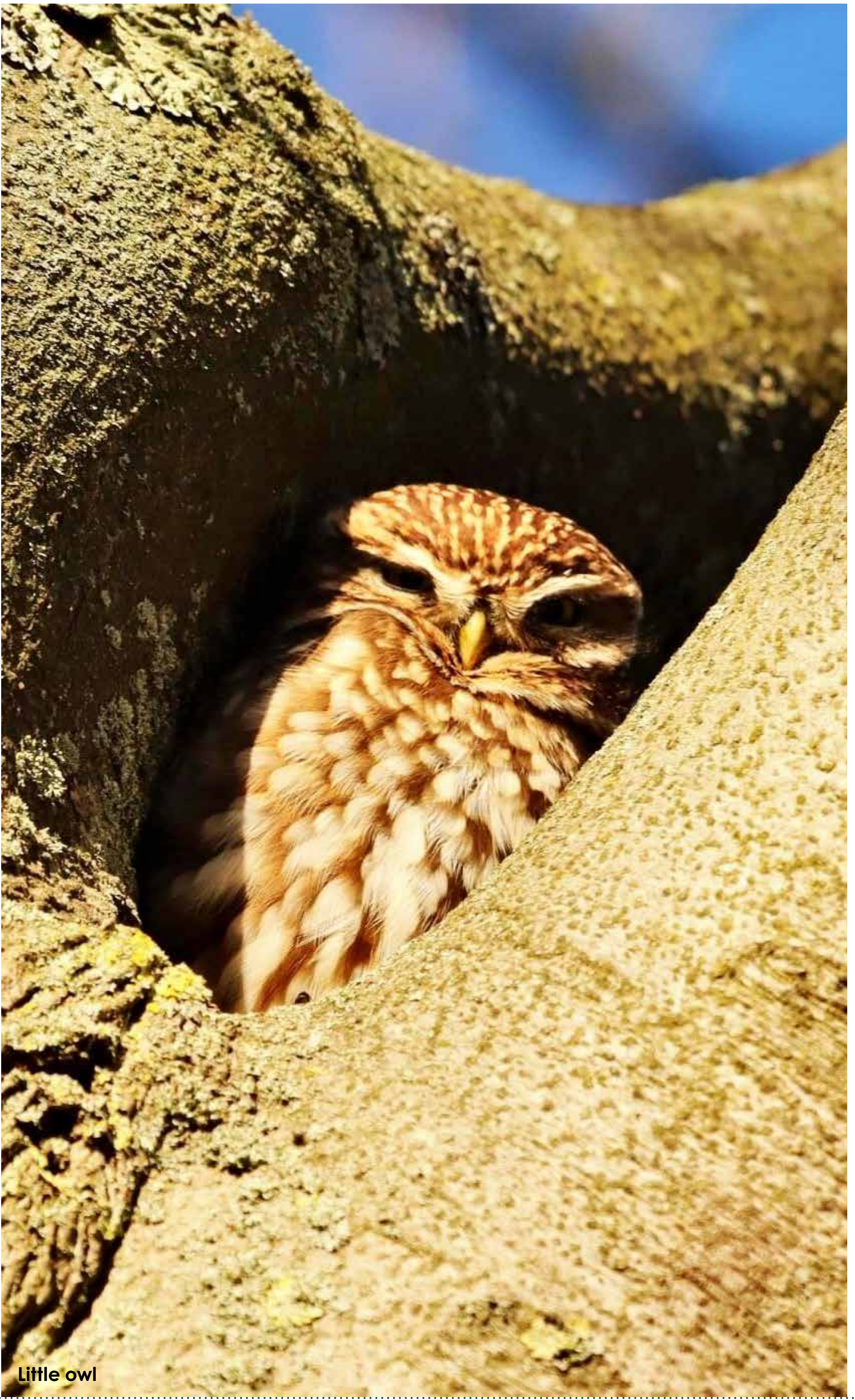
A further tree was planted by the Epping Forest and Commons Committee Chairman, Ben Murphy, on The Green at Epping, and was dedicated to the Queen’s Green Canopy.

For further information about these priorities please refer to the **Epping Forest Management Strategy**

Strategic priorities	Achievements
1, 5	New method of visitor surveying commissioned and survey undertaken, resulting in confirmation of increased visitor numbers than previously estimated.
1	New customer relationship management system set up to vastly improve efficiency with public enquiries and task management.
2	City of London Corporation’s funding approved for over-wintering facilities for cattle at Great Gregories.
1, 3, 5	Rangers Road holiday accommodation refurbishment works completed and lettings commenced.
1, 3, 5	Sponsorship received from Haslers (£15,000) to improve access to Golding’s Hill Pond, provide informative interpretation and install a way-marked trail.
1	Queen’s Green Canopy trees were planted at Gifford Wood and The Green at Epping to mark the Platinum Jubilee.
1, 4	Epping Forest float featured in The Lord Mayor’s Show, promoting the protection of the Forest and the Forest’s role as the green lungs of London, coverage of float featured on BBC 1.
2, 5	Strategic Access Monitoring and Mitigation Strategy (SAMMS) agreement signed by all authorities with one outstanding.
2, 3	70 trees planted on Wanstead Flats to create a commemorative grove for Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth.
4	LIDAR overflight took place to map ground features across the whole estate.
1	Seventeen new noticeboards were installed across the Forest and new interpretation boards were installed at Highams Park Lake and Gifford Wood.
1	Improvements made for visitors to Gifford Wood, thanks to funding from Lady Clare Gifford. In memory of former Lord Mayor, Sir Roger Gifford.
1, 3	Programme of nine summer Open Air Theatre productions were delivered in Wanstead Park.
1, 2	Three new interpretation panels were installed at Park Chalet Wood in Wanstead explaining the importance of native English bluebells, providing guidance to visitors on how to responsibly visit the area, along with pictogram signs marking designated paths.

Projects

Strategic priorities	Achievements
1, 3	Wanstead Park Play Area creation progressed.
4	Planning permission sought for trial pits at The Grotto to establish integrity of structure, and a project board was established.
2, 5	Wanstead Park water bodies - resilience scheme designed for water retention, to allow gradual completion of elements.
2, 5	Wanstead Park water bodies - City of London Corporation's funding approved for dam works and up cascade pumping at Wanstead Park.
2, 5	Birch Hall Pond dam stabilisation works completed.
2, 5	Baldwins Pond works tendered.



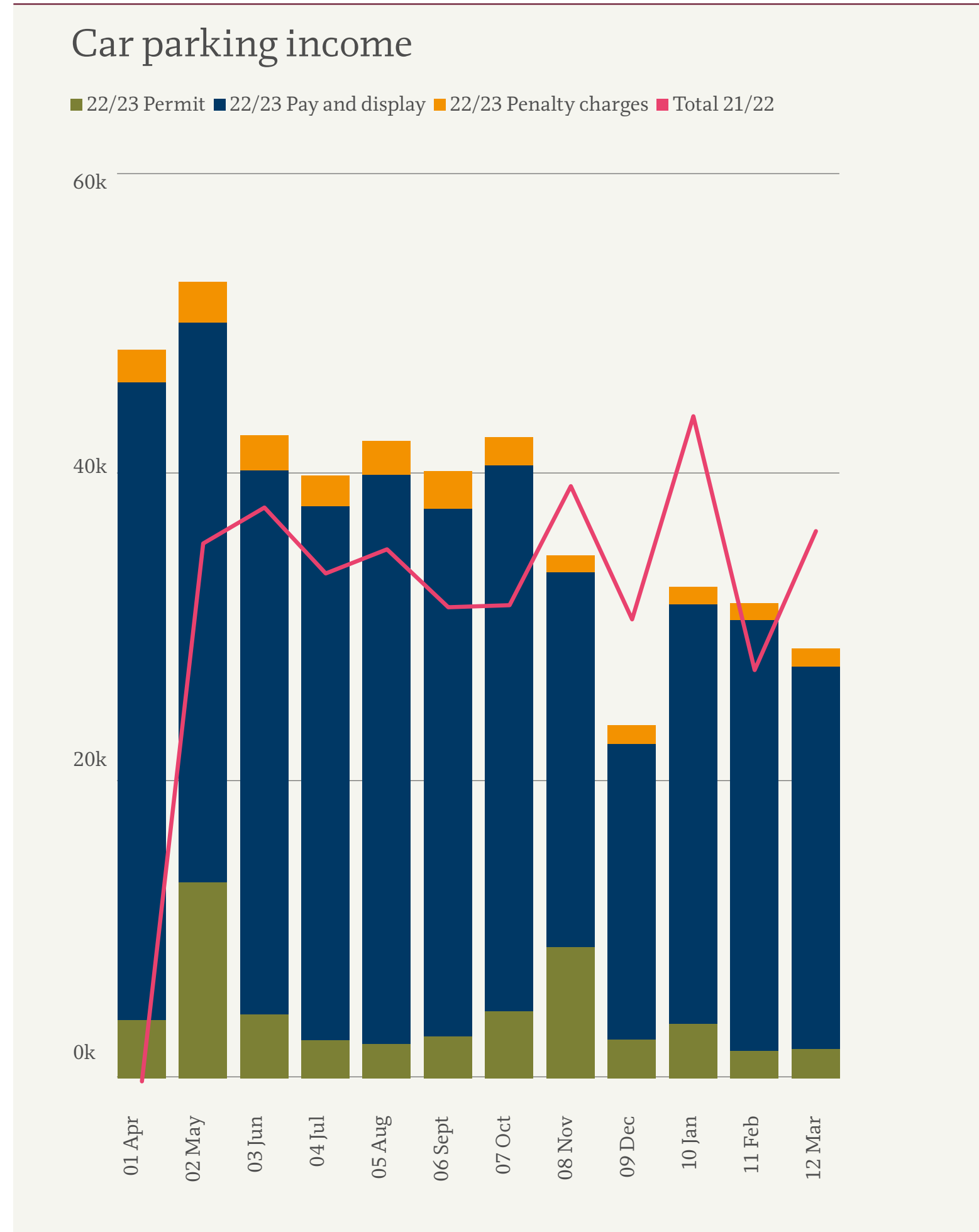
Gifford Wood

Thanks to a donation from Lady Clare Gifford, in memory of Sir Roger Gifford, a new bench, tree planting, interpretation signage, nesting boxes and roosts have been installed at Gifford Wood. The site was named in honour of Sir Roger whose fundraising efforts when Lord Mayor paid for the wood creation.



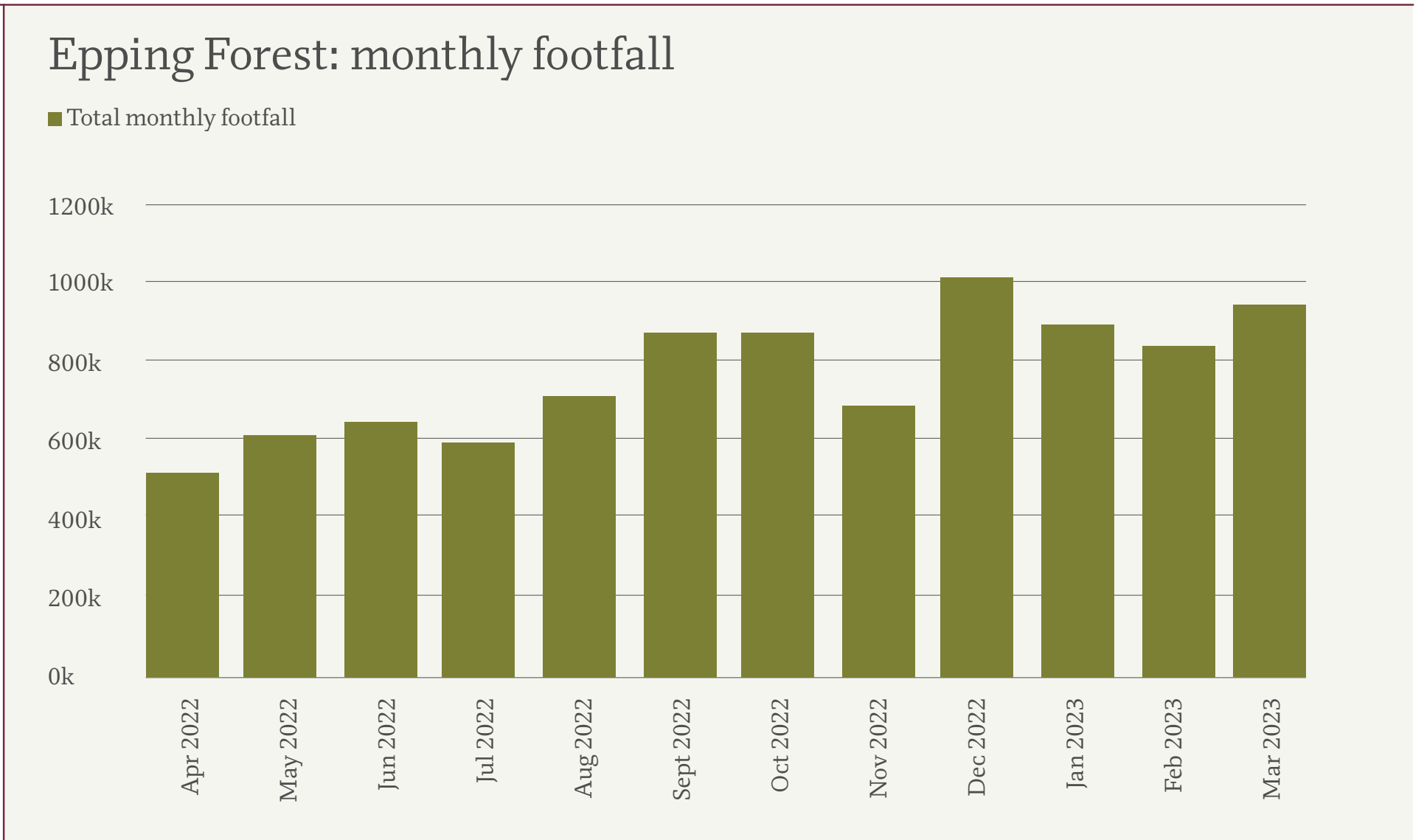
Lord Mayor (2021–2022), Vincent Keaveny, planting a tree at Gifford Wood.

A year in numbers



9,204,289

Visitors to Epping Forest



3 Awards

- Green Flag
- Green Heritage
- VAQAS

18,159

Social media followers

A year in numbers continued

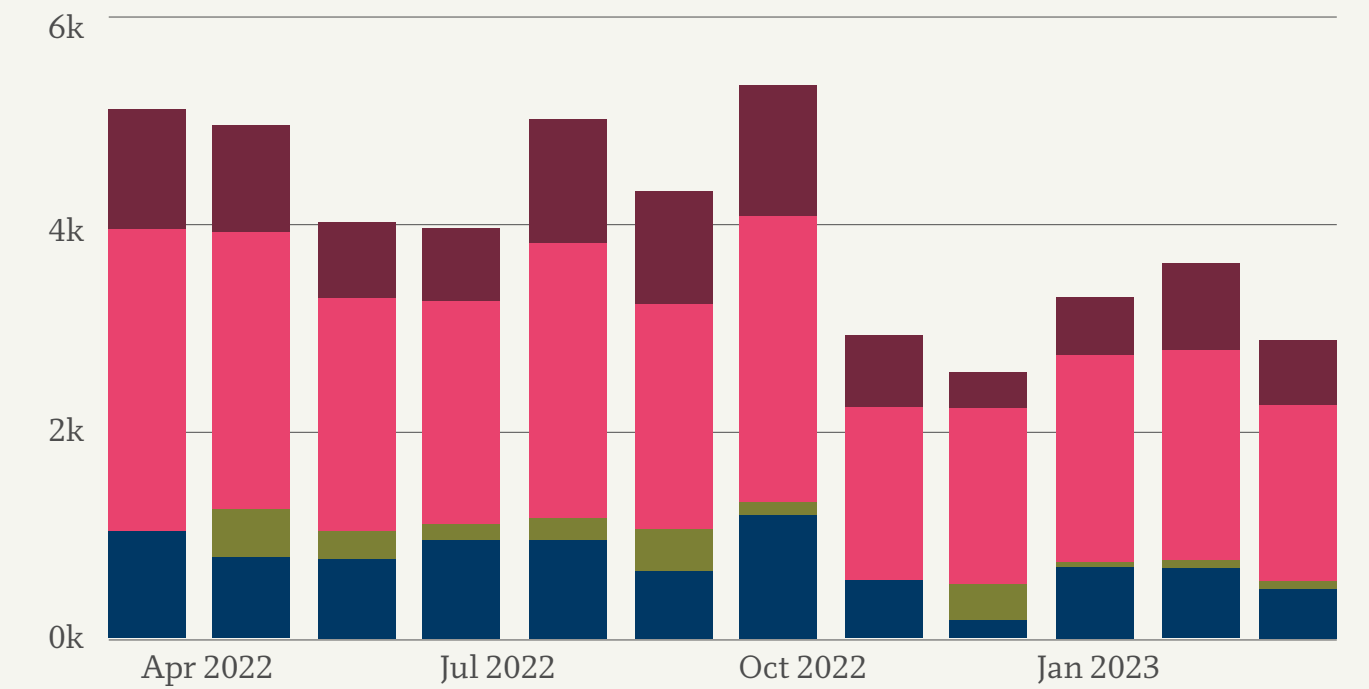
22,228

Volunteer hours spent working for the Forest



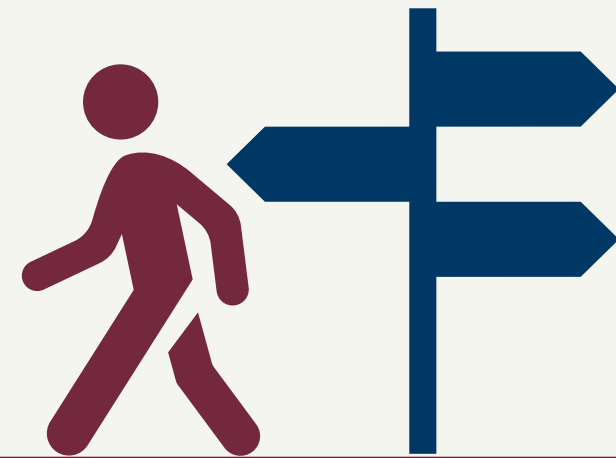
Visits to our Visitor Centres

■ Epping Forest Visitor Centre at High Beach ■ The Temple ■ Epping Forest Visitor Centre at Chingford ■ Queen Elizabeth's Hunting Lodge



1,220

New signs produced



6.9

hectares

Wood pasture restoration completed



116

Fires extinguished

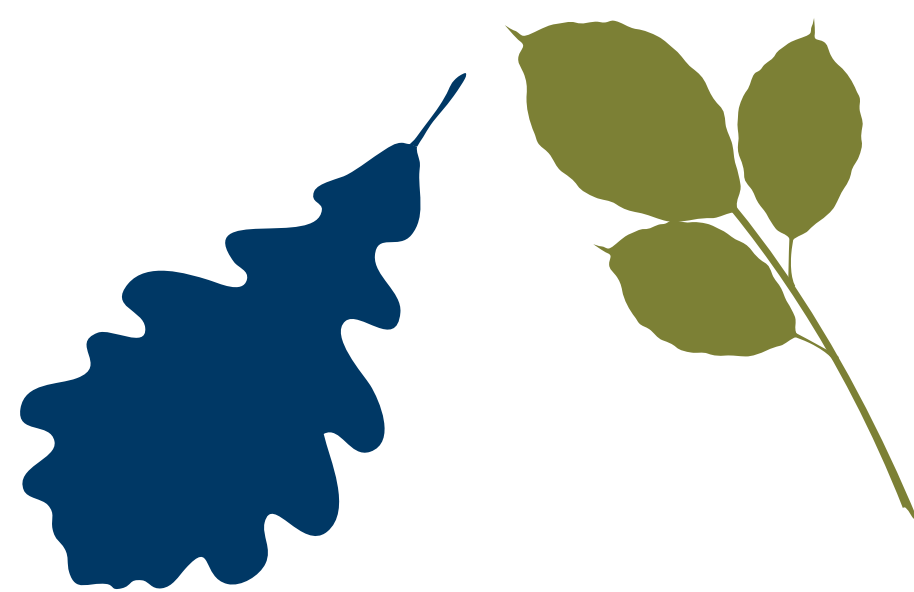
1

Scarce lichen identified



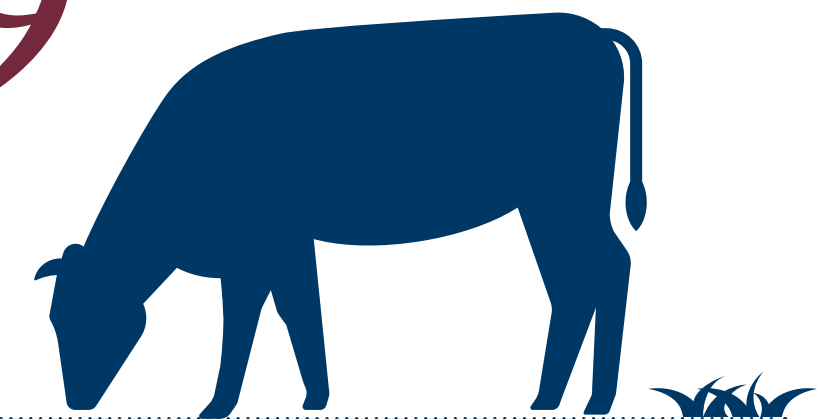
84

New pollards



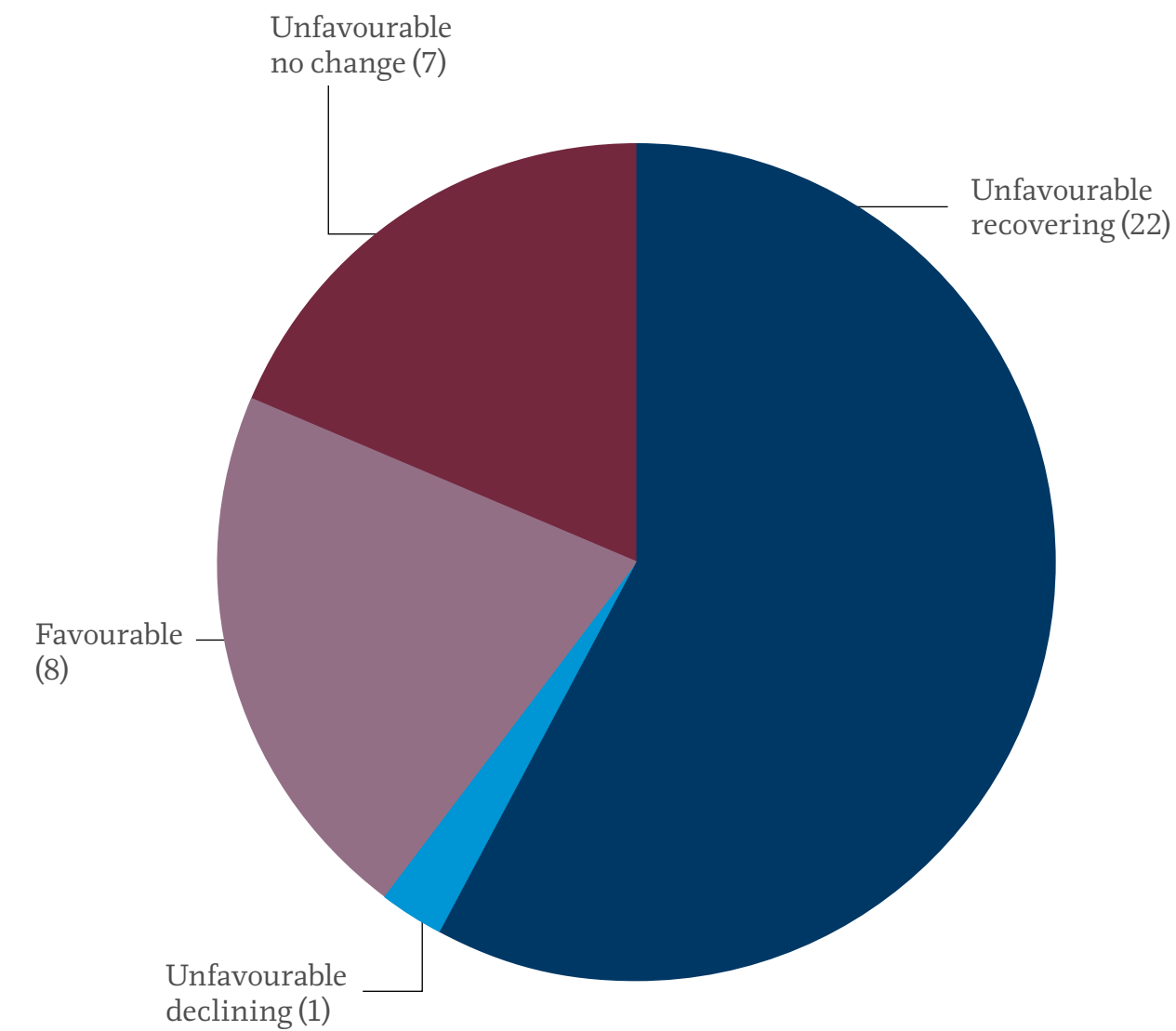
33,609

Cattle grazing days



A year in numbers continued

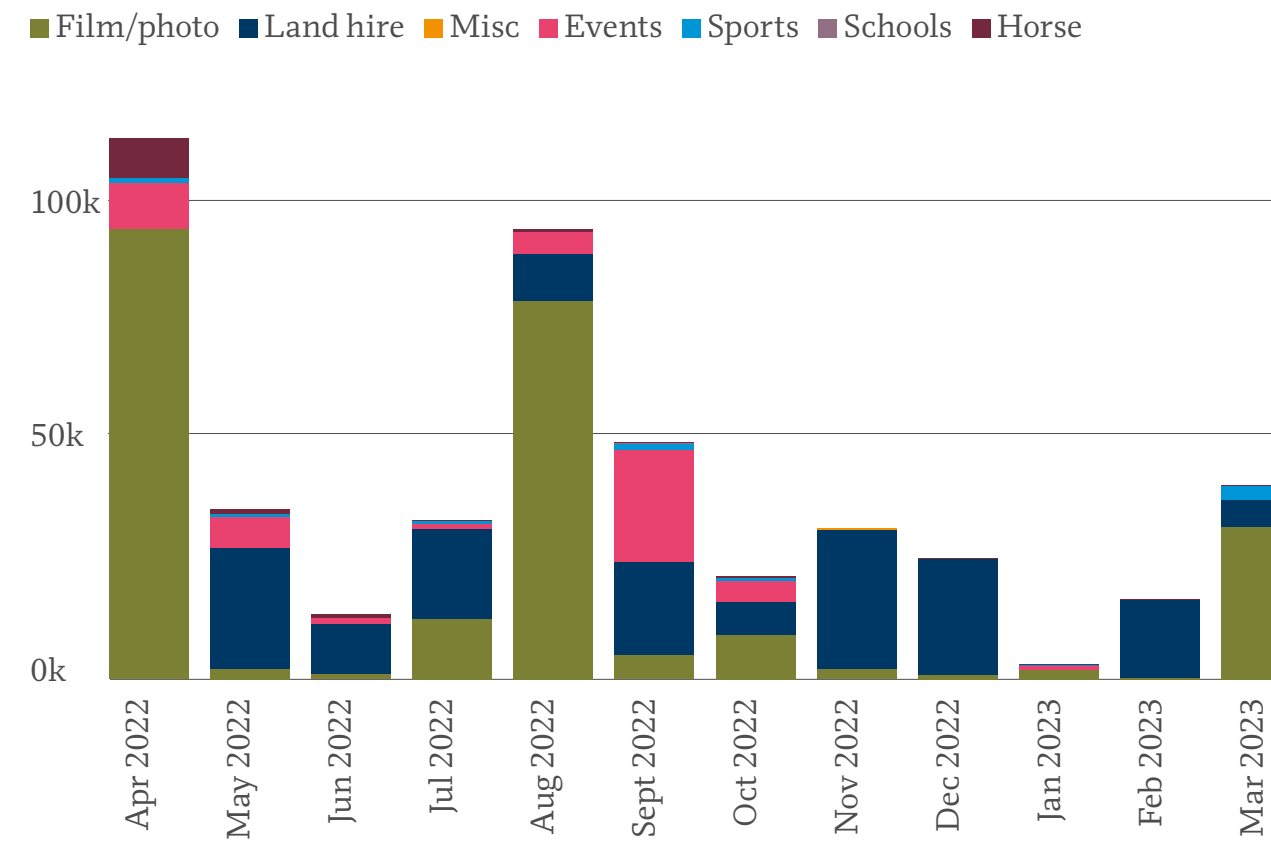
Sites of Special Scientific Interest condition



48

Filming licenses issued (generating an income of £238,721)

Licensing income



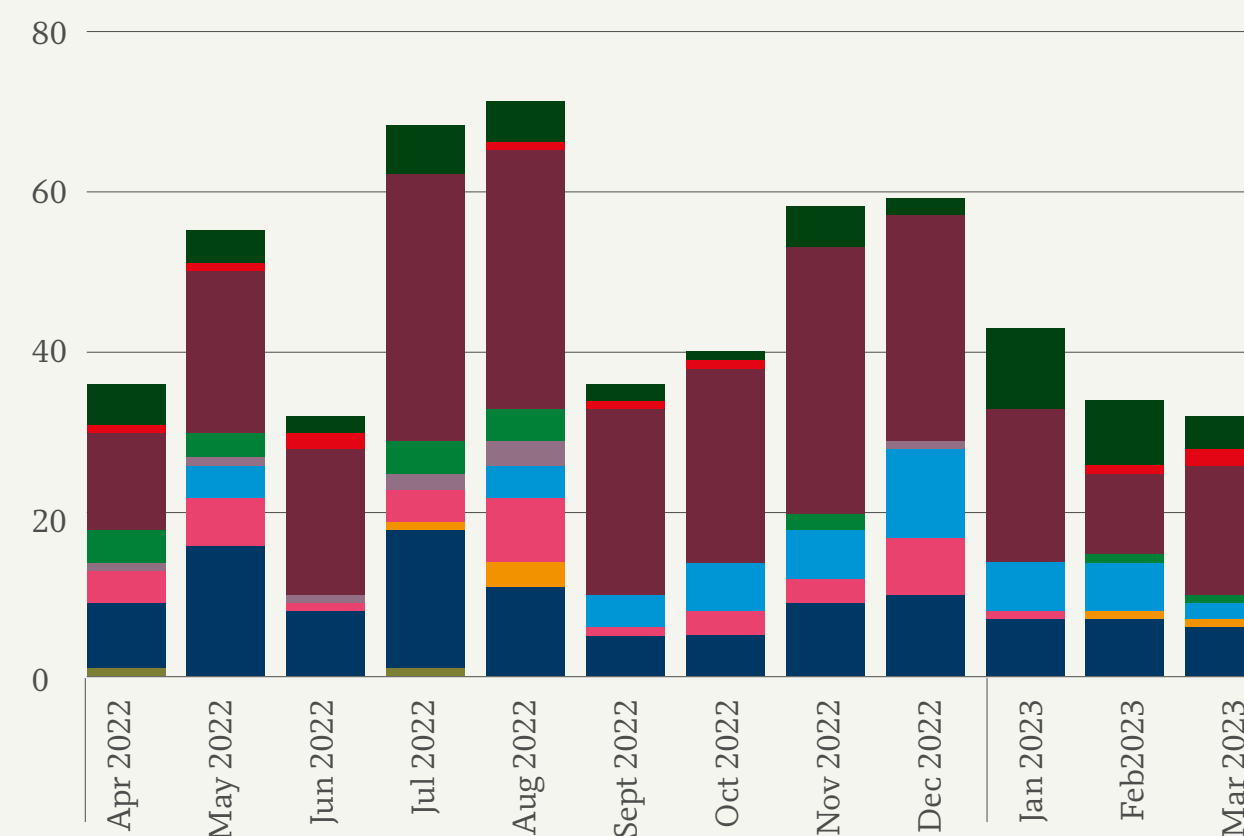
89%

Holiday cottage rentals occupancy



Fly tipping

Asbestos Builders Camp Cannabis Car parts Food Garden Household White goods Other



628

Fly tips cleared



3

Successful court prosecutions for fly tipping



2

Unlawful enclosure of Forest land investigations being carried out



A challenging summer

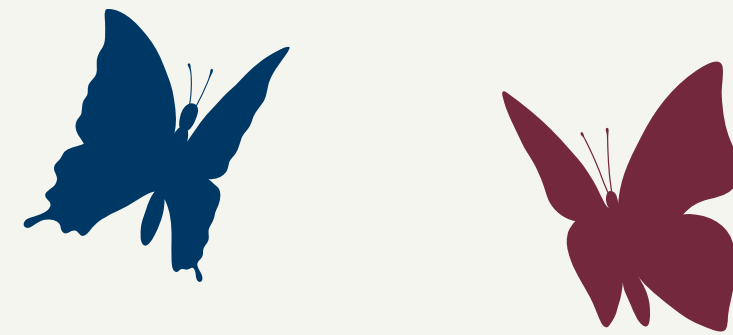
The prolonged hot and dry weather conditions experienced throughout the summer in 2022 proved to be a challenge for Epping Forest with a number of the Forest’s ancient trees failing. However, it is apparent that the smaller, recently re-pollarded trees seem to be coping well with the drought conditions so it is hoped that a further benefit from re-pollarding the trees is that they will be more resilient to the changing climate.

We experienced a severe threat of wildfires throughout the season and an extensive communication campaign reminded visitors to not light a barbecue or a fire anywhere in Epping Forest and to dispose of litter responsibly.

We were grateful for the rapid response of the London and Essex fire services on numerous occasions whilst Epping Forest staff were called out to around 120 fire incidents.

The drought conditions also resulted in very low water levels across the Forest’s ponds and lakes with dry beds visible in many locations and blue-green algae made an unwelcome return to some ponds.

We also suffered the first ever instances of Avian Flu, with keepers responding as rapidly as possible to reports of birds in distress.



Hollow Pond

Re-pollarding works



Before



After

In the autumn of 2022 habitat works were undertaken at a number of wood pasture areas in Epping Forest, including Bury Wood, Almshouse Plain, Cuckoo Pits, Honey Lane Quarters and Chingford Plain. The management work helped to restore the wood pasture landscape of Epping Forest by opening up previously shaded areas, improving the habitat for ancient trees and the plants and animals which respond to these more open habitats.

Whilst the works initially appeared to be quite striking visually, you can see how well the trees have responded to the re-pollarding less than one year on. We are finding that these smaller, re-pollarded trees seem to be coping well with the difficult drought conditions we experienced last summer. It is therefore hoped that a further benefit from re-pollarding the trees is that they will be more resilient to the changing climate and hotter, drier summers. Further monitoring will continue over the coming years.

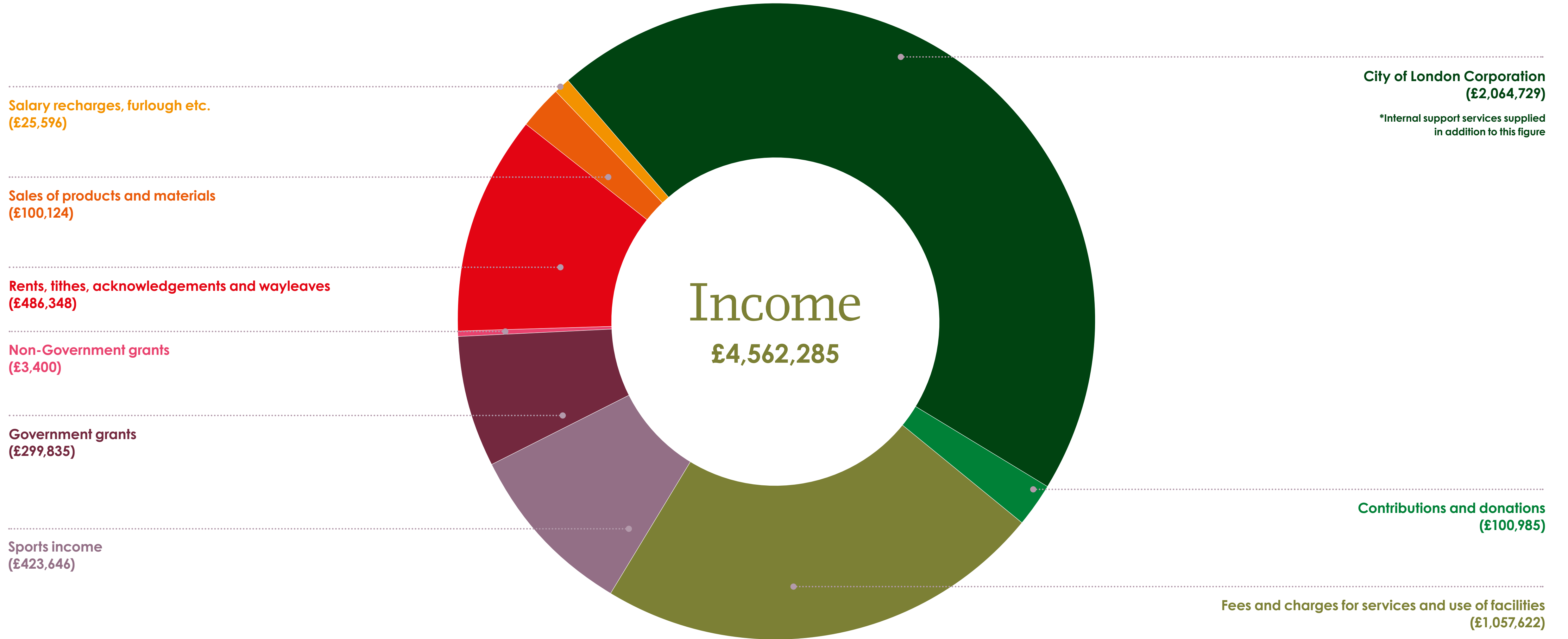
Management of visits to bluebell woods

The interest in visiting bluebell woods has increased year on year, fuelled by the social media trend of taking photographs amongst the flowers. Chalet Wood in Wanstead Park is the Forest’s most popular bluebell destination resulting in damage to the site with some people picking and trampling the flowers.

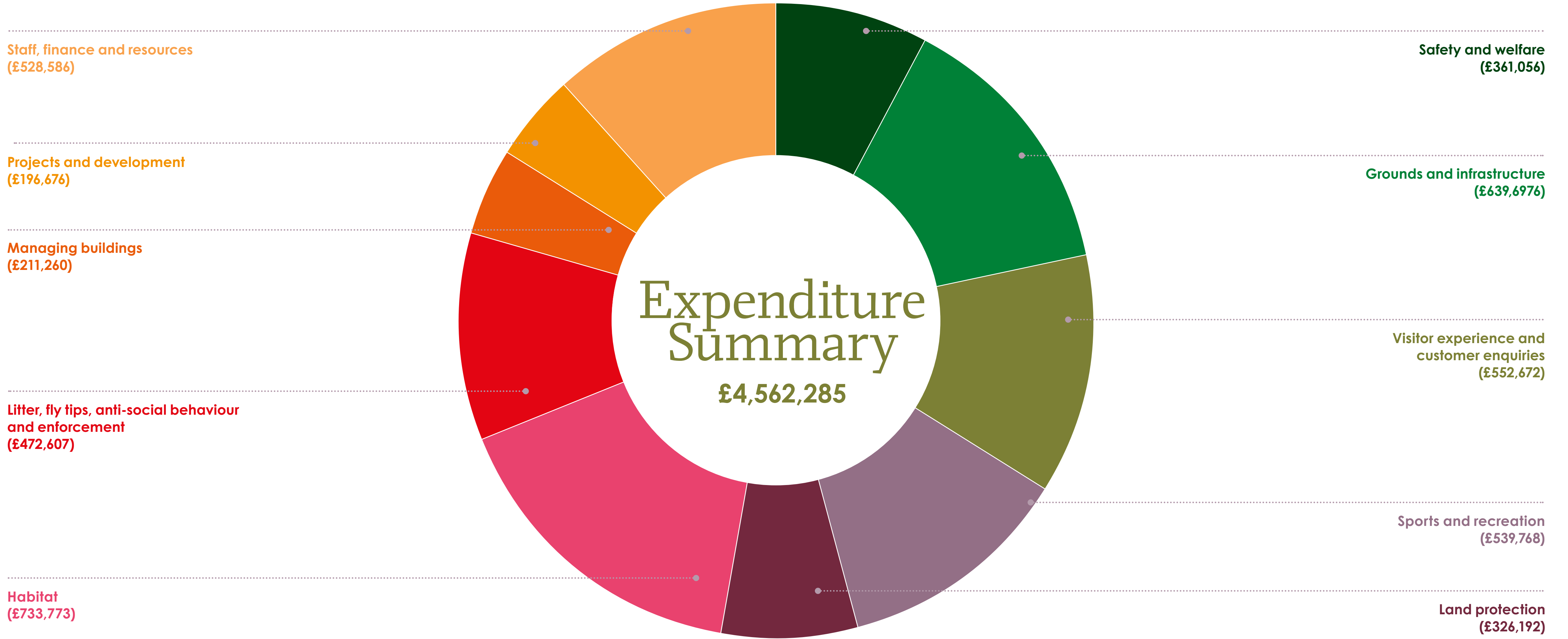
Building on previous campaigns, this year we introduced permanent interpretation signs explaining the importance of protecting this native plant along with pictogram signs to define paths and help prevent trampling of the new plant growth. This has proved very successful with reports of more responsible behaviour by visitors in spring.



Financial statement



Financial statement continued

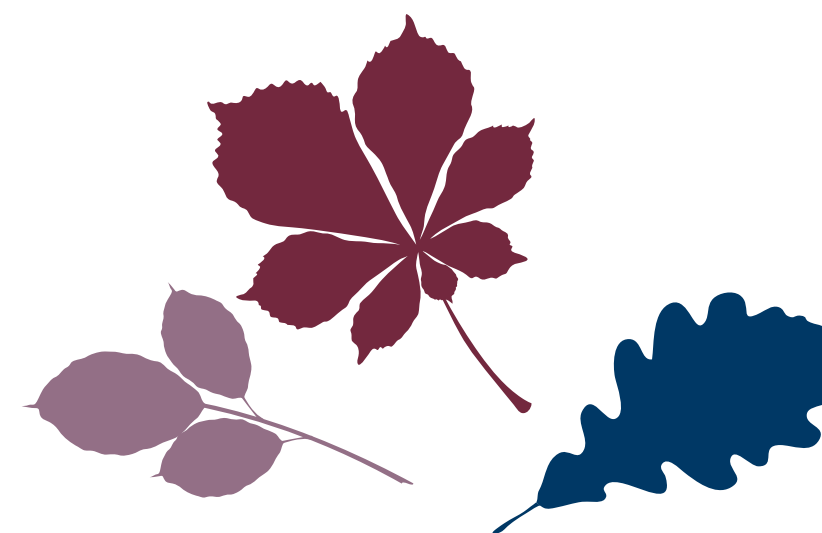




Key goals for 2023–2024

Key goals for 2023–2024

For further information about these priorities please refer to the **Epping Forest Management Strategy**



Strategic priorities	Strategic output	Completion date
5	Funded by the Worshipful Company of Cordwainers, Warlies Park waymarked trail installed.	July 2023
2,4,5	Countryside Stewardship final application for remainder of Forest submitted.	August 2023
1,2,4,5	First draw down of funds from Strategic Access Management and Mitigation Strategy agreement (SAMMS) to commence staff recruitment.	October 2023
4	Conservation Management Plan completed for The Temple.	November 2023
5	Income generated from Lord Mayors' Appeal for management of veteran trees.	November 2023
1,3,5	Clays Lane site re-tendered.	December 2023
3,5	Capel Road lease commenced.	December 2023
5	Staff restructuring and recruitment completed.	December 2023
5	Review of Residency Strategy for Epping Forest lodges.	December 2023
4	Stage 2 landing stage improvements at The Grotto completed.	January 2024
1,2,4,5,	Sustainable Visitor Strategy consultation with stakeholders.	March 2024
5	Review of Epping Forest charity governance and finance completed.	March 2024
2, 5	River Roding abstraction agreement achieved.	March 2024
5	Refurbishment of lodges ready for open market rental – target four lodges.	March 2024
3,5	Wanstead Flats football facility progressed to Gateway 3.	March 2024

Golden Hill Trail

A new waymarked trail has been created, thanks to funding by Haslers Chartered Accountants in Loughton. The Golden Hill Trail (so named as the Golding's Hill area was once known as 'Golden Hill') was created to help visitors navigate this delightful and varied area of Forest.

entrance area opening up views to the Pond and new signage has made the location much more desirable to visit. We hope that visitors will enjoy this location that is easily accessed on foot, bike or by public transport as a bus stop is located opposite the Pond.

The trail begins at Golding's Pond where new clearance of the



Staff from Haslers and Epping Forest launch the new Golden Hill Trail.



Epping Forest Annual Review
Photographers: Clare Eastwood, Mark Powter,
Chris Shepherd, Don Taylor and Yvette Woodhouse