



Summary Business Plan and Budget for 2024-25

1. Context

a. The Forest

The Forest is facing its biggest challenges in a generation, including the scale of adjacent development planned over the next 15 years (68,000 new households within a 6.2km “zone of influence”, with the subsequent increase in footfall and traffic), climate change and air pollution.

The City has a new Corporate Strategy and 4 new Natural Environment Strategies, which reflect many priorities which we have advocated, including an increased focus on community engagement, collaboration and biodiversity.

b. Organisation

Epping Forest Heritage Trust will be in the 3rd year of our strategy 2022-25, and will need to develop a new strategy for 2025 onwards towards the end of this year.

At the same time, we are still planning to do new things over the course of this year, from a fundraising appeal based on our policy and planning work, to launching a corporate partner programme and a new walking app for the Forest.

We are still learning about how our supporters and the wider community respond to these initiatives as we continue to move from being an organisation which is primarily delivered through volunteers to one where there is a small staff team to support the delivery of our charitable objectives, alongside our amazing volunteers.

2. Focus and priorities – Building our Community

Our focus in 2024/25 will be “Building our Community”.

Specifically we will build our community by:

- Extending our pilot community engagement activities with community organisations interested in exploring Epping Forest. We will build on our existing relationships with Muslim Hikers and Black Girls Hike and build new relationships
- Launching engagement with Corporate Partners based on feedback from existing contacts
- Enhancing our engagement with politicians in the various elections planned over the next 12 months – local, Londonwide and national – for the benefit of the Forest
- Launching our new Walking App for Epping Forest, to bring the Forest to the attention of a much wider audience
- Engaging a wider diversity of people and community organisations in our conservation activities.

We also plan to enhance our impact in responding to planning proposals around the Forest through the efforts of a small number of volunteers supported by the Chief Executive.

From an organisational development point of view our focus is now firmly on growing our membership and fundraising, as the requisite systems and structures are now in place to support this growth.

3. **Headline deliverables**

In 2024-25 our key deliverables will be:

A. Educating and inspiring people about the Forest

1. Launch a new walking app for the Forest *[May]*
2. Secure partner funding to build on our pilot community engagement programme that welcomes new people to the Forest, manages our visitor welcome and walks programme *[ongoing]*
3. Increase the number of people participating in our free monthly guided walk programme and host walks with Black Girls Hike, Muslim Hikers and at least 6 other community organisations *[ongoing]*
4. Optimise the impact of the Visitor Centre at High Beach in welcoming people to the Forest while maintaining current model of operation *[ongoing]*.

B. Conserve and grow

5. Consolidate our hands-on conservation activities, with a greater variety of hands-on conservation being undertaken by a more diverse set of participants, recruited both as individuals and through partnerships with at least 6 community organisations *[ongoing]*.

C. Protect

6. Deliver successful awareness campaigns in the run up to the local elections in Epping Forest District Council and the London Mayoral and Assembly elections in May
7. Respond impactfully to planning policy proposals which would have a significant negative impact on the Forest *[ongoing]*.

D. Organisational Priorities

8. Grow the number and generosity of our members and supporters, investing time and resource in recruiting and supporting them, for the benefit of the Forest *[ongoing]*
9. Secure at least £100k of new trust and foundation partnership income to support the delivery of our charitable objectives *[ongoing]*.

E. Governance priority

10. Develop a new strategy for the organisation to take effect from April 2025 [September onwards].

4. **Budget 2024-25**

The budget for the year sets out planned expenditure on delivering our charitable activities of £295k, including a further investment of £58k from the fund dedicated to delivering our strategy.

5. **Risk**

The Trustees have identified the key risks for the year to be:

- Income generation. We have ambitious targets which we are important to meet in order to ensure we meet are able to deliver our plans
- Loss of key staff and/or capacity
- Weakness in policy capacity.