



**Epping Forest  
Heritage Trust**



**2025-2030 Strategy**



# Contents

1. Introduction	1
2. Our vision and mission	3
3. Our beliefs	4
4. Our values	5
5. Strategic objectives	6
6. Strategic goals by 2030	7
7. Theory of Change	8
8. Delivering our impact	11
9. Our community	12
10. The need for ongoing protection and preservation of the Forest	13

## Foreword

Epping Forest is a unique and irreplaceable asset that is facing its biggest challenges since it was first protected by the Epping Forest Act in 1878. This Strategy sets out our ambition to grow our work to help protect and preserve the Forest over the next 5 years. We want to educate and inspire more people about this precious Forest, involve more people in direct work to conserve and grow it and increase our ability to advocate and campaign to protect it.

Protecting Epping Forest is a collective effort, and in order to do this we will continue to work in close partnership with the City of

London Corporation, who own and manage the Forest, and we will need the continued support of our members, volunteers, supporters and partner organisations.

By committing to this strategy, we are taking a crucial step in ensuring that Epping Forest thrives and is preserved for generations to come.



**James Harrington, Chair**

# Introduction



*Epping Forest continues to face the gravest threats that it has seen since it was first protected in 1878.*

Epping Forest is the largest open green space in London and Essex, a hugely important ancient Forest, a Site of Special Scientific Interest and a Special Area of Conservation, with iron age camps, 1,000 year old trees and rare woodland pasture habitats. It is owned and managed by the City of London Corporation, who as Conservators have a duty to preserve the Forest, and loved by local communities as well as visitors from further afield.

Epping Forest continues to face the gravest threats that it has seen since it was first protected in 1878. Climate crisis impacts of stronger winds, higher

temperatures and more rain, and high levels of pollution threaten its biodiversity; neighbouring development, including plans to build 68,000 housing units in its vicinity, threaten its resilience to increased visitor numbers and further pollution.

At the same time the Forest has the potential to help us tackle the crucial issues of our time: it helps mitigate the climate crisis by reducing temperatures and capturing carbon; it provides a vital amenity for people's health and wellbeing as a space to walk, cycle, ride, relax and enjoy.



*It is essential that we protect and preserve the Forest not just for our own current enjoyment, but also for the health and well-being of the Epping Forest community for generations of people to come.*

In 2022 we embraced a new strategic approach, investing our reserves to deliver greater impact for the Forest, at the same time as modernising Epping Forest Heritage Trust, and in particular engaging new audiences and communities. Moving forward we will build on the proud history of our predecessor organisations the Friends of Epping Forest and the Centenary Trust, as well as our achievements and learnings over the last 3 years, to do even more to protect the Forest.

An integral part of our strategy is to work in partnership with the Conservator to help educate and inspire people about the

Forest, help conserve and grow the Forest, and help protect the Forest through engagement, advocacy and campaigning, and by acting as a critical friend to the Conservator when necessary.

It is essential that we protect and preserve the Forest not just for our own current enjoyment, but also for the health and well-being of the Epping Forest community for generations of people to come.

**We set out below the vital role we believe Epping Forest Heritage Trust has in doing just that.**





# About us

We are a membership organisation and charity dedicated to preserving and protecting Epping Forest, its biodiversity, culture and heritage for people to enjoy now, and for generations to come. We have over 1,000 members, and work across the whole of Epping Forest.



## Our Mission

To protect, conserve, grow and celebrate the Forest's biodiversity, heritage and culture, and engage, educate and inspire other people to do the same.

## Our Vision

A thriving Forest, rich in biodiversity, heritage and culture; enjoyed and conserved now and for generations to come.



# Our beliefs

*We believe:*



a) That the Forest is irreplaceable due to its biodiversity, heritage and culture, and that it should be protected and preserved for generations to come.



b) That the Forest is good for people. It is good for their health and well-being, from encouraging people to be physically active to connecting them with nature, history and culture.



c) That interaction between people and the Forest is essential for both to flourish, but this interaction needs to be carefully balanced.



d) That the Forest should be accessible to everyone to enjoy responsibly.



e) That the Forest contributes to the health of the planet. It helps humanity tackle the climate emergency and captures carbon and produces oxygen. The more biodiverse it is, the more resilient it is to climate change.



f) That pollution in and around the Forest needs to be reduced to protect its biodiversity.



g) That more needs to be done to encourage sustainable transport to, from and around the Forest.



# Our values

*Our values underpin our approach to all our work:*



## *Inclusive*

We believe everyone should be able to enjoy the Forest responsibly, and everyone should be able to participate in our work. Everyone who comes into contact with EFHT should be safe and respected. We want to encourage people and communities who do not currently visit the Forest to do so.

## *Collaborative*

We want to collaborate with other people and organisations to optimise delivery of our mission.

## *Trustworthy*

We will be open and honest in all our work, give evidence-based advice and be clear about our areas of expertise and where others may be better able to help.

## *Sustainable*

We will work to reduce our environmental impact, and encourage others to do the same.



# Our strategic objectives

## 1 *Educate & Inspire*

We will educate and inspire people about the Forest

## 2 *Conserve & Grow*

We will do hands-on work to conserve and grow the Forest

## 3 *Protect*

We will protect the Forest through engagement, advocacy and campaigning



Team and attendees at Epping Forest Big Walk 2023. Wanstead Flats. The Big Walk is an annual event that EFHT hosts in collaboration with the City of London Corporation and local partners. Photo © Black Daffodil Photography

# Strategic goals by 2030

*By 2030, we will*

1

*Reach an audience of 50,000 people each year*

2

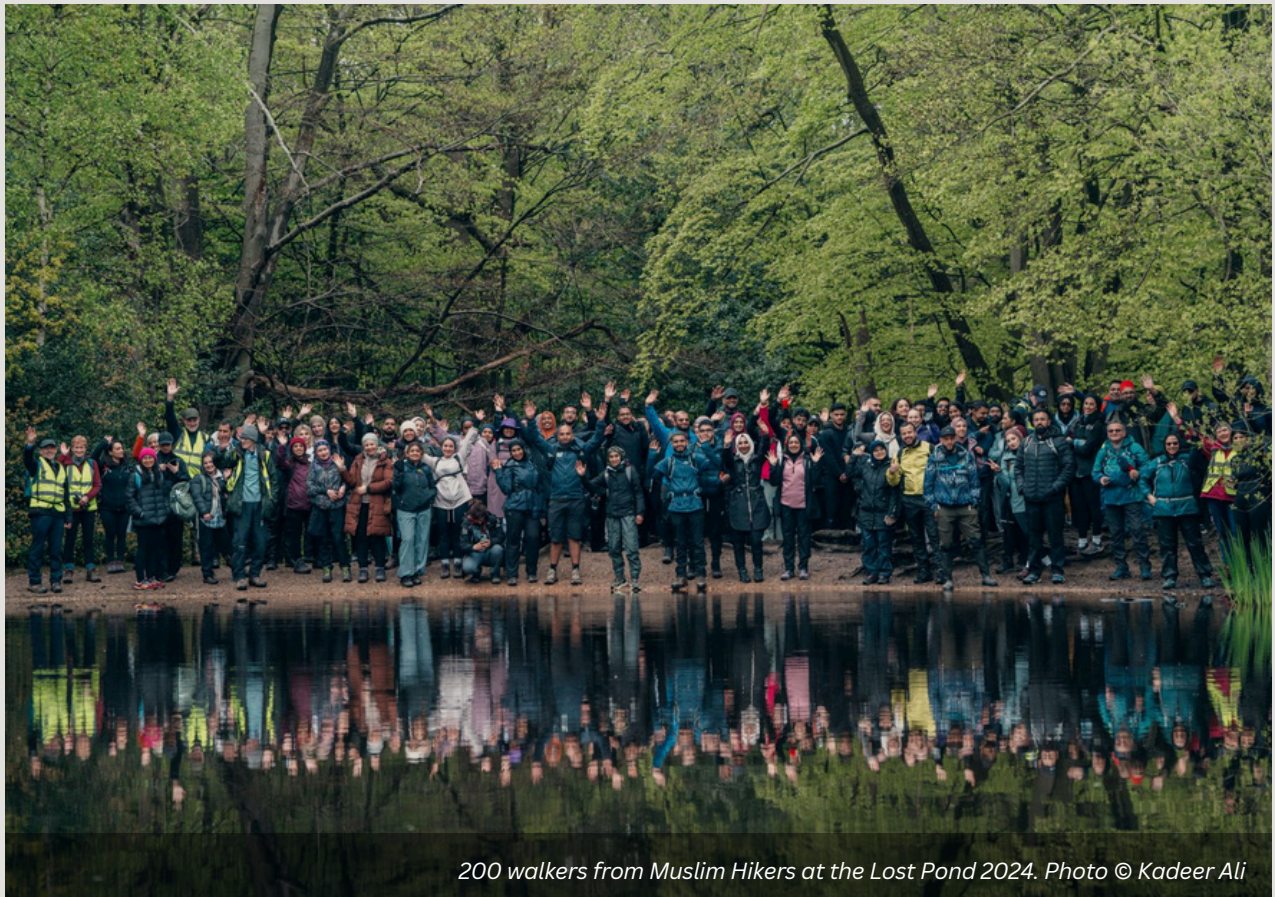
*Have at least 1,000 attendees for our walks each year*

3

*Have delivered 5,000 hours of volunteering activity each year to conserve the Forest*

4

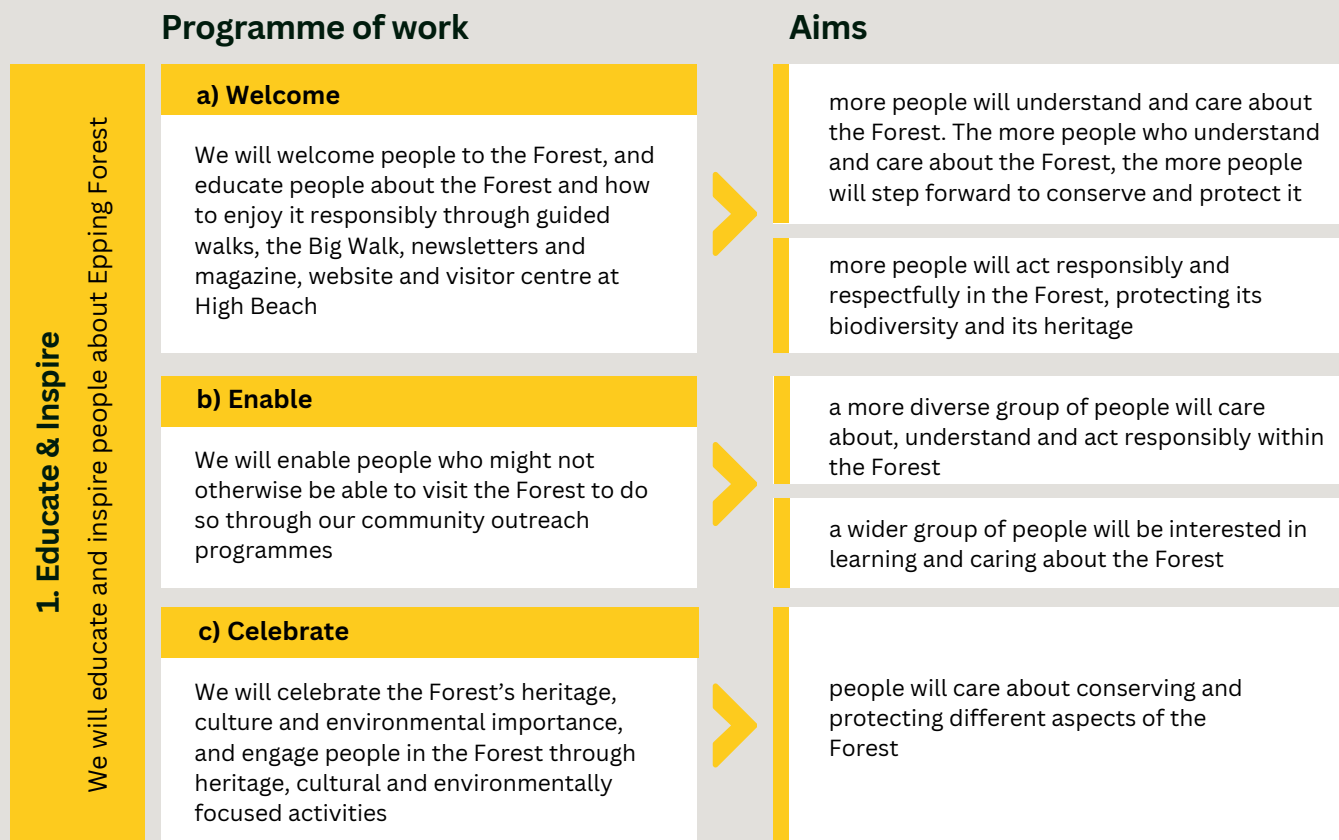
*Have over 1,200 individual members*



200 walkers from Muslim Hikers at the Lost Pond 2024. Photo © Kadeer Ali



# Theory of Change



*"Loved the hike, I live 10 minutes from Epping Forest & haven't ventured out on any of their trails so it was lovely to do it with Muslim hikers & my friends."*

*- Muslim Hikers' Collaboration Walk Attendee*

## Our work in action

### Behnu-Ki-Milan collaboration event

Behnu-Ki-Milan, is a mixed faith group of older, Asian women based at from the Trinity Centre in Newham, introduced to us by Sir Stephen Timms MP, as a result of the awareness-raising work we have done about the Forest in the run up to elections.

Listening to the type of activity in the Forest that would interest them, and with funding support from Aviva 'Save Our Wild Isles Community Fund' and City of London 'Enjoying Green Spaces & the Natural Environment Grant', we organised a short walk around the Easy Access path at High Beach, followed by a Forest-related block printing session in the Visitor Centre we run.



*Behnu-Ki-Milan Forest walk and block printing at High Beach. June 2024.  
Photo © Locality/Alex Brenner*

## 2. Conserve & Grow

We will do hands-on conservation activities and work to grow the Forest

### a) Hands-on conservation & biodiversity monitoring

We will run hands-on conservation activities to increase the biodiversity of the Forest and engage people in its conservation and monitoring its biodiversity

### b) Support efforts to grow the Forest & its Buffer Lands

We will support efforts to grow the Forest and its Buffer Lands, and support appropriate conservation activities on the Buffer lands

develop people's knowledge of, and care for, the Forest. As a result of that they are more likely to stand up and protect it

directly improve the biodiversity of the Forest

improve the health and well-being of people involved

enable people to tell their stories about conserving the Forest

demonstrate the impact of high-quality conservation work

inform our conservation policy work with hands on experience

enable the Conservator to optimise the use of their resources

better understand and be better able to communicate, the impact of our conservation activities on the Forest

help safeguard the existing Buffer Lands

protect Epping Forest itself from the impacts of adjacent development and increased usage

make available a wider area of Forest to enjoy, spreading the burden of increased usage across a larger area, and therefore protecting Epping Forest itself

enable the Conservator to optimise the use of their resources through supporting the appropriate planting and conservation of existing Buffer Lands

*"This was a really accessible, friendly session and a great way to do coppicing for the first time. I came along to learn about conservation and get some fresh air, and both were accomplished! Robyn is really knowledgeable and helpful, and this provides a great way to feel connected to the natural world, especially while living in London"*  
- Ellie, Women\* conservation session volunteer

## Our work in action

### Women\* only conservation sessions

Having realised that the majority of our hands-on conservation volunteers were men, we secured vital funding support to grow our conservation volunteering activities from the City Bridge Foundation. We set up women\* only conservation sessions, to provide a safe and inclusive space for women, trans and non-binary people. These sessions have been a huge success, with over 140 people having now taken part in a women\* only sessions, and the majority of all our conservation volunteers now being women.

\* for women, non-binary and trans people



Women\* hands-on conservation volunteers in Epping Forest



### 3. Protect

We will protect the Forest through engagement, advocacy and campaigning

#### a) Engage

We will engage with the public and local stakeholders in relation to public policy in relation to the Forest

*For example: Member consultation/surveys etc*

#### b) Advocate

We will advocate on behalf of the Forest to the City of London Corporation, neighbouring local authorities and other stakeholders

*For example: planning applications/local plan consultations/local election campaigns/Epping Forest & Commons Committee etc*

#### c) Research & campaign

We will research and campaign on key issues to protect the Forest, including on safe, sustainable transport to, from and around the Forest and the impact of adjacent development

*For example, on the need for lower speeds on Forest roads and on preventing local development negatively impacting the Forest.*

ensure we understand the needs and desires of local communities as well as the needs of the Forest

ensure local community voices are heard in relation to decision-making about the Forest

generate more public support for the Forest

ensure politicians and policymakers have the Forest front-of-mind when they are making decisions

engage people on issues that affect the Forest, and encourage them to stand with us to protect the Forest

ensure inclusion and accessibility are at the heart of decision-making about the Forest moving forward

help the public, politicians and policymakers make the best decisions about the Forest

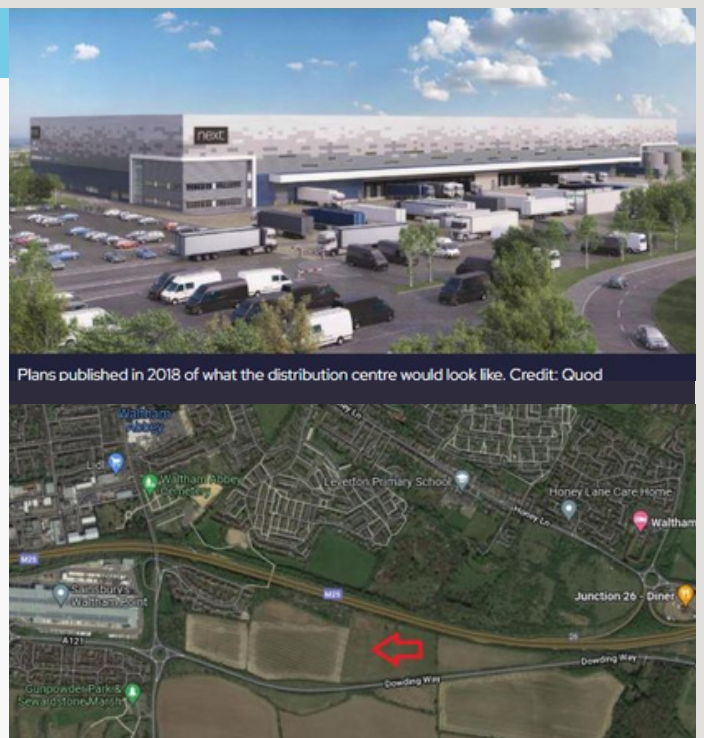
contribute to preserving the Forest, by reducing the negative impacts of developments, poor visitor behaviour, pollution, traffic and noise on the Forest

enable more people to safely visit the Forest and care about it

## Our work in action

### Blocking the Next Distribution Centre, north of the Forest

With the support of an amazing small team of volunteers we have rebooted our work reviewing and responding to planning proposals, with successes including blocking Next's proposed distribution centre on Dowding Way, north of the Forest, a number of other planning refusals where the plans, if implemented, would have damaged the Forest, and several conditions being imposed on permissions to protect the Forest.



# Delivering our impact





# Our community



Sustainably Muslim Forest walk. February 2024



Collaboration walk with Wanderers of Colour at Chingford. December 2024

*'Nature is a way to reset and feel connected. Having a community to do this with makes it that much sweeter.'*

*-Black Girls Hike family walk attendee*

*'A really well organised session with a great and diverse group of women. We worked very hard and I came out of it with a great sense of well being, feeling that I had achieved something worthwhile.'*

*-Womens\* conservation session volunteer*



Women\* conservation session



Bespoke Hands-on conservation day with VaChina. June 2024



Happy Loppers and Judy Adams, EFHT's Honorary Life President, in Epping Forest. December 2024

*'We LOVE working with EFHT - your knowledge and creativity have really brought the Forest alive for our participants.'*

*-Fences & Frontiers*



Fences & Frontiers, Urban Tree Festival Walk. May 2024

*'Very proud!'*

*- Robert, Happy Lopper*

*'A very enjoyable and informative stroll perfectly pitched by the leader. The story of saving Epping Forest needs to be better known and events such as this are vital!'*

*-Guided walk attendee*



Night walk. March 2025



Behnu-Ki-Milan Forest walk and block printing at High Beach. June 2024  
Photo © Locality/Alex Brenner



# The need for ongoing protection and preservation of the Forest



*We believe that the Forest is currently facing unprecedented threats and will continue to face these and other threats for the foreseeable future.*

These threats include neighbouring development, high levels of pollution and climate change.

In order for the Forest to be conserved and protected now, and for generations to come, we believe that the work we have set out in our strategic plan will be needed on an ongoing basis. The Forest will need people to care for it and advocate on its behalf for years to come. Our approach is therefore to develop programmes of work that are sustainable long into the future.

As an organisation that means that over the next 5 years we are planning to at least break even each year, and maintain an appropriate level of reserves for future investment or to deal with unanticipated events.

In order to achieve that we will:

- Grow our membership and the number and generosity of our supporters
- Develop the number and scale of our funding and corporate partnerships
- Broaden our range of free and chargeable activities
- Invest in the development of our staff, Trustees and volunteer teams, including developing a formal volunteer strategy
- Evolve the monitoring and evaluation of our work
- Raise our profile through all of our activities
- Strengthen our governance
- Work in close partnership with the City of London Corporation and other supporting organisations.





**Epping Forest  
Heritage Trust**

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