



LRA's Loughton News

18 December 2020

This issue has the latest update on the District Council-owned company called [Qualis and their current activity](#), [updates on our two libraries](#) and [what will replace part of the 87 Bus Route](#) that will be withdrawn shortly.

With the Coronavirus pandemic affecting our daily lives and Christmas, [here is what Tier 3 means for us](#).

Read also about [changes the government is planning](#) that will affect how our high streets are used, and updates on District Council plans for [two sites on Chequers Road](#).

And if you take the time to enjoy Epping Forest this year, check [what is open](#), and take care [sledding, around ice](#) and [watch for deer](#).

If you have some time over the Christmas break, why not [try LRA's Christmas Quiz](#)? There's even a prize...!

From all of us at LRA, thank you for supporting us through what has been a difficult and challenging year for everyone. We wish you all a Happy Christmas and New Year, along with our hope that 2021 brings better news and optimism for the future.

You can always contact us by email at contact@loughtonresidents.co.uk to raise an issue, to give your views, or to offer help.

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We'd be very grateful if you could pay your 2021 subscriptions now, by bank transfer, standing order or even a cheque: [here's how](#).

And if you're not sure whether you've paid for 2020, you can check by emailing membercheck@loughtonresidents.co.uk and if appropriate combine the two, please.

Lucton's Field, Borders Lane - Covenants

In our last Loughton News email, we [reported](#) on how LRA Cllr Chris Pond and other Cllrs 'called in' proposed amendments to the covenants that apply to Lucton's Field. The District Council then prepared [this report](#).

The Cabinet persisted and set aside the covenants despite the Overview and Scrutiny committee referring it back to them for reconsideration. LRA is disappointed with this outcome.

[Background on our website](#)

Qualis

Qualis was set up by the District Council to buy up investment properties to provide extra income for the District Council (and hence for Council tax payers). We have been concerned from the start that the Council is borrowing money cheaply from the Public Loan Works Board, at fixed rates, and investing it in much riskier assets, without apparently recognising the risks involved. (Other councils have been acting similarly, so that over the last three years the loans taken have been 14 times greater than over the preceding three years.)

To that end it has launched a major development in Epping, and has taken on the maintenance and repairs of Council housing properties.

The Government has now said it will act to prevent such loans (which are just for income generation, or "yield") in future (see [news article](#)). This leaves it uncertain as to what will happen to Qualis, who intend to seek to raise a further £30 million in May 2021. [More](#)

LRA comment: we are surprised to see that Qualis has bought two buildings outside the District. Birchwood Building in Leatherhead and Wickes, Maldon. See the Qualis Group Business Plan 2020-2021 [here](#).



Debden Library

New City College (Borders Lane) has offered to take on the running of Debden Library. The library is currently housed in the College building, but the County Council is threatening to close it (and other libraries) unless it is taken over by a local group.

Save Our Libraries Essex (SOLE) is campaigning against the closures, and against handovers to local groups (you can follow them on [Facebook](#) or [Twitter](#), and [sign their petition](#)). SOLE, and LRA Cllr Chris Pond, have been pressing for a community centre on The Broadway, including the Library; this would increase the use of the Library, and also support the Broadway as a place to visit.

Redevelopment of Loughton Library

We have been aware for some time that the County Council wishes to redevelop the Loughton Library building on Traps Hill to provide a higher building with flats above the Library.

Recently a resident alerted us to contamination testing by test drilling in the library

car park. However, as far as we know, no planning application has yet been made. This would come from the County Council, as they determine their own planning applications with the District and Town Councils being consulted. When an application is made, we'll let you know.

Image: Alex Kite



New District Local Plan

We are still waiting to learn when the Inspector will reply to the Council on the documents the Council have submitted earlier in the year. In the meantime, the Council has published an Interim Air Pollution Mitigation Strategy on its website. Once adopted, this would enable the Council to lawfully grant planning permission for new development that would result in a net increase in vehicle movements through the Epping Forest Special Area of Conservation (EFSAC).

LRA comment: we will be examining the Mitigation Strategy very carefully as this could open the floodgates for further developments in Loughton. [Background on our website](#)

Royal Mail deliveries

There have been a number of posts on various Facebook pages from people in Loughton who have been without postal deliveries because of staff shortages, which have been made worse by the need for some staff to self-isolate after being in contact with someone who's tested positive for Coronavirus.

LRA Cllr Chris Pond asked the leader of the County Council to raise this personally with the Managing Director of Royal Mail. It is understood Dame Eleanor Laing MP has also done so.

You can pick your mail and parcels up at the depot as long as you bring ID with your address on it. [Directions and revised opening hours.](#)



Replacement for Bus Route 87 (Langston Road Shopping Park - Harlow)

As we mentioned in the last Loughton News, this bus route will be withdrawn after December 30th.

Earlier this month the District Council Cabinet approved a proposal for a three month trial of a replacement service from January 2nd 2021. LRA Cllr Chris Pond has been keeping the District Council's nose to the grindstone on this and details have now been released.

[More on how the service operates is here.](#) To use the service you need to [pre-register your interest as a first step](#) and then pre-book for both the peak and off peak times.

It will approximately mirror the route of the Arriva 87, covering Debden, Theydon Bois, Epping, Epping Green, Staple Tye and Harlow. Princess Alexandra and St Margaret's Hospitals will also be included, as well as the Epping Forest District Council offices, Epping Forest Shopping Park and New City College – Epping Forest Campus. Tube links are provided at Debden and Epping stations.

The Broadway Post Office

LRA Cllr Chris Pond reports that the Post Office are still in talks, but finding a replacement is obviously not proving to be easy.

LRA's Christmas Quiz

Even in this strange and sad year, we're happy to bring you the usual [Christmas quiz](#). This year the theme is films – almost all of them well known, and certainly likely to have been on TV, as well as at the cinema. It's a bit longer than usual, but with lockdowns and restrictions in some form, we thought you may have a bit more time on your hands.



There is a prize of a book token or fizz for the first correct answers out of the hat. Answers to lesandsueharris@aol.com by January 5th please.

Stony Path

Residents in Stony Path have been advised by the North Essex Parking Partnership (NEPP) that the double yellow lines protecting their junction are illegal and cannot be enforced, as the necessary Traffic Regulation Order (TRO) was not obtained in 2003 when the District Council (the then highway authority), put them in. Following an intervention by LRA Cllr Chris Pond, NEPP are proposing righting this anomaly by a temporary TRO to be issued in January.

Progress on Potholes

As mentioned in a previous Loughton News, LRA Cllr Chris Pond nominated a long list of road repairs. Defects in The Drive and Pyrles Lane are now due for repair on December 22nd.

North Weald Airfield Inland Border Facility

Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs (HMRC) is proceeding with works to establish a temporary Inland Border Facility at the airfield for a period of two years, commencing on 1 January 2021. Periodic communications will be published on the Council's website to keep residents informed. Further details [here](#).

LRA comment: although the intention is to avoid lorries travelling through Epping Forest, we remain concerned that the extra traffic generated by the use of the site will in practice have an adverse impact on the Epping Forest Special Area of Conservation.

Draft Sustainability Guidance

Earlier this year the District Council declared a Climate Emergency, including a resolution to do everything within the Council's power to make the Epping Forest District Council area carbon neutral by 2030. To support this, the Council has set in motion a public consultation (now closed) on two draft Sustainability Guidance documents for use across the District; one for Major Developments (10+ units) and one for Minor Developments (1-9 units).

LRA comment: we have responded to the consultation to say that we think the documents are poorly drafted and not fit for purpose, and would place an intolerable burden on developers, particularly on small firms.

Local Government Reform (LGR)

On 3rd July, the then Minister for Local Government, Simon Clarke MP, gave a speech setting out the Government's vision for local government – building on commitments made in the Conservative Party manifesto. He confirmed that the Government would be issuing a White Paper on devolution and local recovery in the autumn that would set out plans for “many more elected mayors and more unitary councils”. Since the summer, the Government's position on LGR has shifted and LGR has been relatively deprioritised; the promised White Paper has been delayed.

LRA comment: Essex has one of the most complex political and organisational geographies in the UK – 1 county council, 12 city, borough and district councils and 2 unitary councils. We cannot form a view about LGR until there are firm proposals, but we remain concerned about maintaining – and increasing – local democratic control of Loughton's affairs, and about the inevitable delays and extra costs that any reorganisation would involve.

Coronavirus/Covid-19



More

Loughton, along with parts of Essex, is now in Tier 3 (Very High Alert). [The restrictions are here](#), however during December 23rd to 27th [different rules on social contact will apply](#).

Latest data for Essex

In the seven days up to 10 December, there were 4,547 confirmed cases of Coronavirus in Essex. [More](#). For Epping Forest the case numbers have increased from 228.5 to 444.6 per 100,000 in the one week to December 10th.

You can read [more local updates](#) and [the latest data for Essex](#), plus detailed data for cases and deaths for each district [here](#).

Complaints on Compliance

Any complaints received by LRA on breaches of Coronavirus restrictions by licensed premises are being referred to relevant officers at the District Council, and are are

anonymised unless the resident agrees.

From feedback received from the District Council, officers are attending and licensees are being reminded of the rules.

Vaccinations

The NHS is currently offering the COVID-19 vaccine to people most at risk from coronavirus. The vaccine is being offered in some hospitals and hundreds of local vaccination centres run by GPs. [More](#)

Vaccination sites in Essex, as chosen by the NHS, have been announced. You have to wait to be contacted for a summons from your GP - councils have no say in this. The sites near us are:

- St Margaret's Hospital, Epping
- From next week, Buckhurst Way Clinic

However there is no site in Loughton and LRA Cllr Chris Pond has protested.

Late-opening for shops

The Government has announced that retailers will be able to extend their daily opening hours from Monday to Saturday in the run up to Christmas and through January. However, the Government doesn't appear to be legislating to permit what could be breaches of current planning permissions for some shops; instead, it is encouraging local councils not to enforce any restrictions on opening hours. [More](#).

Bank of England Study – coronavirus on banknotes

As part of [a study on the impact of the pandemic on cash usage](#), the Bank of England looked at concerns of virus transmission on banknotes.

For the purposes of the study, a very high dose of a coronavirus, representing a plausible worst-case scenario, was applied to paper and polymer banknotes (equivalent to someone coughing or sneezing directly onto the note, and as such is highly unlikely to occur in day-to-day life. However, it provides accurate data on how fast the virus declines and how this compares to other everyday surfaces). They also examined how Coronavirus behaved on stainless steel and plastic, which are representative of typical surfaces that people come into contact with in everyday life, and on used and new banknotes.

They found that the level of virus found on a banknote remained stable for one hour after exposure. However, after six hours, virus droplets on banknotes had declined rapidly to 5% or less of their initial level on both paper and polymer notes, old and new. Similar declines were seen on plastic and steel surfaces, although the decline in viability on some of these wasn't as large as on banknotes. Importantly, 24 hours after exposure, the virus was only present at very low levels on all surfaces tested.

[More](#)

Don't forget all modern polymerised notes (produced of course in Loughton) are washable.

District Council Support

The District Council has [further information and guidance here](#), plus

Loughton Covid- 19 Mutual Aid Group

support for [residents](#) and [businesses](#), and [help for getting you back on your feet](#).

This Loughton group connects neighbours to offer practical help during the pandemic, through Facebook and WhatsApp groups. [More](#)

Planning and Licensing

[Read more on our website](#) about Planning and Licensing, the role of the LRA Plans Group (LRAPG), how to get more information and how to comment to the Town Council and the District Council.

The District Council takes the decisions on planning applications. The application will be decided upon by a Council Officer or by Cllrs in a District Council Planning Committee, and residents' comments on the proposals will be taken into account but not necessarily agreed with. This is a quasi-legal process, and decisions have to be taken **on planning grounds only**, based on the national planning legislation and the District Local Plan, whatever the views and feelings of the individual Cllrs involved.

If you wish to comment, don't delay. The process is time critical with several stages along the way. If you wish to make comments please try to submit them before the deadline set by the Council. Although submissions can be made and have to be considered up to the time a decision is made, once the statutory deadline has passed, the application might be determined before your comments are received.

More changes on the High Street

The government has announced new permitted development rights to allow town centre uses such as offices, restaurants, shops and gyms, to convert to housing without the need for planning permission.

LRAPG is concerned this may blight our town centres. Turning shops into residential produces dead frontages and blights the rest of the high street. They do not generate local spending, footfall or vitality to local centres. Although the justification for the changes is based on easing struggling high streets during the [Coronavirus](#) crisis, the proposed new rights can be exercised elsewhere and can impact our GP surgeries, retail parks, business parks, gyms, crèche, nursery or light industrial units. LRAPG is also concerned landlords will be tempted to flip vacant units to residential before looking at other, more traditional, commercial uses.

We are very concerned that these latest proposals will undermine the ability of communities to inform decisions about the future of their local high street.

Land and Garages Chequers Road Site B

In 2016 the District Council gave itself approval to erect a terrace of five houses with ten parking spaces on this site almost opposite the end of Deepdene Road. However, they never started work and so the approval expired. In the meantime, they have demolished the garages and the site has been used as a building compound, without the necessary planning permission. Mud has been dropped over the road and no attempt has been made to clear it up, and traffic cones have been dumped around the entrance of the site. The site is being churned up – a dangerous situation as it is very badly contaminated with asbestos and other chemicals. LRAPG has asked the Council's Planning Enforcement team and Environmental Health officers to look into these matters.



The Council has now submitted a new application for a block of eight flats with six parking spaces (the County standard would be 15 spaces, which can be reduced if there is good public transport). LRAPG has objected because it represents an overdevelopment of the site with insufficient parking, is poorly designed and will affect the amenity of the neighbours.

Application [EPF/2502/20](#). The formal consultation period has ended.

Green open spaces, Chequers Road/ Deepdene Road

The District Council has also applied to destroy the green areas on the corners of Chequers Road and Deepdene Road by installing 6 parking spaces and by relocating an electricity substation (currently nearby). Some local residents are very concerned at the loss of the green spaces.

LRAPG has objected as this would be contrary to the Council's own draft green infrastructure strategy, which requires prior consultation with residents (not carried out). In addition, the proposal points up the inadequate allowance for parking in the Council's proposal for flats nearby (see item above) and would form a very dangerous precedent in relation to Loughton's other green spaces.

Application [EPF/2614/20](#). The formal consultation period has ended.

Next warehouse in Waltham Abbey

At a meeting on December 19th, a District Council Planning Committee will consider an application by Next for a warehouse on Green Belt land north of Dowding Way, Waltham Abbey. The application has created considerable concern in the area. The Council is proposing the introduction of a right turn ban from the A121 Honey Lane East into Forest Side in order that it can conclude that there won't be any adverse effect on the integrity of the Epping Forest Special Area of Conservation.

Application [EPF/2503/19](#). The formal consultation period has ended.

New Breed Bottle Shop Ltd, 287 High Road

The District Council has approved a premises licence for this specialist off-licence with a local & UK focus on independent producers of craft beer, wine & spirits, subject to the condition that the consumption of alcohol on the premises shall be for product sampling only and not as a bar or public house.

Application [202035310](#). The consultation period has ended.

Slots o Luck, 65 The Broadway

This is an application for a new adult gaming centre premises licence.

LRAPG has objected as there are already far too many gambling businesses in this small local shopping parade such as William Hill, Ladbrokes and a new gaming centre which has opened recently opposite the application site.

This is a residential area with young families living above and around The Broadway. There is a lot of social housing in the area, and vulnerable people who will be attracted to this type of establishment. LRAPG considers young vulnerable adults will be attracted and easily exploited by the glamour and glitz of such a use. They will all too easily lose money on slot machines that they can ill afford to lose, and this will lead to them hanging around on The Broadway and to more crime and antisocial behaviour.

Roads, Parking and Travel

Free off street parking at the weekends

Weekend parking is free in District Council-run off street car parks throughout December. [More](#)

Remember, parking is not free in car parks such as Morrisons and M&S, although that is dependent on the ticket machines working. If not, you may get a (small) early Christmas present of free parking.



Parking on Borders Lane

We were contacted by a resident who was concerned that the District Council were saying that in future they would fine people who park vehicles on the wide grass verge in front of the houses between The Hawthorns and Deepdene Road. This has always been an offence, but has not been enforced.

Nationally there is a new impetus to preserve gardens and green spaces. Last year the Council abandoned its programme to provide extra parking spaces on their estates. However, if a resident needs a disabled parking space, they should approach the County Council.

Shelley Grove

Residents in Shelley Grove have been refused a single yellow line prohibiting parking between 2-3pm by the North Essex Parking Partnership (NEPP).

This appears to be a new NEPP policy on the grounds that single yellow lines give them undue enforcement difficulties in the narrow window for an enforcement officer to attend. This may presage the end of new single-hour single hour lines throughout Loughton.

Residents have been offered the alternative of a Controlled Parking Zone (CPZ) with permits and they have accepted.

Planned Road Closures

Pump Hill

The road will be closed between Queens Road and York Hill for gas mains replacement from January 18th until February 5th. [More](#)

Baldwins Hill

The road will be closed for gas mains replacement from January 18th until February 5th. [More](#)

Brooklyn Parade

The road will be closed for road and kerbside repairs from January 11th to January 13th. [More](#)

Clays Lane

The road will be closed on January 15th to enabling cutting down of overhanging tree branches. [More](#)

Christmas and New Year Travel

Between December 23rd and January 3rd, most TfL services will be running. However, there will be service changes and planned work on the public transport and road networks. [More](#)



Help from TfL staff

TfL say they are very aware that coronavirus may make you feel more anxious than usual about travelling on public transport; their station staff are there to provide assistance if you need it. Visit their [help from staff page](#) to find out more or call 0343 222 1234. They say that their Turn-up-and-go service is popular with customers with visual impairments, mobility impairments, and groups, and doesn't need booking.

Police and Crime

Response to problems in The Broadway

Following concerns raised at the last police Debden Q+A session regarding anti-social behaviour and violent disorder on The Broadway and nearby, a number of teams have been putting in additional hi-visibility patrols in the area.

Rapid robbery response

Reports of a robbery in Loughton last month brought an immediate and rapid response (seven minutes) from four local teams and the dog section. Five suspects were arrested.

Shoplifter bagged

Last month a store in Debden was having repeat issues from shoplifting. The local team made enquiries and then went on the hunt. They located a suspect who was arrested, interviewed, and then charged and remanded for 12 separate theft offences.

Who do you report crime to?

- Crime, as it is happening and when there is a strong possibility that the police will catch the criminal if they attend with some urgency: phone 999
- Crime when the criminals have left the scene: phone 101, online or via Live Chat through the [Essex Police website](#).
- Anonymously via Crimestoppers on 0800 555 111.

You can report a business that you think has broken the law or acted unfairly by phoning Citizen's Advice (0808 223 1133) and they will refer your case to Essex

Trading Standards if appropriate.

You can report breaches of the coronavirus regulations to the District Council for action by emailing ContactUs@eppingforestdc.gov.uk or calling 01992564000.

Who do you report phishing, suspicious texts, emails and fraud to?

- Suspicious emails should be forwarded to report@phishing.gov.uk
- Suspicious texts should be forwarded on to 7726
- Fraud should be reported to [Action Fraud](#).

How are the police performing?

You can see the quarter 2, 2020/21 summary [here](#) and the full report [here](#).

Have your say on paying for policing and fire & rescue services in Essex

What are your thoughts on paying for policing and fire rescue services in Essex? Do you want more investment in the services and what are your priorities? Fill in a [survey](#) by midnight on Sunday, December 20. [More](#).

Funding for Essex Police comes from two sources, central government funding and local council tax. Taking these two funding sources into account Essex Police receives the second lowest funding per resident of any police force in the country and has one of the lowest council tax precepts for policing.



Improve your online security

Recovering when you've been hacked can take far more effort than taking a few simple precautions beforehand – see [Action Fraud's simple tips](#).

E-Scooters

Are you thinking of buying someone an e-scooter for Christmas? Apart from a few areas where there are trials being run, they can only be used on private land with the land-owner's permission. If you are stopped on one in any public place (road, footpath, public park etc), you can be dealt with the same motoring offences as a car: failing to stop for police, dangerous riding, careless riding, no insurance, no driving licence, no tax, riding on a footpath, etc.



Next year, six Essex urban areas will trial the use of e-scooters in defined zones, starting first in Basildon and then Braintree, Brentwood, Clacton, Chelmsford and Colchester. They will have a locking mechanism so won't be usable outside these areas.

Council News

District Council deficits

A report to the Cabinet last month showed a deficit of £2.1m for 2021/22. However, this assumes £1m in Government support for Covid-19, and drawing down £1m from Reserves. The underlying budget deficit is therefore £4.1 million for 2021/22. The Council will be required to eliminate any deficit and set a balanced budget for 2021/22 in February 2021.

There will also be a difficult position in 2022/23 with an in-year budget shortfall of £1.1m, although the Council believes it could cope even with no Government support for Covid-19 given a draw-down of £0.5m from Reserves. From 2023/24 through to 2025/26 the position appears healthier, although longer range forecasts are, by their very nature, less reliable. [More](#).

District Council charges

The Council charge tenants living in Council-owned blocks of flats for additional services, such as the cleaning of blocks and communal utility costs such as electricity for lighting. Previous years' increases in line with the Consumer price Index now mean that income is £675,000 less than current charges. The Council needs to increase charges to the level of the actual cost for each individual property. Tenants who are in receipt of benefit (about 70%) will get the increases covered by housing payment support. The increases will also affect leaseholders in Council properties. The Council will spread the increases over 3 years. [More](#).

The Council has also approved the introduction of charges for permission to create front garden parking (applies to Council and ex-Council dwellings) and other miscellaneous items. [More](#).

District Council housebuilding

[Update](#) on the various council-house building projects in the District, including those in Loughton.

County Council finance

The County Council's half-yearly report has revealed a £4.1m underspend in health and adult social care. There are fewer older people in residential and domiciliary care, which has left the Council £3.4m better off.



Town Council Building Design Award 2021

Can you nominate a recent Loughton building project for the Council's [Building Design Award](#)? Last year the award went to a rebuild at 1 Hillcrest Road.

Image: Loughton Town Council

Winter salt & grit

The Town Council welcomes volunteers to help clear snow and spread salt on the pavement and road outside their homes. If you live in a hillier part of Loughton, contact 020 8508 4200 after January 1st (existing volunteers will be contacted directly).



Local News



Loughton Leisure Centre - Opening Hours

[See here](#) for changed opening hours over Christmas and New Year. Opening arrangements are subject to changes in lockdown restrictions. [More](#)

The advice from Places Leisure is that under the Tier 3 coronavirus rules, the gym and pool will still be open, but no classes will take place. You will need to book in advance either via the [Places Locker app](#) or member area on [the website](#). If you arrive at the centre without pre-booking, you may not be able to enter and take part in your activity. [More](#)

Wildlife Photographs at the Museum

The Epping Forest District Museum will host an exhibition of wildlife photos on loan from the Natural History Museum in London from January 23rd. Tickets are free but need to be [booked](#). (The museum was due to reopen January 4th but is subject to changes in lockdown restrictions). [More](#)

Health and Wellbeing

New NHS approach to A&E

NHS 111 can help if you have an urgent medical problem and you're not sure what to do. Anyone [going online](#) or calling the free NHS 111 number will be given a thorough assessment and then helped to find treatment, which could be at their local pharmacy, their GP surgery or an appointment slot at an A&E department or Urgent Treatment Centre.

If you go to an emergency department, urgent care or urgent treatment centre, without a booked appointment, you will be assessed by a senior nurse to see if you need immediate emergency treatment. You may be asked to contact NHS 111 to be assessed and directed to the most appropriate service for your needs. See the [video](#).

- You should always call 999 if someone is seriously ill or injured, or if their life is at risk

No-one who needs emergency care will be turned away.

St Clare Hospice dementia support

The Hospice is launching a new dementia project to support people living with advanced dementia, and their carers, across West Essex and East Hertfordshire. [More](#).

Know some-one elderly or vulnerable living alone?

If you have a neighbour who lives alone, you might like to ask them if you can have a contact number of a relative who can gain access, should anything untoward happen to them & the Emergency services can't get any response by knocking and would have to break in.

As an alternative, [Voluntary Action Epping Forest](#) have a police-checked Handyperson who is able to supply and fit police approved key safes for £82 (but obviously a neighbour needs to know the combination). If you have a family member who would benefit from one, please email admin@vaef.org.uk or call 01992 910 701 and leave a message, someone will then be in touch to arrange fitting.

Epping Forest

Visiting Epping Forest

In keeping with the latest government advice, the current status is (but [check for the latest here](#)):

- Epping Forest Visitor Centre at Chingford: open Tuesday to Sunday 10am - 3pm. The gallery and display spaces will be closed until further notice - but the shop will be open for in-person and 'call and collect' shopping.
- High Beach Visitor Centre: closed until further notice. Toilet facilities will remain open in the adjacent block.
- Queen Elizabeth's Hunting Lodge: not open as usual at the moment, but you can book a private tour of the Hunting Lodge. [More](#)
- The Temple: closed until further notice
- Ambresbury Banks: guided tour sales back. [More](#)
- Chingford Golf Course: open

More in [the latest Forest Focus](#) email newsletter (although take care as this was written before the government advice changed) and you can [sign up to receive the emails here](#).



Sledging in the Forest

Epping Forest has some fantastic hills for sledging - the top three, as identified by readers in 'Epping Forest Awards' from Forest Focus in 2018 were:

1. Baldwins Hill
2. Pole Hill
3. Warren Hill

Other good sledging locations include the Pillow Mounds at High Beach, the hill behind the Warren Wood pub, Walthamstow Reservoir in Waterworks Wood, Yates' Meadow and Warlies Park.

Whilst the Conservators love to see visitors having fun in the Forest when there is snow, they ask you to exercise caution when sledging anywhere, as it can be a

dangerous activity and is undertaken at your own risk.

Image: [Forest Focus](#)

Ice warning

Please take special care when walking near the Forest's ponds and lakes during icy weather. Do not walk on the ice and keep dogs on leads near any frozen ponds.

Image: [Forest Focus](#)



Watch out for deer please

We have had reports of deer being hit and badly injured or killed by vehicles on roads in the Forest. The days are shorter and darker, and the 40mph is there to protect motorists as well as the deer. Indeed, 40 is too fast round some of the Forest bends if round the corner there's a deer crossing the road.

Car park charges in Forest car parks

The Corporation of London is faced with an increasing problem of allowing free access to the Forest, while protecting the Special Area of Conservation and Site of Special Scientific Interest.

The Corporation is now proposing to charge for parking, starting with 14 of their 55 car parks (the ones that experience the worst parking problems), including 3 at High Beach and 5 in Chingford. We understand that at the Epping Forest and Commons Committee on 16 November the elected Verderers opposed [the proposals](#), which were nevertheless carried. The next step will be a public consultation.

And More

Christmas Day activities

In these uncertain times, WEA staff will be providing [free online activities on Christmas Day](#) for everyone, whether you are feeling lonely, or are just needing a moment away from the busy family. Their short activities will run throughout the day and will provide fun and a chance to chat. (The WEA provides a wide range of adult education.)



Be safe in the snow and ice!

If you have to go out on slippery paths, then wearing slip-on "ice grips" can give you a much better grip and reduce the risk of a fall. Try [searching "ice grips"](#) for suppliers.

Royal Mail collects your parcels from your home

This [new service](#) lets you arrange for Royal Mail to collect up to 5 packages at a time for 72p each, plus postage. Book and pay online, print out the labels and book your collection. And you can arrange a pre-paid return collection to a retailer for 62p.

Lee Valley Country Park – new Wildlife Centre

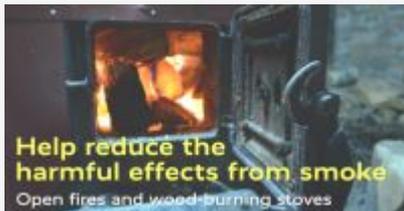
The new Centre overlooks Seventy Acre Lake, a great place to see bitterns and many other birds. Free; open 10am-4pm 7 days a week. You must pre-book. [More.](#)

Research into women’s health in post-war Britain – can you help

Researchers at the University of Essex are looking for women from London who were either born between 1940 and 1970, or migrated to the UK during that time, to take part in an exciting oral history project exploring women’s health in post-war Britain. The researchers from the [Body, Self and Family project](#) are studying women’s experiences of physical and emotional health in times of sweeping social change to help girls today, and they need you to tell your story.

Free trees and hedges

The Woodland Trust is providing free trees and hedges to schools and community groups as part of its plan to help meet the millions of new plantings needed to meet the 2050 carbon net-zero target. [Here’s](#) how to apply.



Open fires and wood-burning stoves

Open fires and wood-burning stoves can cause breathing problems such as asthma and contribute to other health conditions. Discover some simple steps to reduce environmental and health impacts. [More.](#)



Have you seen parakeets locally?

In a [previous Loughton News email](#), we reported on how parakeets came to be here.

Have you seen any parakeets locally? LRA Cllr David Wixley has spotted them on the Roding Valley Recreation Ground and in gardens in Roding ward. If you spot them around town, email David at david.wixley198@btinternet.com, and let him know what they are feeding on (if you know).

[More on parakeets here](#) and if you want to go a stage further and help with some Citizen Science, sightings of parakeets (and any other wildlife) can be reported at [iRecord](#).

Image: [Martin Sepion](#)

Thank you for being an LRA member. Our next Loughton News email is due to be issued Saturday January 23rd although that date could change.

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