

# Minutes of the Sixth meeting of Ashdown Area Deer Group

7<sup>th</sup> May 2008, Ashdown Forest Centre, Wych Cross

Present: Colin Booty (RSPCA), Neil Brookes (British Deer Society), Jamie Cordery (Deer Initiative; minute-taker), Dale Foden (East Sussex County Council), Richard Grimwood (MoD), Graeme Lake (East Sussex County Council), Fred Marshall (previously Conservators of Ashdown Forest), Alan Morriss (Pippingford), Hew Prendergast (Conservators of Ashdown Forest; chairman), Kim Wheeler-Mallows (MoD).

## 1) Apologies

Jochen Langbein (Deer Initiative), Brian Ellis (Firearms Officer, Sussex Police), Derek Stimpson, John Sully (Rystwood Estate Ltd, Forest Row and liaison with BASC), Chris Brooks (BASC), Mark Weaver (CLM-Buckhurst Estate).

## 2) Minutes of the last Meeting

The Minutes of the last meeting were approved.

## 3) Matters Arising.

Before continuing with the meeting subjects of the meeting the following Matters Arising were dealt with:

3, 4 e Jamie to contact Jochen for designs of seasonal signage

6 Jamie to re-draft introductory letter in the light of the Deer Warden Scheme meeting on the 6<sup>th</sup> May; a number of those present had expressed an interest in a meeting on the subject of deer management.

## 4) Traffic Mitigation Sub Group

Graeme Lake gave a summary of the traffic mitigation situation. The following points were noted:

a. There has been no reaction from GOSE to the suggestion that permanent “cricket score” signs be erected which update motorists on the DVC toll on local roads. Graeme intends to contact GOSE again, this time in writing in order to elicit a response. In the meantime Graeme suggested the possible alternative of temporary “Corex” signs attached to existing deer warning signs; these would be replaced by an ESCC traffic officer (monthly?) as the DVC count increased. Dale confirmed that his budget could pay for the signs and Graeme undertook to investigate their manufacture along the lines of the design discussed.

b. Graeme confirmed that a reduction to 50 mph on the A272 at Piltdown is now in place and that a short section of the A272 near the junction with the A22 will have a new 40mph limit when the new roundabout is constructed near the Veolia waste site

## 5) RTC Sub Group

Dale Foden briefed on the Deer Warden Scheme for dealing with DVC.

- a. The Scheme was approved by ESCC early in 2008 and is supported by Sussex Police. A press release was issued in March 2008 which resulted in a good response from potential participants.
- b. A meeting to roll out the scheme was held on 6<sup>th</sup> May 2008 with an attendance of 26 and apologies from a number of others who intended to take part in the scheme. As of

this meeting (7th May) Dale had already received 7 completed application forms. Indications are that the potential coverage is good, particularly in the AADG area and it is hoped that the Scheme will be active by August 2008. Dale is still accepting enquiries at [highways@eastsussex.gov.uk](mailto:highways@eastsussex.gov.uk) or telephone on 0845 60 80 193 and will issue progress reports as the Scheme evolves. East Sussex County Councillor Bob Tidy was present at the meeting and recorded his thanks to Dale Foden for his enormous effort in getting the scheme running. The AADG added their thanks also.

- c. The logistics of providing the risk assessment training which is an integral part of the scheme were discussed and a number of dates were suggested. Dale, Neil, and Jamie will put together a programme so that when dates are agreed much of the ground work will already be done. Neil offered Wadhurst Park as a potential venue for at least one of the training events. The Ashdown Forest Centre can also be available and Forest Rangers could take part in the training, both as contributors and as wardens
- d. Hew reported that, despite a reduction in the area covered by his staff together with staffing shortages, the number of DVCs in 2007 had been comparable with the year before (336) and that the toll for 2008 was on a par with the previous two years.

## **6) Management Group**

Jamie gave the results of the thermal imaging census carried out on 26<sup>th</sup>-27<sup>th</sup> March 2008 by the Deer Initiative and Forest Rangers on the Forest and areas immediately to the North and West. A total of 720 deer were seen on what turned out to be a cold, wet night. Jamie will inform Alan of the numbers for Pippingford. The idea of an area-wide daytime census using local volunteers was discussed; potentially such a census could have the dual benefit of involvement of the local community, thus increasing deer awareness, and add to the limited data already available on deer numbers. The aim would be to carry out the count in late autumn 2008, or more probably, March 2009. Jamie will draft a rationale and describe methods used elsewhere to good effect.

With regard to strengthening contacts with local landowners and encouraging discussion about deer issues, Jamie will re-draft his introductory letter and submit it to the Group together with suggestions as to who to target and how to send it out.

## **7) AOB**

Alan reported that he had offered DEFRA the use of Pippingford Park for an immuno-contraception trail as a means of controlling deer numbers.

Alan raised the question of the potential impact of Bluetongue disease on deer and all agreed to inform the group of any potential indications of the disease (cases of lameness/stiffness in deer and depression of fecundity have been reported in the USA). Fred confirmed that he was involved in vaccinating some park deer against the disease.

Kim asked whether group members used a standard methodology for inspecting DVC carcasses. Most of the carcasses are simply disposed of in an approved manner and very few were inspected due to their damaged nature.

## **8) Date of next meeting**

The date of the next meeting was provisionally set for 15<sup>th</sup> October 2008.