

Minutes of the meeting of Ashdown Area Deer Group (AADG)

15 October 2008, Ashdown Forest Centre, Wych Cross

Present: Neil Brookes (British Deer Society, BDS) Jamie Cordery (Deer Initiative, DI), Dale Foden (Deputy Network Manager, East Sussex County Council [ESCC]), Graeme Lake (ESCC), David Knowles (BASC), Fred Marshall (Conservators of Ashdown Forest), Alan Morriss (Pippingford), Mark Weaver (Complete Land Management, CLM), Kim Wheeler Mallows (MOD).

1) Apologies

Rodney Ash (Firearms Manager, Sussex Police), Colin Booty (RSPCA), Chris Brookes (BASC), Ian Byford, Brian Ellis (Firearms Officer, Sussex Police), Jochen Langbein (Deer Initiative), Hew Prendergast (Conservators of Ashdown Forest), Derek Stimpson (BDS).

2) Deer Census Video.

Before starting the meeting proper Jamie Cordery showed some clips from the Thermal Imagery (TI) survey of the Forest to be discussed later in the meeting.

3) Minutes of the last Meeting

The Minutes of the last meeting were approved.

Matters Arising.

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

With regard to points 3. and 6.(contacting landowners re deer management strategies in the area) the meeting decided that rather than a simple introductory letter, a direct request for an expression of interest together with a request for information on deer management on each property would be made. Jamie will draft a letter accordingly. Since the group does not hold contact details for all of the land ownerships involved it was suggested that an approach be made through governmental and membership organisations such as GOSE, DEFRA, FC, Nat England, BASC, BDS, CLA, NFU. David Knowles offered to help in furthering some of the contacts. **David Knowles.**

4) Traffic Mitigation Sub Group

Graeme Lake reported that :

- a. There has been no response from GOSE regarding the possibility of permanent “cricket score” signs for reporting deer casualties.
- b. The temporary “corex” cricket score signs were erected (on existing deer warning signs) early in the year and have been replaced once to update the numbers. A number of members reported that these signs had been received with approval and that they certainly raised awareness, although it was too early to say if the presence of the signs was making a difference to deer collision numbers. The intention is to change the signs every quarter. So far ESCC had arranged for the corex signs to be maintained, it was suggested that if they seem effective that some form of partnership arrangement might ensure that their presence can be maintained.
- c. It is unlikely that electronic vehicle activated signs could be erected at any time in the near future although that and seasonal signage remain potential additions.

5) RTC Sub Group

Dale Foden reported that the Deer Collisions scheme now has 18 members signed up with a good coverage across the county, particularly in the AADG area. All had undergone police firearms checks and ID badges and safety equipment had been ordered. There is room on the scheme as presently funded for a number of further members should they come forward.

The next step is risk assessment training and the Ashdown Forest Centre and Wadhurst Park were once again offered as venues. It is hoped to commence training (probably over 2 dates) sometime before the end of 2008.

The issue of scheme members being able to contact each other (to enable detailed coordination of call outs) was discussed but it was agreed that this should only be possible with the permission of both parties and through the police to avoid conflicts with data protection legislation.

The management of the scheme will be taken on by Ian Byford and other ESCC staff with the police coordinating the call out system through their control centre (including call outs from other centres such as the RSPCA where appropriate)

Contact Dale for the latest version (14) of the scheme paperwork.

Jamie reported that there had been a great deal of interest in the scheme from other areas and that the DI continued to promote interest in a national approach to dealing with deer road casualties.

The meeting once again expressed their gratitude to Dale for all the hard work that has gone into developing the scheme.

The number of deer casualties received from the Ashdown Forest Centre office was just under 200 since January. Given the reduced area over which these numbers are now collated and the fact that the late autumn period is often the worst for deer collisions it seems that figure will be comparable with past years.

6) Management Group

Landowner liaison

An official approach will be made through the group to the organisations listed in matters arising above asking them to contact landowners within the group area regarding the deer situation on their land. The next step will be to call a meeting of all interested parties. **Jamie Cordery/ Hew Prendergast/ David Knowles.**

Deer census

Thermal imaging counts will continue, perhaps with the emphasis moving to the south western part of the area.

A daytime count is proposed for March/April of 2009. Jamie will make a proposal as to how this can be carried out. A name for the event and any suggestions as to how to raise awareness of it and perhaps for limited funding are sought. **Jamie Cordery**

7) AOB

There was no other business

8) Date of next meeting

The date of the next meeting will be agreed through Hew. A meeting of a small sub –group will be called in January to discuss the spring census.