

DRAFT
Minutes of the meeting of
Ashdown Area Deer Forum (AADF)

22 September 2009, Ashdown Forest Centre, Wych Cross

Present: Ian Byford (Inspector, Sussex Police), Jamie Cordery (Deer Initiative, DI), Dale Foden (Deputy Network Manager, East Sussex County Council, ESCC), Paul Francis (Sussex Police, Firearms), Graeme Lake (ESCC), Alan Morriss (Pippingford), Carol Pople (Sussex Police, Firearms), John Rich (sec deer group) Mark Weaver (Complete Land Management, CLM), Kim Wheeler Mallows (MOD).

1) Apologies

Colin Booty (RSPCA), Chris Brookes (BASC), Jochen Langbein (Deer Initiative), Fred Marshall (Conservators of Ashdown Forest), Hew Prendergast (Conservators of Ashdown Forest), Derek Stimpson (BDS), Neil Brookes (British Deer Society, BDS).

2) Minutes of the last Meeting

The Minutes of the last meeting were approved.

Matters Arising.

The following Matters Arising were dealt with:

With regard to point 6. (proposed spring 2009 census) This had not taken place.

2) Name of deer groups

Although the proposed group for dealing with deer management matters (see agenda item 5) has not yet been formally constituted there appears now to be a need to maintain a distinction between that group and the original Ashdown Area Deer Group, that requires careful consideration of the names of both groups. Those present suggested that the original, overarching group of which these are the minutes becomes the Ashdown Area Deer Forum (AADF) to reflect its wide remit with respect to deer matters generally. The new group, intended to interest itself specifically with the management of deer populations, was originally intended to be named the Ashdown Area Deer Management Group (AADMG) but since the meeting an alternative has emerged, the "West High Weald DMG" (WHWDMG). Since the boundaries of the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty at its western end almost precisely match our boundary and the AONB is long established, this new name may be a good compromise and certainly reduces the risk of confusion. Since not all members were present a poll will be carried out, by e-mail, to finally determine suitable names.

3) RTC Sub Group

Dale Foden reported that the Deer Collisions scheme now has 26 members signed up with a generally good coverage across the county, particularly in the AADG area, although thinner in the east of the county. Some Wardens operate across the West Sussex boundary. All had undergone police firearms checks and have been issued ID badges and safety equipment and had received "risk assessment" and "dealing with the public" training in April 2009. Applicants appear to have been of a high standard with only one being turned down. The scheme will continue to be managed and funded by ESCC (safety equipment) and the Police (ID cards).

The provision of a question base for control centre staff seems to have reduced the number of wardens called in duplicate or called to the wrong location.

72 call out reports were filed by Wardens in 2008 and 62 in 2009 so far.

There appears to be little or no duplication between the Wardens reports and reports from Ashdown Forest Rangers (in other words Wardens reports are in addition to those reported by Rangers) but attempts will be made to ensure that this cannot occur. It was suggested that Rangers reports are added to the Warden Scheme database.

In order to raise the profile of the scheme ESCC and Sussex Police have produced a tax disc holder with the call out number on the back and Dale has placed an article in the "Your County" magazine as well as taking part in radio interviews.

Both the Police and Co Council could perceive benefits of the scheme to themselves in that have a dedicated number and known routes for response had helped to relieve pressure on Police emergency numbers and although the District Councils are the designated disposal authority the scheme helps the co Council to ensure that the roadways are kept clear of potential obstructions to traffic. Conversely Co Council teams can be called upon to remove large carcasses to the verge if required.

DI continue to promote interest in a national approach to dealing with deer road casualties and intend to use the E.Sussex Deer Warden scheme as a model/case study.

The number of deer casualties received to date from the Ashdown Forest Centre office was just 160 since January with one of the prime periods (the rut and clock change) still to come.

4) Traffic mitigation Sub Group

- a. There has still been no response from GOSE regarding the possibility of permanent "cricket score" signs for reporting deer casualties, therefore this possibility has been abandoned for the time being.
- b. The temporary "corex" cricket score signs, which are changed every quarter have been causing comment locally which appears to affirm that they are being noticed. ESCC are content for the signs to be maintained by them for the time being.
- c. The next sign will report that there have been 160 DVCs Jan to September
- d. ESCC are developing a policy for erecting deer warning signs which involves the use of ground truthing deer crossing points and checking traffic volume and deer casualty reports through the Deer Warden Scheme before erecting signs. In this way it is hoped that the limited resources for such signage will be most effectively used.
- e. JCC reported that coincidentally the 22nd Sept 2009 marked the launch of a national "Deer Aware" campaign aimed at raising awareness of the risk of deer vehicle collisions and giving advice on how to avoid them. this campaign will run for the next 3 years and is supported by a wide range of organisations and funded largely by the Highways Agency. For details see the temporary hosting website <http://www.deeraware.org.uk> and look out for the permanent Deer Aware website in the future. This new website will also contain the information formerly seen on the Deer Collisions website.
This group hopes that the Deer Aware project will contribute to it's own efforts to cope with the DVC problems in the Ashdown Area.
- f. Jochen (by e-mail) is investigating a potentially viable version of a retro-fitted overpass

5) Management Group

As a result of a questionnaire sent out to landowners a scoping meeting was held on 28/4/09 to gauge the level of concern/interest in the fallow population in the Ashdown area. More than 30

people attended. At that meeting was generally agreed that fallow numbers are, or are becoming, an issue which might benefit from the formation of a deer management group intended to inform and support by advice, the activities of those culling deer in the area. 20 or so parties from those present have registered an ongoing interest in such a group.

This (22/9/9) meeting briefly discussed a draft constitution for such a group. It will be confirmed by a small working party. The next step will be to re-contact interested parties and others with a view to holding a further meeting in the near future.

7) AOB

There was no other business

8) Date of next meeting

The date of the next meeting will be agreed through Hew as the likely host.