



A message from the Chair of the Board of Conservators – December 2015

Ashdown Forest is an extraordinary place: a natural environment of considerable significance.

The current governance arrangements were established over 40 years ago, and whilst they have served the Forest well, work is now beginning to ensure these arrangements are brought up to date and are fit for the future management of the Forest. The aim is to create 'best in class' governance.

Through the centuries the Forest has changed hands several times and today is owned by the Ashdown Forest Trust (a Charity), with elected members of East Sussex County Council as Trustees. The Trust and Conservators will be working together to ensure that arrangements are put in place to guarantee the conservation and management of the Forest will continue, as enshrined in the Ashdown Forest Act 1974:

'It shall be the duty of the Conservators at all times as far as possible to regulate and manage the forest as an amenity and place of resort subject to the existing rights of common upon the forest and to protect such rights of common, to protect the forest from encroachments, and to conserve it as a quiet and natural area of outstanding beauty.'

What are we trying to achieve?

A new charitable organisation to own, run and manage the Ashdown Forest independent of East Sussex County Council and Wealden District Council.

Why do we need to do this?

- Because we must rationalise the current arrangements as there appears to be confusion and duplication between the Ashdown Forest Trust, the Ashdown Forest Conservation Trust and the Conservators.
- Concern on this was expressed by the Charity Commission and a Review agreed.
- Because there is a requirement to raise additional funds for which there is not currently a suitable vehicle.

Over the coming weeks we will be keeping everyone informed of progress.