Chairman’s Introduction

The Conservators of Ashdown Forest are charged with an overriding mission/statutory responsibility:

“to manage the Forest as an amenity and place of resort, to protect the rights of common, to protect the Forest from encroachments and to conserve it as a quiet and natural area of outstanding natural beauty”.

The Forest is fortunate in having a competent and dedicated staff team, supported by a first class group of committed volunteers, who share passion and enthusiasm in managing the very special environment of Ashdown Forest. The Queen’s Award, made to the Forest volunteers last year, is testament to that commitment, competence and dedication.

Following an extensive review of Forest Governance and in dialogue with the Charity Commission, one of our main priorities in 2018 is to progress a transition from the existing Forest governance arrangements to establishing a new charitable foundation, through which to implement some of the key long standing ambitions of the Board and to make best use of the skills and expertise of everyone involved in the conservation and protection of Ashdown Forest. To achieve that, the Conservators will endeavour to maintain the highest standards of charity governance and leadership going forward.

As we embark on a period of major change, there will be a number of further challenges. However that may be, I believe our new governance arrangements will emerge with strength, dynamism and focussed commitment.

I particularly wish to express our thanks for the help and support the Board has received over the past year from the Trustees of both the Society of Friends of Ashdown Forest and the Ashdown Forest Conservation Trust. The help and assistance of both sets of Trustees for very timely substantive contributions is greatly appreciated.

Cllr Richard Stogdon
Cllr Richard Stogdon
Originally a deer hunting forest in Norman times, Ashdown Forest is now one of the largest free public access space in the South East. It is a great place for walking and enjoying spectacular views over the Sussex countryside and is known the world over as the 'home' of Winnie-the-Pooh.

The Forest is at the heart of the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and has national and international protection because of its wildlife. Nearly two thirds of its 6500 acres (2500 hectares) are heathland, amounting to 2.5% of the UK’s extent of this rare habitat.
Some of the Forests’ 2017 Highlights

Cattle, sheep and ponies all grazed successfully
New staff policies created and adopted
Thriving education and community programme
New donation post installed at Forest Centre
Increase in use of social media leading to generous offers of assistance from local businesses/public
Hogget and beef sales
Payroll now in-house
New commercial ‘Fitness licence’ created
Bye-law breaches heavily publicised
Cheese and wine evening in conjunction with Friends
Generous funding received by Friends to resurface Long, Broadstone and Kingstanding car parks
Improvements to sewage system at Forest Centre
New wood store at Forest Centre
Filming undertaken by Disney
Audit reports received with only minor improvement suggestions
Extensive management of non-native species
Development of Livestock facility
Extensive Parish Council liaison
Dash-cams installed in Ranger’s vehicles
Training underway for new General Data Protection Legislation
CONSERVATION STRATEGIC PLAN

Strategic Priority: Heathland Management
Lead Officer: Conservation Officer

GOALS

1. Manage gorse scrub
2. Wild fire risk and plan
3. Birch, oak, willow and Scots pine control
4. Remove Rhododendron, Gaultheria and American black cherry
5. Bracken control
6. Provide / maintain livestock control structures (invisible)

STRATEGIES

- Area of gorse managed
- Wild fire plan produced/updated
- Area of scrub managed
- Area of invasive non-native species managed
- Area of bracken managed
- Length of fence installed/maintained

KEY ELEMENTS

Result 1.1
Scrub control limits the spread of Gorse and scrub in heathland areas and prevents development of secondary woodland.

Result 1.2
Invasive non-native species are removed from healthland.

Result 1.3
Bracken is managed to reduce its extent and dominance in heathland and prevent soil fertility increase.

Result 1.4
Grazing by domestic stock prevents scrub encroachment and promotes biodiversity.

PROGRESS (Apr 17 - Sep 17)

Gorse management is largely outside the period covered by this report.

Operation Corsican Pine, a national fire management exercise, carried out on the Forest.

Scrub control is predominantly outside the plan period, though volunteers and the probation service carried out work on the North Chase.

Extensive Rhododendron cutting carried out by corporate volunteers; Gaultheria and black cherry sprayed during the summer.

Bracken cut-and-collect, both in house and by contractors, was completed during the summer, as was bracken spraying.

Once again, invisible fencing was trialled on the Forest, with mixed results. A detailed report was submitted to Conservation Committee.

Minor repairs carried out during the year.
Strategic Priority: Heathland Management
Lead Officer: Conservation Officer

**GOALS**

7. Husband grazing stock, cattle - Conservator's herd
8. Husband grazing stock, cattle - Commoner / non-commoner graziers
9. Husband grazing stock, cattle - Commoners' herd
10. Husband grazing stock, sheep
11. Husband grazing stock, ponies
12. Provide / improve / develop livestock welfare facility
13. Manage heather
14. Manage grassland by summer or winter mowing
15. Removal of invasive woodland

**STRATEGIES**

- Staff time
- Staff time
- Staff time
- Staff time
- Facility in place
- Area of heather managed
- Area of grassland managed
- Area of woodland removed

**KEY ELEMENTS**

Cattle, sheep and ponies all grazed out on the Forest successfully during the summer

Progress is being made towards the development of a livestock facility

Not during this reporting period

Annual hay cut carried out on a number of sites in late summer

Not during this reporting period

**PROGRESS** (Apr 17 - Sep 17)

Result 1.5
Heather management maintains a balance of age classes and limits increase in soil fertility

Result 1.6
Grass heath management maintains an open diverse sward

Result 1.7
Removal of invasive woodland restores heathland in priority areas
Strategic Priority: Woodland Management  
Lead Officer: Conservation Officer

GOALS

Result 2.1  
Non-native species in woodland are controlled

Result 2.2  
Woodland management by commoners leads to thinning and increased dead wood microhabitat

Result 2.3  
Ride mowing maintains fire breaks and the woodland edge microhabitat

Result 2.4  
Control of deer numbers through an annual deer cull

STRATEGIES

16. Remove Rhododendron by cutting and spraying
17. Remove Turkey oak
18. Remove Japanese knotweed by cutting and spraying
19. Create glades by selective group felling
20. Annual mowing of woodland rides
21. Manage species, mammal – Deer Project

KEY ELEMENTS

- Area of Rhododendron treated
- Number of trees removed
- Staff time
- Area thinned
- Length of ride mown
- Number of deer culled

PROGRESS (Apr 17 - Sep 17)

Extensive Rhododendron cutting carried out by corporate volunteers  
Not during this reporting period
Spraying of the usual sites carried out during the summer  
Not during this reporting period
No culling during this reporting period
Result 3.1
Management of the “Clumps” to maintain their presence in the landscape

Result 3.2
Management of priority archaeological features in the landscape

22. Clump management

23. Manage cultural features, archaeological general

- Staff time
- Staff time

PROGRESS (Apr 17 - Sep 17)

Not during this reporting period
Not during this reporting period
Strategic Priority: Ponds and Streams
Lead Officer: Conservation Officer

GOALS

Result 4.1
Ponds will be created as a water source for grazing animals

Result 4.2
Ponds managed to protect their vulnerable wildlife and contribute to the Forest landscape

STRATEGIES

24. Manage habitat, open water / rivers, by excavation

25. Manage habitat, open water / rivers, clearing/dredging/re-profiling

KEY ELEMENTS

- Number of ponds created
- Number of ponds managed

PROGRESS (Apr 17 - Sep 17)

Pond management took place outside this reporting period.
Strategic Priority: Monitoring Recording and Evaluation
Lead Officer: Conservation Officer

GOALS

Monitoring and recording of:
- Key Forest species
- Work undertaken
- Effects of management
- Compliance with the requirements of Countryside Stewardship

STRATEGIES

Project 1. Deer monitoring
Project 2. Small mammal surveys
Project 3. Bird surveys
Project 4. Amphibian Monitoring
Project 5. Reptile Monitoring
Project 6. Invertebrate Monitoring
Project 7. Land Cover Monitoring
Project 8. Tree Regeneration
Project 9. Annual species counts
Project 10. Valley Mire Monitoring
Project 11. Bryophyte Monitoring
Project 12. Invasive Plant mapping and monitoring
Project 13. Woodland tree regeneration and flora
Project 14. Fire recording and investigation
Project 15. Dogs and visitor survey

KEY ELEMENTS

As per Chapter 7 of the Five Year Plan


PROGRESS (Apr 17 - Sep 17)

Deer monitoring will be undertaken by the Deer Coordinator during the summer. Bird monitoring continues to be carried out by the Ashdown Bird Group, and a consultant is carrying out some bird monitoring as part of the Deer Programme. Additional species added to the list monitored by the Conservation Officer. Various other monitoring carried out in-house or by volunteers.
Strategic Priority: Maintenance of Key Species Data
Lead Officer: Conservation Officer

**GOALS**

An up to date comprehensive species database for the Forest

**STRATEGIES**

Define key species
Regular monitoring of species in accordance with protocols
Regular detailed Forest vegetation mapping
Liaise with Local Records Centres and specialist groups e.g. Sussex Biodiversity Record Centre, Ashdown

**KEY ELEMENTS**

Number(s) of key species
Extent of relevant habitats

**PROGRESS (Apr 17 - Sep 17)**

See monitoring section
Strategic Priority: Understand Implication to Forest of the Local Authorities Strategic Access and Monitoring Strategy (SAMMS)
Lead Officer: Director

GOALS
Implement projects proposed by Ashdown Forest and approved Local Authority (LAs)

STRATEGIES
- “Every Dog Matters” programme
- Bird Monitoring
- Education and Information Programme
- Visitor Management and Monitoring

KEY ELEMENTS
- As per individual project proposals

PROGRESS (Apr 17 - Sep 17)
No progress made as funding not released by LAs. Draft agreement to be circulated October 2017
**FINANCE & GENERAL PURPOSE STRATEGIC PLAN**

Strategic Priority: Financial Management and Reporting  
Lead Officer: Finance Officer

**GOALS**

- Ensure fiscal discipline
- Maintain quality and clarity of financial reporting

**STRATEGIES**

- Ensure Financial Regulations are adhered to
- Evolve reporting structures in the financial year 2016/17 in order to provide effective reporting for Countryside Stewardship programme
- Regular presentation of reports to appropriate stakeholders
- FO to manage cash flow
- Asset register relevant
- Approach Natural England about re-aligning calendar year for CS reporting

**KEY ELEMENTS**

- Satisfactory audit reports (Internal and external)
- Feedback from stakeholders

**PROGRESS (Apr 17 - Sep 17)**

- Satisfactory audit reports received for 2016/17
- Minor improvements suggested from internal audit review
- Financial Regulations reviewed and approved at F&GP August 2017 without amendments
- Core and CS financial reports separated to increase transparency.
- 1.8 multiplier applied to CS staff costs
- Asset register reviewed as far as it can before Governance Review completed
- Tax year for core budget cannot be re-aligned due to local authority auditing
- CS budget could be realigned to tax year but will take considerable work to re-format
- Cash flow model to be developed
- CS payment schedule still uncertain but 75% of annual revenue total due to be received in one payment by year end
- Vacancy in bookkeeper post created considerable backlog in financial administration. Catch up still underway. Aim to be complete by calendar year end 2017
Strategic Priority: Financial Management and Reporting
Lead Officer: Finance Officer

GOALS

- Effective budget setting process
- Produce a full Annual Report
- Explore funding options and provide support to individual committees

STRATEGIES

- To build on foundation created by evolved financial reports
- Timely receipt of incoming data to create the budget
- Collation, production, distribution of report
- Set up a working party to focus on increasing income streams prior to resolution of governance review
- Organisational Funding Strategy to be developed following Governance review

KEY ELEMENTS

- Meeting timescales for approvals required
- Production of a budget that is transparent, comprehensible and relevant
- Stakeholder feedback
- Monitoring new sources of funding
- CS payment timing schedule required

PROGRESS (Apr 17 - Sep 17)

- Budget setting process underway for 2018/19
- 2017/18 Annual Report produced
- Second half payment for 2016 Countryside Stewardship funding received in August
- 15 Parish Councils approached for funding in 2018/19 and 2019/20. Seven have agreed to support the Forest. Four pending (grant applications)
- Currently no overall Funding Strategy
- Income Stream Working Party continues to explore other options but Parish Council work took up a considerable amount of time
**Strategic Priority: Financial Management and Reporting**

**Lead Officer: Finance Officer**

### GOALS

- Maintain key finance related relationships including East Sussex County Council, Wealden District Council, Natural England and others.
- Review use of external accounting contractors.

### STRATEGIES

- Maintain open lines of communication.
- Regular meetings.
- Ensure cost-effective use of external/internal support with a view to eliminating support.
- Appoint a specialist to undertake a VAT review to ensure correct procedures undertaken.

### KEY ELEMENTS

- Partner feedback.
- Regular meetings.
- Financial savings.
- Review VAT apportionment between core and CS budgets.

### PROGRESS (Apr 17 - Sep 17)

- Communication maintained with ESCC, WDC and NE.
- New contacts at ESCC and NE.
- Further discussion with ESCC with regards to Treasury Management postponed until after governance change.
- Payroll in-house since May 2017.
- Revised strategy proposed regarding other finance work being undertaken in-house – two people should undertake finance work as a precaution (checks and balances, fraud, etc).
- New bookkeeper in place since September 2017 after two month vacancy.
Strategic Priority: Financial Management and Reporting
Lead Officer: Finance Officer

GOALS

- Review of best value provided for brought-in services
- Supporting work program for core budget

STRATEGIES

- Procurement review in conjunction with Clerk
- Develop a long term schedule for maintenance, in conjunction with core staff, and staff costs
- Procurement review in conjunction with Clerk
- Develop a long term schedule for maintenance, in conjunction with core staff, and staff costs

KEY ELEMENTS

- Financial savings
- Availability of work program for budgeting and financing
- Financial savings
- Availability of work program for budgeting and financing

PROGRESS (Apr 17 - Sep 17)

- See Strategic Priority: Maintaining and managing organisational infrastructure
- Three year plan completed and submitted to Board of Conservators September 2017
- See Strategic Priority: Maintaining and managing organisational infrastructure
- Three year plan completed and submitted to Board of Conservators September 2017
Strategic Priority: Governance
Lead Officer: Clerk

GOALS

- Maintain appropriate and up to date Standing Orders
- Ensure a consistent and timely reporting style to Board and Committees
- Carry out a fundamental review of Governance arrangements

STRATEGIES

- Quarterly review of Standing Orders ensuring best practice and organisational efficiency
- Clear hierarchy for decision making
- Uniformity through use of documents, templates, and version control
- Clear and concise documentation
- Maintain open lines of communication
- Board Governance Working Party established
- Consider all options
- Consider all views raised during consultation
- Work with Ashdown Forest Trust
- Communication Plan

KEY ELEMENTS

- Adherence to practice
- Annual approval by Board
- Compliance
- Number of meetings held
- Number of submissions received
- Consultation and engagement Plan feedback
- Number of meetings held
- Website postings

PROGRESS (Apr 17 - Sep 17)

- Standing Orders reviewed and agreed annually
- Standing Orders revised to allow Committees the ability to group together all items of a confidential nature at each meeting to avoid disruption
- Ongoing
- Articles of Association for the new Charitable Company Limited by Guarantee have been submitted to the Charity Commission
Strategic Priority: Governance
Lead Officer: Clerk

GOALS
Create a clear, concise and accurate record keeping system/document repository
Ensure identifiable evidence of land ownership, trust deed and legal status

STRATEGIES
• Catalogue original/ filed documents
• Signing out/in process for borrowed documents
• Identify and catalogue important documents and collate securely both physically and electronically
• Date stamping of all received correspondence
• Scanning of relevant documents
• Identify and catalogue important documents and collate securely both physically
• Timetable of monitoring

KEY ELEMENTS
• Compliance with copyright and data protection
• Clear and easily accessible filing system
• Documents/evidence in place
• Accurate record keeping
• Documents in place and any gaps identified
• Compliance
• Review as appropriate

PROGRESS (Apr 17 - Sep 17)
• Access to shared drives managed through IT provider to ensure employees only have access to information relevant to their role thus ensuring the privacy of sensitive records
• Ongoing
• Full review undertaken of land in the ownership of the Conservators. Parcels recorded on Forest map
Strategic Priority: Governance
Lead Officer: Clerk

**GOALS**

Have all organisational and employee policies in place, ensuring compliance with relevant legislation and data protection.

Maintain appropriate and up to date H&S risk management toolkit.

On a best efforts basis, be aware of changes to legislation affecting Ashdown Forest activities and incorporate necessary changes into planning and execution of governance and management of Forest where appropriate.

Work with other institutions and bodies to influence proposed legislation if it adversely affects Forest through management.

**STRATEGIES**

- Impact of legislation and possible legislative changes
- Templates and toolkits
- Risk Assessments
- Redaction of sensitive data and personally identifiable information (PII)
- Communication to appropriate Committees of legislative changes and their impact
- Review and Implementation of changes to practices where appropriate

**KEY ELEMENTS**

- Documents in place and any gaps identified
- Compliance
- Review as appropriate
- Compliance
- Review as appropriate

**PROGRESS (Apr 17 - Sep 17)**

- New Security at Work policy adopted by Board. Dash Cams purchased and installed in Rangers vehicles as a safety precaution.

- New General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) legislation coming into force (May 18). Training undertaken and Committee informed of key requirements.

Work with other institutions and bodies to influence proposed legislation if it adversely affects Forest through management.
Strategic Priority: Governance
Lead Officer: Clerk

**GOALS**

Bye-Law Governance

Establish and implement a Management Information system to give an accurate and overall picture of the organisation

**STRATEGIES**

- Ongoing Bye-law breaches being pursued through Legal Services
- Liaison with Bracknell Forest and National Trust regarding activity licences
- Ashdown Forest added to the ‘No Fly Drone’ app through liaison with NATS and the CAA
- Social media widely used to help identify perpetrators. This has generated much assistance and offers of help from general public and local businesses
- MI captured for Conservation, FCDC, RPA and F&GP Committees
- Provision of charts and graphs providing clear and concise analysis with ability to monitor trends

**KEY ELEMENTS**

- Management Information
- Compliance
- Routine and trends
- Strengths and weaknesses
- Frequency of activities
- Number of activities
- Organisational efficiency
- Challenges that may affect organisation
- Feedback

**PROGRESS (Apr 17 - Sep 17)**

- Record and maintain all evidence in relation to breaches and anticipate and manage trends in breaches where applicable
- Awareness of new legislation
- Increase publicity, consider interaction with other sources (partners, local businesses)
- Positive relationship with DEFRA
- Factor into work schedules where necessary
- Record and maintain organisational information
- Record tangible and specific information
- Ensure information is relevant and timely
- Accurate and structured information
- Regular reports to Board and Committee level on relevant operations
- Tools in place to evaluate past and present information in order to provide predictions
- Monitor trends and review quarterly
Strategic Priority: Maintaining and Managing Organisational Infrastructure
Lead Officer: Clerk

**GOALS**

- Have an effective communications and IT system in place
- Manage the Forest Centre site (to its full potential) within budget
- Effectively regulate fees for commercial and other licence activities

**STRATEGIES**

- Focus on business process improvement, efficiency and value for money
- Business Continuity Plan
- Drive efficiency, productivity and operating costs
- Consider system constraints
- Focus on business process improvement, efficiency and value for money
- Annual review of maintenance and utility contracts
- Monitor trends and review quarterly
- Create programme of publicity in relation to charges, fees and licences
- Review charges of similar organisations

**KEY ELEMENTS**

- Best value
- Organisational challenges that may affect capabilities
- Cost savings
- Best value
- Organisational efficiency
- Cost savings
- Numbers of permits issued
- Number of licences issued
- Frequency of permits (per reporting period)
- Frequency of licences (per reporting period)

**PROGRESS (Apr 17 - Sep 17)**

- Significant data connectivity issues experienced during reporting period. Alternative methods to improve broadband speed and infrastructure reliability researched but viable options are costly and complex
- Insurance review undertaken with emphasis on commercial vehicles and equipment
- 378
- 48
- Average 63 per month
- Average 8 per month
- New Fitness Licence
Strategic Priority: Maintaining and Managing Organisational Infrastructure
Lead Officer: Clerk

GOALS
Organisational Document Management

STRATEGIES
- Detailed audit trails
- File security/Network security
- Data Protection
- Conversion of files to PDF
- Document versioning
- Redaction of sensitive data and personally identifiable information (PII)

KEY ELEMENTS
- Clear and easily accessible filing system
- Organisational efficiency
- Accurate record keeping

PROGRESS (Apr 17 - Sep 17)
- Training undertaken for new General Data Protection Regulation Legislation
Strategic Priority: Human Resources
Lead Officer: Director

GOALS

- Establish and implement a Human Resources Working Group
- Ensure a well-motivated and effective staff
- Ensure a well-motivated volunteer team

STRATEGIES

- Standing Orders
- Appraisal Process (annual and six month reviews)
- Training and Development Plan
- Review organisational structure and resources
- Succession Planning
- Investing in Volunteering accreditation
- HR Working Group convened as necessary

KEY ELEMENTS

- Terms of reference and resolution of issues
- Complaints and compliments reviewed
- Appraisal paperwork
- Organisational and individual training undertaken
- Feedback from staff and volunteers
- Feedback from partners on organisational effectiveness

PROGRESS (Apr 17 - Sep 17)

- Three meetings held – reports made to FGP Committee as a Standing Item
- Six Month reviews underway as per agreed process and Training Plan updated accordingly
- One volunteer training event held
- Two Exit Interviews completed. Recruitment process undertaken for Countryside Worker and Grazing Officer vacancies – 1 post filled
- One volunteer event (BBQ) held as a ‘Thank you’ – 80 attended
- One Volunteer Newsletter circulated
- Feedback obtained regularly on an informal basis
ROADS PLANNING AND AMENITY STRATEGIC PLAN

Strategic Priority: Protect the Forest from encroachment and misuse
Lead Officer: Clerk

GOALS

Effective enforcement of the Bye-laws and in so doing reduce the number of breaches and speed up their resolution

Effective enforcement and resolution of encroachments

STRATEGIES

- Record and maintain all evidence in relation to breaches and anticipate and manage trends in breaches where applicable
- Conduct regular boundary walks of known properties of concern, maintaining photographic evidence and reviewing boundaries against the original Forest Award maps
- Engage with offenders at an early stage and educate them on Forest habitat management and the consequences of their actions
- Publicise most frequently breached Bye-laws in Ashdown Forest Life publication. Appeal for information/witnesses through social media for serious Bye-law breaches (e.g. dog attacks on livestock)

KEY ELEMENTS

- Total number of breaches identified
- Number of breaches where perpetrator is identifiable
- Numbers of repeat offences (same individual committing same offence)
- Number of prosecutions
- Number of breaches resolved (where perpetrator is known)
- Number of breaches passed to ESCC for comment and action
- Most frequent breaches

PROGRESS (Apr 17 - Sep 17)

- 41
- 14
- 2
- 0
- 4
- 5

- Cycling
- Fly-tipping
- Out of control dogs
Strategic Priority: Protect the Forest from Encroachment  
Lead Officer: Clerk

**GOALS**

Effectively regulate commercial and other activities ensuring compliance with Bye-laws

**STRATEGIES**

- Create programme of publicity in relation to charges and penalties, fees and licences required for use of Forest
- Monitoring of advertised activities and number of permits and licences issued
- Review commercial activities of other similar organisations (e.g. Malvern Hills) and be aware of new trends (such as Hover boards and Drones) and applicable legislation
- Actively review and seek the removal of videos/photography taken of the Forest without licence and uploaded on media sharing websites

**KEY ELEMENTS**

- Numbers of permits issued
- Number of licences issued
- Number of breaches relating to non-compliance of commercial activity
- Frequency of permits issued (NB. Some permits such as Wood Permits and Riding Permits are seasonally dependant)

**PROGRESS (Apr 17 - Sep 17)**

- 378
- 48 (including property licences)
- Filming undertaken by Wealden District Council without consent. Retrospective Licence issued
- Average 63 per month
- New Commercial Fitness licence created for Personal Trainers using the Forest. Fees levied with London Parks. One licence issued
Strategic Priority: Protect the Forest from Encroachment
Lead Officer: Clerk

**GOALS**
To ensure timely and appropriate objections on any planning applications affecting the Forest

**STRATEGIES**
- Clear understanding of Local Authority planning policy to ensure objections and comments made on applications affecting the Forest are directly relevant to the proposal
- Respond within timescale outlined in planning policy

**KEY ELEMENTS**
- Number of planning applications responded to
- New process implemented to work with local parishes to help identify and raise relevant applications affecting the Forest

**PROGRESS** (Apr 17 - Sep 17)
- Parish Councils assisting with the identification of major applications affecting the Forest
- Property Developers reminded of 400m exclusion zone
Strategic Priority: Manage the land portfolio and amenity assets in the ownership of the Conservators
Lead Officer: Director/Clerk

**GOALS**

Acquire land when it becomes available within the Ancient Pale

**STRATEGIES**

- Maintain positive relationships with landowners and Friends and periodically review online property portals and auctions for land sales
- Manage and maintain existing land records and Titles

**KEY ELEMENTS**

- No. of acres/hectares acquired
- Accurate record keeping

**PROGRESS** (Apr 17 - Sep 17)

- In process of acquiring land
- Full review undertaken of land owned by the Conservators
Strategic Priority: Promote understanding of the Forest as an amenity and to ensure effective Visitor Management and Safety
Lead Officer: Director

GOALS

Promote understanding of the Forest as an amenity allowing for quiet enjoyment by walkers, dog owners, horse riders and other visitors.

Promote understanding of heathland conservation and management.

Promote visitor safety

STRATEGIES

- Develop Communication Plan for internal resources (website, printed literature, e-service) and external (event, exhibition and programme management).

- Build Programme of Relationship management – Commoners, Friends, Residents, Volunteers, Parish Councils, local groups and organisations

- To address visitor access and safety management and usage of facilities

KEY ELEMENTS

- Number of events / activities / meetings/forums put on, directly and indirectly

- Number of participants attending

- Visitor Management Strategy developed by March 2015

- Visitor experience feedback

- Car park maintenance

- Bridge maintenance

- Ride maintenance

- Bench maintenance

- Dangerous trees

- Ponds

- Spraying/COSHH

PROGRESS (Apr 17 - Sep 17)

- No. of Forest Centre Events: 81
- No. of external events: 100
- Website/Blog hits: 65,155
- Twitter followers: 3487 (total)
- Highest Facebook post reach: 131,233
- 2 Parish Liaison Panels
- 4 Volunteer Events
- 3 Tourism Association meetings
- 3 Ashdown Forest Riding Associations meetings
- 2 presentations
- 1 tourism event

- Long, Broadstone and Kingstanding car parks resurfaced thanks to generous Friends sponsorship
- Annual programme of Ride maintenance carried out with support from AFRA. (See Conservation Plan)
Strategic Priority: Promote understanding of the Forest as an amenity and to ensure effective Visitor Management and Safety
Lead Officer: Director

GOALS

- Develop a Visitor Management Strategy including promoting the Forest Centre as a facility that will increase the footfall from existing Forest visitors, to include the development of an Access Trail, development of retail and hiring opportunities
- See also FCDC

STRATEGIES

- Strategic Access Management and Monitoring Strategy (SAMMS) visitor survey to be undertaken by WDC, Access Audit, ESCC Access Group
- See also FCDC

KEY ELEMENTS

- Number of visitors to Forest Centre, others TBA as part of the Strategy feedback from stakeholders & numbers of volunteers recruited, trained and retained
- Funding Opportunities sourced, feedback from users
- Feedback from Access groups
- Feedback from Ashdown Forest Tourism Association (AFRA)

PROGRESS (Apr 17 - Sep 17)

- 43 Feedback Comments in Info Barn
- No. of Volunteers: 158
- No. of Volunteers trained to new tasks (Information Barn and Ranger): 7
- Volunteer Hours: 5259
- No. of Forest Centre visitors: 7496
- Visitor data now captured in Management Information Database
- Visitor Management Strategy under review
- Access Trail: no progress
Strategic Priority: Develop the Ashdown Forest in-house Education and Community offer
Lead Officer: Director

GOALS

Extend the education and community programme for schools, adults, ‘special’ interest groups and local communities

Develop a three year plan to maximise education use of land adjacent to the Forest Centre including a ‘no dog’ provision

Develop sustainable long term relationship with the Friends

Secure grant aid to support development of programme for special needs/excluded groups

STRATEGIES

Countryside Stewardship:
- Target 25 schools per year to visit Forest

Friends:
- Develop outreach sessions into schools to 6 per year
- Develop and expand the Ashdown Forest Explorers Clubs (pre-school)

KEY ELEMENTS

Countryside Stewardship:
- Number of schools visiting – target 25. Feedback from schools

Three Year Plan produced for academic year 2018/19

Friends:
- Number of Outreach sessions delivered. Feedback from schools
- Number of children attending. Number of sessions delivered. Feedback from families

PROGRESS (Apr 17 - Sep 17)

- Schools reached: 40
- Outreach sessions: 3
- Toddler Group: 12
- Total children reached: 1,594
- Teacher Twilight Sessions: 0
- Self Led School Visits: 2

NEW PRIORITY
Progressing

Financial support from Friends confirmed for 2017/218

NEW PRIORITY
Strategic Priority: Develop the Ashdown Forest in-house Education and Community offer
Lead Officer: Director

GOALS
- Work with Forest staff to ensure consistent Conservation messages across all programmes and ability to respond to topical issues.
- Work with Forest staff to increase sustainable retail items for sale to visiting schools.
- Provide an annual training programme for teachers and community leaders leading to certification.
- Develop Education resources, publicity and information.

STRATEGIES
- Self-Funded (building an education ‘pot’):
  - Target 10 schools per year to visit Forest over and above funded CS contract and/or a yearlong 1 school project.
  - Provide an annual programme of holiday activities for children and families at least six delivered per annum.
  - Develop an annual programme of seasonal/specialist ‘walk and learn’ for families/adults/interest groups at least 4 per year.
- Self-Funded: number of self-funded school sessions.
- Numbers of family events. Feedback from families.
- Number of ‘walk and learn’, craft activities. Feedback from participants.

KEY ELEMENTS

PROGRESS (Apr 17 - Sep 17)

NEW PRIORITY
To be completed at next reporting period.
Strategic Priority: Develop the Ashdown Forest in-house Education and Community offer
Lead Officer: Director

GOALS

- Develop learning packs and online resources for sale and hire.
- Secure long term funding to employ in-house staff

STRATEGIES

- Develop an ‘offer’ for private schools/exchange students during holiday period
- Explore the possibilities of offering bespoke wildlife/history/Winnie the Pooh sessions to local hotels
- Create an Education exhibition, in association with one or two schools, in the Information Centre to inform the public about the education work taking place. Photographically record the school work
- Grant aided: Investigate funding opportunities to fund staff in-house
- Develop a programme of activities/events for special needs/excluded groups
- Develop historical interpretation for area around the Forest Centre looking at pale, warren, stone age hut and iron smelting
- Hold an event to inform public about grazing and increase understanding
- Investigate the provision of dog waste bins

KEY ELEMENTS

- Programme package developed. Take-up
- 1 session trialled and delivered
- 1 exhibition per year. Feedback from visitors
- At least 1 grant application made per year
- Programme developed; at least 1 event per year offered
- Interpretation developed. Feedback from visitors

PROGRESS (Apr 17 - Sep 17)

- 1 event held in conjunction with Grazing team
- Number of Dog Waste bins installed; decrease in complaints re dog mess

NEW PRIORITY
To be completed at next reporting period

Trial agreed for two dog waste bins at Forest Centre and Broadstone car parks
GOALS

- Identify all costs associated with formal fundraising activities associated with Forest Centre development
- Secure funding to implement works as appropriate

STRATEGIES

- Forest Centre Project agreed by Board and structures to implement in place
- Commission appropriate professionals including Quantity Surveyors and Architects
- Relationship management with supporters, funding bodies, partners and local communities
- Relationship management with landowners and Society of Friends

KEY ELEMENTS

- Project development milestones reached
- Funding achieved for 3 development projects within the overall Forest Centre development

PROGRESS (Apr 17 - Sep 17)

- Wood Store completed June 2017
- Sewage Plant due to be completed November 2017 (Funds for both from AFCT)
- Application pending with LoCase for improved lighting
- ESCC acting on our behalf re. land purchase funded by the Friends, slow progress but aim to complete by Friends AGM November 17
Strategic Priority: Refurbished Forest Centre
Lead Officer: Director

**GOALS**

- To develop the retail activities within the Forest Centre
- Extend and market the Ashdown Forest meat brand to include Hogget, Mutton, Venison and Beef
- To develop the hire potential of information, education and community barns

**STRATEGIES**

- Source local crafts and suppliers, building on current knowledge and suppliers
- Promotion, marketing and branding
- Promote through local networks, forums and social media
- Source funding for kitchen refurbishment
- Hire terms and conditions
- To develop the retail activities within the Forest Centre
- Extend and market the Ashdown Forest meat brand to include Hogget, Mutton, Venison and Beef
- To develop the hire potential of information, education and community barns

**KEY ELEMENTS**

- Increase stock and sales
- Sales
- Increase in hire and usage

**PROGRESS (Apr 17 - Sep 17)**

- Information Barn sales increased by 22% from equivalent time last year. Additional local suppliers used
- Hogget and Mutton sales meeting demand. Venison to be marketed from November onwards
- September 17, hosted by Friends in partnership with Bluebell Vineyard and High Weald Dairy
- WDC Capital grant secured for Kitchen refurbishment completed August 2017 – 1 fundraising event held