

**Minutes of the  
CONSERVATION COMMITTEE MEETING OF THE  
BOARD OF CONSERVATORS OF ASHDOWN FOREST**

Monday 28 March 2011

Ashdown Forest Centre at 14.30

Committee members present: Cllr R St Pierre (Chairman), Cllr N Bennett (Vice-Chairman), Mr M Cooper, Mr J Francis, Mr P Glyn, Mr C Marrable (Conservation Officer), Minutes taken by Mrs T Buxton.

Also present: Cllr F Whetstone.

The Chairman opened the meeting. There was one member of the public present.

*Mrs Haigh-McVitty asked if the Board had formally objected to the proposed sell-off of Forestry Commission land. Both Mr Marrable and the Chairman replied that no objection had been made.*

**09/11 Apologies.**

Apologies were received from Dr K Cole, Mr R Galley, Mr J Harding, Mr R Thornely-Taylor, Cllr M Hoy, Ms L Hutchby, Mr C Johnson and Dr H Prendergast.

**10/11 Declarations of any interest by Members of a Personal or Prejudicial Nature.**

There were none.

**11/11 Tree disease policy and procedure – CON 3/11**

The Chairman explained that this paper had come about due to concerns raised by Mr Stenhouse. Mr Marrable said the paper, and the advice it contained, was based on up-to-date information from the Forestry Commission. There had already been discussion amongst the Rangers regarding maintaining a watching brief and, should there be concerns regarding the health of a tree or trees, advice would be taken from experts and appropriate treatment and bio-security measures put in place. Discussions would also be held with contractors working on the Forest to ensure that they follow rigorous bio-security protocols. The Chairman asked that the paper be appended to these minutes at the next Board meeting and she would write a letter of thanks to Mr Stenhouse.

**12/11 Grazing Project - verbal update**

Mr Marrable reported that there were 250 sheep currently in six different locations which made management difficult. Some of the rams would be sold in due course. New sources of winter grazing had been found recently and there are offers of winter grazing for next year. It is particularly hard work to maintain the flock when dispersed in multiple groups and larger areas of winter grazing might be essential for the viability of the scheme. The grazing on the Forest was not quite ready to take the sheep, however, it was planned to move them out into electrically fenced enclosures in early to mid-April.

**13/11 Verbal update on Wych Cross Reservoir**

There had not been an update on the repairs from South East Water but it was noted the porta-cabin and skip had been removed. The Chairman asked that the Clerk contact South Eastern Water and ask for an update.

**14/11 Consent and monitoring of cess pits at Forest properties**

Mr Marrable reported that there were no cess-pits or septic tanks on the Forest, other

**Action**

**R St P**

**RM**

than that operated by the Conservators for the Visitor Centre. There were, however, some out-flows. There had been past problems with some out-flows failing to work properly but a phone call to the Environment Agency usually brought about a speedy resolution.

**15/11 Current status of key bird species – verbal report**

Mr Marrable reported that there had been concern regarding Dartford Warbler numbers after the hard winter. It had been feared that numbers have been greatly reduced, however, recent sightings had suggested numbers were better than first thought. He went on to say that many species that were reported to be in decline nationally such as skylark, cuckoo and redpoll had a stronghold locally. Similarly the adder which had recently been reported in the media as being endangered seemed to be doing well on the Forest. He went on to say that the Forest's habitat structure allowed many species to shelter successfully through the depths of winter which further highlighted the importance of the Forest.

There was a short discussion regarding the receipt and dissemination of data and thanks go to the Ashdown Forest Bird Group which plays such a vital role in this work.

There was a brief discussion regarding public reaction to work on the Forest and it was thought Ashdown Forest Life would be a good medium to explain why tall gorse is left and the value of 'scrubby' land to wildlife. The Committee thought it appropriate that the Forest Director draft an article for Ashdown Forest Life.

HP

**16/11 Financial information for the Conservation Committee responsibilities**

This had been circulated. There were no comments.

**17/11 Any Urgent Item of which the Clerk has notice in order to pass to the elected Chairman.**

There was none.

There being no other business the meeting closed at 15.55

The next meeting is Monday 27 June 2011.