



Minutes of the meeting of the Parish Liaison Panel of the Board of Conservators of Ashdown Forest

Wednesday 27th September 19.00 – 20.00 Ashdown Forest Centre

Present on behalf of the Conservators of Ashdown Forest: Tony Reid, John Francis and Philip Glyn. **Staff:** Pat Buesnel (Director). **Present on behalf of Parish/Town Councils:** Lolita Reeves (Maresfield), Stephen Whittaker (Withyham), Tony Lewin (Forest Row), Quentin Burch (Crowborough Town Council), Brian Phillips (Ashurst Wood Village Council), Derek Waits (Ashurst Wood Village Council), Catherine Crouch (Danehill) **Representing the Friends of Ashdown Forest:** Pat Arnold

1. **Introductions:** Tony Reid (Chairman) welcomed everyone to the meeting and introductions were made.
Apologies: Michael Cooper, Sylvia Tidy and Richard Stogdon (Conservators), Paul Brown and Douglas Denham St Pinnock (West Hoathly). Peter Ellefsen (Crowborough Town Council), Keith Obbard (Withyham)

2. **Minutes of the last meeting (June):** agreed.

3. **Matters arising:**

Meeting with Parish and Town Councils (PC/TCs): Tony Reid (TR) reported that the Conservators were currently responding to invitations to attend a number of Town and Parish Council meetings to discuss the request for a financial contribution during the transition period as the Governance review is implemented – to date there has been both positive and negative responses, a fuller report will be available at the next meeting. TR confirmed that some councils have invited application to their grant funds. Some of the amounts requested had changed following feedback from the initial meeting held in April and that the amounts were based in part on household numbers and precepts with the three Town Councils being asked for the same amount. The Director noted that the requests to PC/TCs supported further engagement in other ways and hoped communication and understanding would be increased as a result.

TR gave the context for the Governance Review and the hoped for outcome i.e. a clearer structure and the setting up of a separate Charitable Company Limited by Guarantee to manage the Forest which would have the ability to raise funds, reclaim VAT and set up a trading arm.

TR took the opportunity to thank the Friends for their ongoing support.

4. **Forest Update:** The Director spoke to her report (previously circulated) and added the following:
 - Unfortunately the Sewage upgrade has been delayed until next month
 - SAMMS – still delayed but ‘noises’ from Wealden are somewhat more positive. SAMMS Every Dog Matters projects originally submitted some three years ago and agreed will now be reviewed as will the costs.
 - A special screening of the film *Goodbye Christopher Robin* had been held at Uckfield Picture House – the Director and Conservation Officer attended, gave a presentation and answered questions from the audience.
 - A major break in at the Centre had taken place – a lot of damage to gates, doors and vehicles and the theft of a quad bike, and a great deal of inconvenience and disruption.

5. **Every Dog Matters (EDM):** The 'clear up and take your mess away' campaign reported at the last meeting has started (sample notices were circulated). The Director reported that further research and consultation had taken place with regard to a trial period of having Dog Waste bins sited at the Forest Centre and Broadstone car parks. A recommendation is to be put to the RPA Committee in October and if agreed funding to be sourced. Members agreed that this would be a very positive move. Lolita Reeve offered to investigate the possibility of funding from the Fairwarp Community Association for the purchase of the bins with the suggestion that the Conservators finance the ongoing waste collection.
See also SAMMS above.
6. **Governance review:** the Chairman reported that the Articles of Association had been drafted with input from the Board and had been reviewed by an (independent) Queens Counsel – these will be submitted to the Charity Commission within the next week or so.
7. **Countryside Stewardship (CS):** Philip Glyn (PG) (Chair Conservation Committee) updated on progress of the CS scheme commenting that it had been a challenging few months. However, despite staff shortages (compassionate leave, holiday period, vacancy) and mechanical breakdowns CS projects were on track and the summer programme nearly completed. Gorse continues to be a problem needing a number of different interventions. The Deer programme has been affected recently by the tragic deaths of two of the programmes stalkers. The Director reported that the new Chiller was in place and had received its full Environmental Health award – plans will now be progressed to develop the Ashdown Forest venison 'brand'. PG pointed out that the deer cull was just one part of the programme also highlighting the existence of deer 'enclosures' on the Forest to monitor impact and the coordination role to bring together neighbouring landowners.
8. **Items from Parishes:**
 - Crowborough: Fire Break maintenance at Crow and Gate: the Director reported that maintenance work on Fire Breaks/Rides was imminent and would be started once the amenity mowing was completed.
 - Future commercial initiatives and deficit reduction: dealt with under Item 3.
 - Forest Row: many objections to the Housing application which will probably be withdrawn. Complication with Sports Ground – Director advised that it was the responsibility of the Ashdown Forest Trust.
 - Withyham: blocked ditches on bridle way at St Johns opposite School Lane – Director to investigate with Chase Ranger.
 - Danehill: apologies for changing the date of meeting with Conservators.
- 10 **Any other business:** The Director circulated details of Conservators hoggett and beef for sale – this will be sent by email for circulation.
- 11 **Dates of next meeting: December 13th 7-8pm at the Forest Centre**
- 12 **Dates for 2018**
 - March 21st**
 - June 27th**
 - September 26th**
 - December 12th**