

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

1900, Wednesday 14 December 2011  
**Ashdown Forest Centre**

Present on behalf of the Board: Rupert Thornely-Taylor (who took the Chair), Roy Galley, John Francis, Francis Whetstone, Philip Glyn, Chris Marrable

Present on behalf of Parishes/Councils: Paul Brown, Michael Fishlock, Annette Gurr, Laura Hatch, Vivien Hill, Keith Obbard, Lolita Reeves,

## **1. Apologies**

Board: Rosalyn St Pierre, Diana Hurrell, Sylvia Tidy

Councils: Patrick Shaw, Jenny Exley, Geoffrey Sheard, Clare Risby

## **2. Minutes of the last meeting (21 September 2011)**

Corrections:

- Item 1: Apologies were received from Patrick Shaw
- Item 6, 2<sup>nd</sup> para: It was agreed that the Conservators would write to the parish councils concerning the possibility of donations to Forest funds

## **3. Matters arising**

Hartfield Parish Council had discussed Forest funding (Item 6, 2<sup>nd</sup> para.) and come up with two suggestions: i) that the Conservators should request donations to funds from the larger local town councils (e.g. East Grinstead) as well as the parishes and ii) that the creation of new 'quasi-commoners' paying a Forest rate in exchange for common rights could raise money.

It was suggested that requests for funding from the parish councils would require a full explanation of the Forest finances plus some persistence.

Forest Centre development – John Francis, for the Conservators, reported that an ecologist had now been employed to carry out the environmental assessment required by WDC Planning Officer.

## **4. Update from the Forest (verbal report by Chris Marrable)**

- Deer update – updated graphs were shown which demonstrated the decline in numbers of road traffic collisions involving deer attended by Rangers (See Appendix One). Three possible explanations were offered: lower deer population due to increased culling; lower deer population due to two hard winters; change in reporting of accidents.
- Grazing – it was reported that sheep and cattle belonging to Commoners have suffered from both dog attack and road traffic collisions. It was known that at least two dozen sheep had been killed and also that five cows had been fatally hit on the road. The Conservators' Hebridean sheep had fared well in comparison, with three known dog attacks leading to a single injured sheep. The sheep were now on in-bye land around the Forest and would not return to the heathland until the spring.

- Land purchase – the Conservators are going ahead with the purchase of land at Chelwood Gate known as Charles Smith woodland (ca 2 ha). The use to which this area might be put is still to be determined but it is most likely that it will simply be incorporated into the Forest by removing the boundary fences. The Rhododendron problem will be addressed in due course.
- Forest income and expenditure – pie charts outlining the Forest budget were discussed. (See Appendix Two). The contribution from Higher Level Stewardship was highlighted and it was pointed out that the scheme would end in 2016.
- Christmas trees – it was reported that small pine trees cut during heathland conservation work were once again being sold as Christmas trees at the Forest centre. While this is a popular activity with locals, it is difficult to maintain from year to year due to the lack of suitable trees.
- Ground nesting birds and badgers – the question of the impact of foraging badgers on ground or near-ground nesting birds was raised. There is little evidence, but it seems likely that the impact would be small as badgers probably do not regularly use heathland areas due to the paucity of reliable food supplies such as worms. All the known badger setts on the Forest are in or very close to woodland. The chance of a badger seeing a cryptically camouflaged nightjar at night seems small, though eggs, chicks or even adult birds would be suitable food.

#### **AOB**

- The question of the profile of the Friends of the Forest was raised. It was suggested that the problem of falling membership might be addressed by attendance not only at village fetes but also at higher profile country events such as the Weald Wood Fair or the South of England show. It was further suggested that the Conservators should have a direct presence at such events.
- The state of the Wim Lane access to the Forest at Chelwood Gate was raised because it was very muddy and difficult to negotiate in the winter. This is a bottleneck onto the Forest and subject to heavy usage by pedestrians and horses; it is also very wet. It was re-surfaced about five years ago and is unlikely to receive much more attention in the short term.
- Some of the parishes are looking into the local provision of high speed broadband. The Conservators said that they were happy to support these projects in any way possible, including completing questionnaires and displaying leaflets at the Forest centre.
- With particular regard to the land newly acquired by Danehill P.C., the following techniques for Rhododendron control were recommended: hand or machine clearance followed by application of herbicide to cut stems and foliar spray of re-growth. Seedlings can be pulled by hand.
- It was suggested that the Conservators might be drawn into negotiations for road repairs at the top of Chapel Lane. Cllr. Whetstone had already attended some discussions and was aware of the implications for the Forest.

At 2000 the Chairman closed the meeting and thanked everyone for their attendance.

#### **NB**

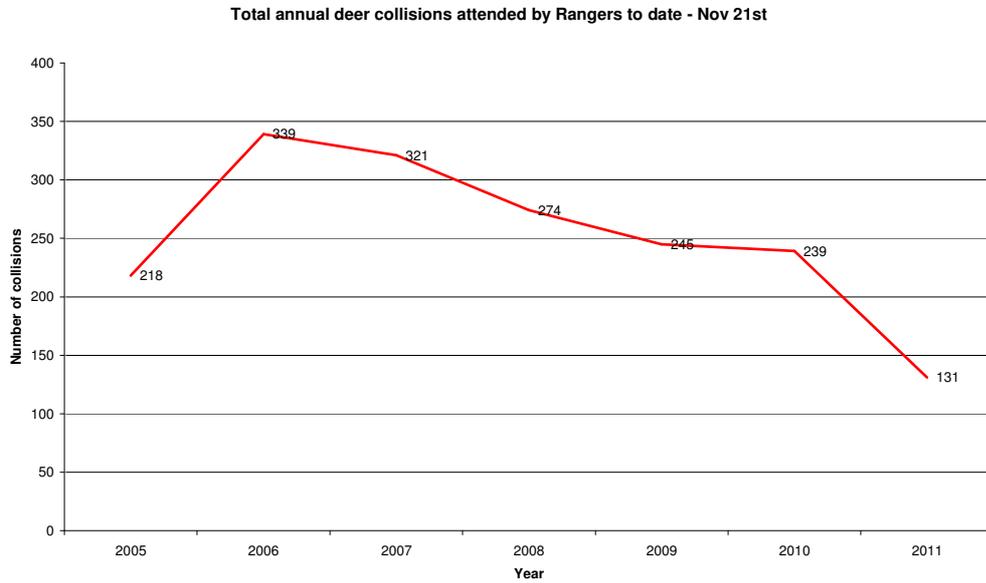
The next meetings will take place at the Forest Centre as follows:  
1900, Wednesday 14 March 2012

## Appendices

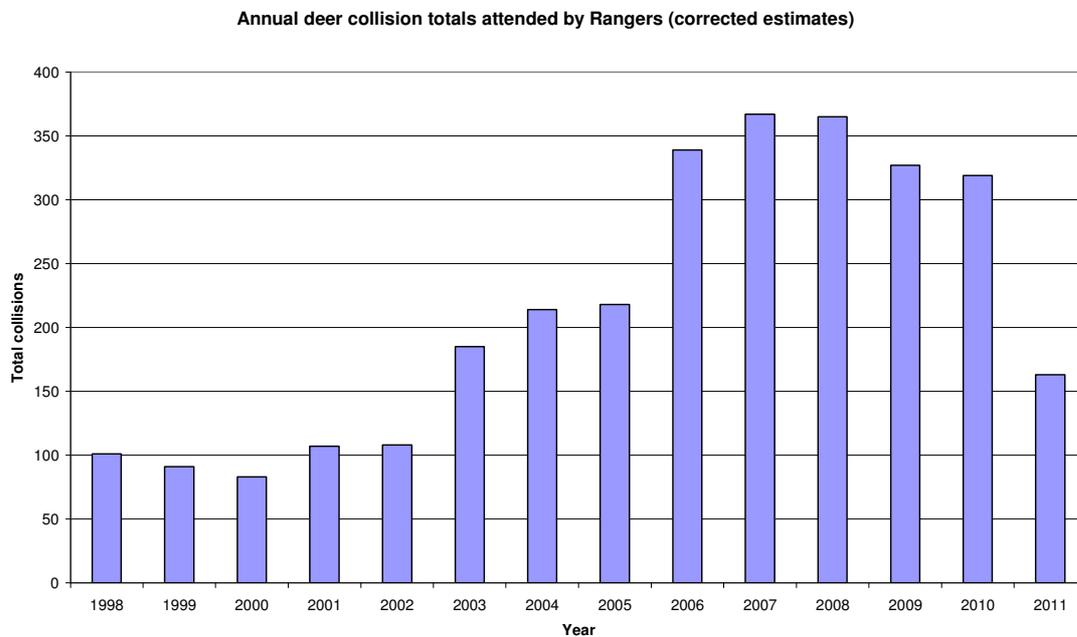
### Appendix One

#### Road traffic collisions involving deer attended by Forest Rangers

##### Graph 1 Recorded incidents

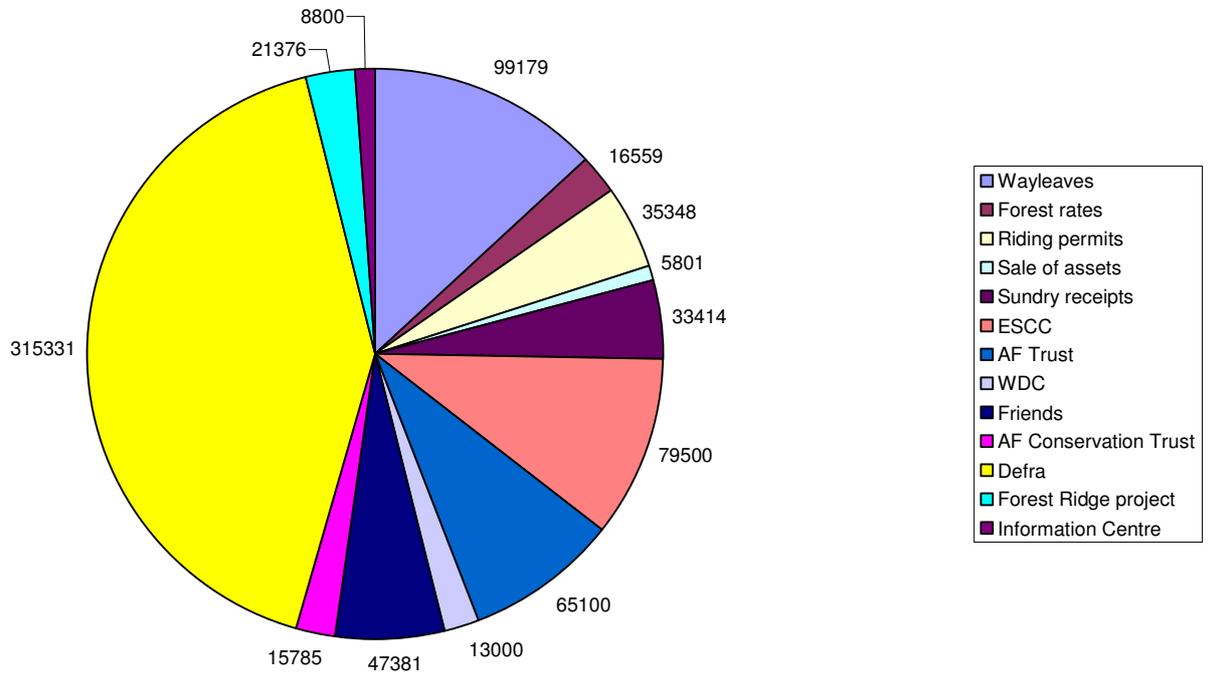


Graph 2 Estimate of road traffic collisions involving deer corrected for the 25% reduction in Ranger cover which occurred from 2007 – 2011 and to include end Nov/Dec 2011



Appendix Two

Conservators' income 2011



Conservators' expenditure 2011

