

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

1900, Wednesday 18 May 2011  
Ashdown Forest Centre

Present on behalf of the Board: Rupert Thornely-Taylor (who took the Chair), Roy Galley, Diana Hurrell, Sylvia Martin, Hew Prendergast (Director), Rosalyn St Pierre, Francis Whetstone.

Present on behalf of *Parishes/Councils*: *Buxted*, Geoffrey Sheard; *Forest Row*, Vivien Hill; *Hartfield*, Claire Risby; *Maresfield*, Lolita Reeves; *West Hoathly*, Paul Brown.

With new Parish Councillors present, Rupert Thornely-Taylor asked everyone to introduce themselves.

## 1) Apologies

Board: Michael Cooper, Philip Glyn.

Councils: *Danehill*, Michael Fishlock; *Withyham*, Keith Obbard.

## 2) Minutes of the last meeting (23 February 2011)

These were approved as an accurate record.

## 3) Matters arising

Hew Prendergast reported that a large portion of the Hebridean flock is now in Wrens Warren Valley in a temporary electric-fenced enclosure. The main problem so far has been deer knocking the fence down. Another enclosure is almost ready for use beside the Royal Ashdown Forest Golf Club course.

In March a Planning Inspector turned down the appeal against WDC's refusal to allow a development at Fairwarp. In large part the decision was based on the perceived impact the development would have on the attributes of the Forest that have granted it the EU designations of Special Protection Area and Special Area of Conservation. Hew Prendergast said the decision is a reminder that any loss of heaths on the Forest would increase the likelihood of local development.

## 4) Update from the Forest (verbal reports by Hew Prendergast)

i) Fire near Four Counties car park.

Twelve acres were burned on 25 April as a result of the lighting of a disposable BBQ. Fifty ESFRS officers were eventually involved and, a week later, still had to make visits to extinguish flare-ups. Contrary to local media reports Hew Prendergast neither 'slammed' nor was 'angry' about Police inaction; no witness, after all, had come forward, and any evidence had presumably been burned! Rosalyn St Pierre said the Conservation Committee had visited the site. There Chris Marrable (Conservation Officer) had pointed out that fires *per se* are not a bad thing for heaths, indeed they may be very beneficial, but there is no place for uncontrolled ones like this.

ii) Forest Centre development

Plans for the development had been submitted to WDC at the end of March. More information and some changes had been requested at the end of April. Claire Risby asked whether, were the application to go to committee, those Conservators who were Councillors could vote on it. There followed a discussion on protocol and procedure on this matter, on which no one knew the answer, but Roy Galley thought that the application, though 'major', was uncontroversial and might not go to committee.

iii) Conservators' contributions to the Weald Forest Ridge Landscape Partnership Scheme

Two projects are due for completion in the next fortnight: installation of a new permanent exhibition in the Information Barn – to replace one that has been *in situ* since the last millennium – and the setting up of a mobile app to introduce car park visitors to the Forest and nearby walks and points of interest. Though possibly the first of its kind in East Sussex, Hew Prendergast had little doubt that in a year or two's time it will already be seen as antiquated! Paul Brown wondered whether mobile use might, in time, be linked to car park charging. Hew Prendergast said this already occurs at Forestry Commission sites in the county.

Other projects have been the installation of an electronic whiteboard, development of online educational resources, running of school events (including one due this week), the transcription and putting online of 5000 pages of the Conservators' minutes since 1887, and the production of seven walks leaflets. The Mesolithic House at the Forest Centre was built by another organisation under the Scheme.

iv) Resignation

Hew Prendergast will be leaving the post of Director on 6 June. The Chairman expressed the appreciation of many for his contribution to the Forest.

**5) AOB**

Vivien Hill said she would announce the 7 June Public Meeting in her column in the local paper. She added that she had recently been at a meeting where the felling of trees had been an issue for one attendant. Francis Whetstone thought that the trees in question were on the Royal Ashdown Forest Golf Club course so this had not been an issue for the Conservators.

At 1936 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 21 September

1900, Wednesday 14 December