

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

1900, Wednesday 21 September 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, Richard Stogdon, Tony Reid, Chris Marrable

Present on behalf of Parishes/Councils: Jenny Exley, Michael Fishlock, Annette Gurr, Vivien Hill, Keith Obbard, Lolita Reeves, Clare Risby, Geoffrey Sheard

## **1. Apologies**

Board: Rosalyn St Pierre, Diana Hurrell, Sylvia Tidy  
Councils: Patrick Show

## **2. Minutes of the last meeting (18 May 2011)**

These were approved as an accurate record.

## **3. Matters arising**

None.

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

i) Grazing – there have been a number of road traffic collisions with sheep and cattle on the C3 Crowborough Road. Discussions with the Ashdown Forest Villages Road Safety Partnership failed to come up with anything more constructive than new signs: It was very unlikely that the county council would impose a lower speed limit or install speed humps. Sheep in the main grazing enclosure have also been subject to many attacks by dogs, leading to several fatalities.

ii) Hebridean flock – the Conservators' own flock has grazed four areas on the Forest over the summer, including two large areas at Wrens Warren. There have been a few incidents of dogs worrying sheep but only one injured animal. The sheep will soon have to leave the Forest as the grass disappears and an appeal was made for winter keep. Some good suggestions were forthcoming and these will be followed up.

iii) Deer – possibly as a result of increased culling and stalking, encouraged by the Ashdown Area Deer Forum, the number of deer collisions attended by the Rangers was down by 30% compared with recent years. A map showed that the greatest number of casualties occurred where traffic speed and volume was highest, on the A22 at Millbrook and Cherry Orchard bends near Forest Row. However, the map also showed that collisions occurred over every part of the Forest area, demonstrating that deer were now widespread across the Forest and beyond.

iv) Heathland maintenance – a diagram was circulated showing the areas where the main heathland conservation work would occur in the coming winter. (The same information is available on-line at [www.ashdownforest.org](http://www.ashdownforest.org) )

v) Dangerous roadside trees – the recent closures required by road works around the Wych Cross traffic lights gave Forest staff an opportunity to carry out remedial work on roadside trees. This policy of identifying potentially dangerous trees and either felling them or removing branches has reduced the number of trees falling across roads.

vi) Dartford warblers – the snow which fell during the last two winters has had a catastrophic effect on the Dartford warbler population, with a crash from around 30 pairs down to perhaps only one pair. It was explained that this fluctuation was normal for a species living at the edge of its main range.

vii) Dormice – the dormouse monitoring programme has shown that the species appears to be doing well in the Vachery woodlands with four dormice breeding in the boxes. In the Cackle Street coppice woods, there is one family of dormice and one box occupied by a family of woodmice.

## **5. Forest Centre Development**

The Chairman told the meeting that the planning application had been submitted and was now being screened by WDC to determine whether or not an Appropriate Assessment under European Habitat Regulations was necessary to ensure that no damage would occur to the heathland close to the Centre. Continuing discussions over the detail of the development have brought about some internal changes.

## **6. Car parking charges**

Conservators explained that the Board had an obligation to seek alternative sources of income. Car parking charges, either for use of the public car parks or for locals wishing to park on the Forest outside their property, were under consideration. There was discussion about how difficult it would be to implement charges in the 50 Forest car parks.

Moving on from car park charges, there was discussion about whether or not the parish councils would be in a position to make a donation to Forest funds. It was agreed that the parish representatives would bring the matter up at their respective council meetings.

## **7. AOB**

There was brief discussion about piles of Rhododendron brash stacked in Broadstone Warren. It was pointed out that the Conservators had no authority in that area and that it was not appropriate to comment on Broadstone's management.

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 December 2011

1900, Wednesday 14 March 2012