



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

Wednesday 10th December 19.00 – 20.00 Ashdown Forest Centre

Present on behalf of the Conservators of Ashdown Forest: Tony Reid, John Francis, Philip Glyn **Staff:** Pat Buesnel (Director). **Present on behalf of Parishes/Councils:** Keith Obbard (Withyham); Vivien Hill (Forest Row), Quinten Burch (Crowborough Town Council), Paul Brown (West Hoathly), Clare Risby (Hartfield). **Present on behalf of the Friends of Ashdown Forest:** Pat Arnold

1. **Introductions:** Tony Reid (Chairman) welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Apologies: Michael Cooper, Tony Lewin (Forest Row), Lolita Reeves (Maresfield), Francis Whetstone

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

3. **Matters arising:**

Item 4: Every Dog Matters Code of Conduct consultation has now concluded and final copy is being prepared.

Item 6: Work at Newbridge – this is on the Work Programme.

4. **Forest Update:** John Francis (Chair of Conservation Committee) talked to the Conservation Report previously circulated. A further briefing note regarding a proposed Invisible Fencing trial (awaiting confirmation of funding from Natural England/DEFRA) was circulated to members – feedback was positive. Points raised included:

- The need to inform and educate Forest users as the reasons for its installation and to address the inevitable concerns there will be from riders and dog walkers. The Director reported that the Conservation and Grazing officers will be putting in place a Communication Plan.
- Security of equipment
- Battery life

Remembrance Sunday: those who had attended agreed it was a wonderful occasion and traffic management very effective.

Education Programme: the Director reported that this was going well, and was able to offer schools an excellent programme to fit in with the curriculum. Members were asked to encourage their local schools to take part – all details on the website.

5. **Presentation - The Plants of Ashdown Forest:** Philip Glyn gave a very informative presentation on the flora of Ashdown Forest. He highlighted the important species that would be under threat without Forest management. He discussed the successional woodland and explained though useful for amenity use (directing pressures away from heathland) it was biologically 'dull'. He went on to explain that heathland compartments should not be all heather clad; explained the benefits of gorse management and highlighted key species such as Gentian; White-beaked sedge; Sundew; Bog asphodel; Cotton grass; Marsh Club moss; Northern Fragrant and Early Marsh orchids. He finished the presentation by discussing the invasive non-native species that should be eradicated from the Forest such as: Black Cherry; Turkey Oak; Himalayan Balsam; Japanese Knotweed; Gaultheria Shallon and Rhododendron ponticum

6. **Forest Centre Development:** Solar panels are installed. 2nd Planning Application for Tractor Shed and Workshop modernisation will be submitted before Christmas.

7. **Items from Parishes:**

Hartfield: Clare Risby raised the issue of traffic safety at Wrens Warren following recent accident. The Director reported that the Chase Ranger had made a site visit and that due to the high nature of the bank there was nothing that we could do to increase the sightlines however it was suggested that Highways be approached to put in place and maintain some Concealed entrance signs plus a request to the Board for a mirror would be looked on favourably. Clare to report back.

Crowborough: Quentin Burch raised a number of issues with regard to the Grazing Area at Crow and Gate. The Director responded:

- Dogs need to be kept under close control or on a lead near any grazing livestock – this will be reinforced by the Code of Conduct
- No permissions are needed from Secretary of State as we are not exceeding the 100 acre limit
- There are signs that meet all the EU legislation
- As a result of phone calls from a concerned walker, the lower wire of this enclosure will be deactivated as this will not reduce its effectiveness while it contains the current stock.

Quentin will report back.

8 **Any other business:**

- The Director informed the Panel of the proposed Summer grazing areas for 2015; as with the Invisible Fencing, Parishes with grazing locations will be contacted directly with more detailed information.
- Vivien Hill raised the possibility of having 'star gazing' events/courses on the Forest – the Director to investigate.

9 **Dates of meetings 2015: 7-8pm at the Forest Centre**

March 25th

June 24th

September 23rd

December 9th