

**Minutes of the  
PROGRAMME COMMITTEE MEETING OF THE  
BOARD OF CONSERVATORS OF ASHDOWN FOREST**

**Monday 20 May 2019**

14.00 at the Ashdown Forest Centre

Committee members present: Mr N Mawdsley, Mr J Francis, Cllr S Tidy, Mr C Smith, Mr AG Reid, Mrs R St.Pierre and Mr S Alton (Conservation Officer)

Minutes taken by K Meade

There were no members of the public present

		<b>Action</b>
<b>15/19</b>	<b>Apologies</b> Apologies had been received from Cllr R. Stogdon, Ms J Field (Natural England), Mrs L Meehan	
<b>16/19</b>	<b>Declarations of interest by Members of a Personal or Prejudicial Nature</b> The wife of Mr Smith is the treasurer of SPGCT	
<b>17/19</b>	<b>Election of Chair and Vice-Chair of the Committee</b> Th Vice-Chair wishes to stand down since he is Chair of the Finance & Regulatory committee. The re-election process will be activated at the September meeting.	
<b>18/19</b>	<p><b>Matters arising</b></p> <p><u>18.01/19 RPA update</u> The RPA funds were paid on 17<sup>th</sup> May 2019. The expected payment was £522,676 and the amount received was £522,770.78</p> <p>An RPA field inspection was carried out during May. The written report is yet to be received.</p> <p><u>18.02/19 SAMMS update</u> There have been no recent updates. The Conservation Officer is now the point of contact with WDC and will contact Kelly Sharp.</p> <p><u>18.03/19 Thames Basin Heaths Visit</u> The TBH visit to the TBH Partnership, an active SAMMS programme, has been arranged for 5<sup>th</sup> June</p> <p><u>18.04/19 Conservator vs Commoner comparison of grazing costs</u> It was unclear what the data the committee need. NM, ST and SA will work with the Grazing Officer to outline the future grazing strategy.</p> <p><u>18.05/19 Deer Programme Working Party</u> The Deer Programme Working Party will meet on 13<sup>th</sup> June 2019.</p>	<p><b>SA</b></p> <p><b>SA</b></p> <p><b>NM</b></p> <p><b>SA</b></p>
<b>19/19</b>	<b>Financial Information for the Programme Committee</b> <u>19.01/19 Countryside Stewardship Financial Summary for information</u> <u>PROG</u> <u>06/19</u>	

	<p>The possibility of using CS funds for capital and amenity expenditure was discussed - it was considered that adequate CS reserves must be maintained until towards the end of the agreement. In the medium-term it was expected that a Forest business plan would contain the 10-year forecast for CS income and spending and encompass any capital needs that can be supported by the CS funds plus other funding sources.</p> <p>The committee agreed that it would be beneficial to see the finances for the whole organisation and for both committees to see the same paper.</p>	LM
<b>20/19</b>	<p><b>Forest Conservation Reports</b></p> <p><u>20.01/19 Conservation Officer's report</u> <u>PROG 07/19</u></p> <p>The Conservation Officer advised that the winter/spring season had been successful, and compliments had been received from external bodies including Butterfly Conservation and the Sussex Ornithological Society, which will be passed on to staff. Habitat management is starting to show results.</p> <p><u>20.02/19 Grazing Officer's report</u> <u>PROG 08/19</u></p> <p>The Chair noted that the report alludes to important strategic issues for the expansion of grazing, which are related to other items on the agenda. These issues including fencing, expansion of stock through Commoner graziers and the Conservators stock, the grazing base and implications for the grazing project of the Sussex Pony Grazing and Conservation Trust. These will need to be resolved in the near future. In the first instance, NM, ST and SA will work with the Grazing Officer to outline the future grazing strategy and will report back to the Committee.</p> <p><u>20.03/19 Management Team Meeting report</u> <u>PROG 09/19</u></p> <p>The Chair asked for the important issues to be included in the Conservation Officer's report at future committee meetings and for this report to be removed as an agenda item but included as an Annex in the Conservation Officer's report.</p> <p><u>20.04/19 Grazing Base – Little Broadstone Farm barn</u></p> <p>Planning permission has now been granted to Mr Cranfield.</p> <p>The Grazing Officer put forwards to the Committee the recommendation to approach John Cranfield to update the proposals and negotiate a ten- year agreement. The Committee decided that Chris Tipping should be asked to negotiate a favourable contract as per his earlier recommendation in his letter of 11 May 2017. The resulting Heads of Terms agreed for the land and barn will be subject to final approval and should be presented to the appropriate decision maker at the Conservators for final decision. Negotiations should also include possibility of hay making from grazing field.</p> <p><u>20.05/19 Sussex Pony Grazing and Conservation Trust</u> <u>PROG 10/19</u></p> <p>The Executive Committee has agreed for a business case to be put to the Board in September. This will therefore return to the Programme Committee at its next meeting on 16 September 2019.</p> <p>Legal advice will need to be sought in regard to our charitable status and the transfer of assets from a registered charity.</p>	<p>SA</p> <p>NM / SA</p> <p>SA</p> <p>SA</p> <p>SA</p>
<b>21/19</b>	<p><b>Compliance Checklist and Monitoring</b></p> <p><u>21.01/19 Monitoring and evaluating the impact of management</u></p> <p>Discussed as part of the Conservation Officer's report</p> <p><u>21.02/19 CS compliance monitoring</u></p>	

	<p>Discussed as part of the Conservation Officer's report</p> <p><u>21.03/19</u> Risk assessments and monitoring The grazing risk assessment needs updating.</p> <p>The Chair asked for views on modifying the agenda for future meetings in order to highlight the important items for discussion. A suggested format was given as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Overview, Progress and Monitoring – to include a red/amber/green system, outcome / KPI highlights, compliance and finance</li> <li>• Specific Issues for Consideration and Decision</li> <li>• Future Strategy, Performance &amp; Risk</li> </ul> <p>Mr Smith asked if each paper could highlight items for noting, for discussion and for approval in an effort to streamline the meetings. The Committee agreed to consider a revised agenda to help streamline meetings – the Chair will draft a revised agenda for consideration.</p>	<p>CF</p> <p>NM/KD</p>
<b>22/19</b>	<p><b>CONFIDENTIAL SESSION</b> <b>END OF CONFIDENTIAL SESSION</b></p>	
<b>23/19</b>	<p><b>Communications</b> <u>23.01/19</u> Development of relationships with outside bodies The Committee was advised that the Executive Committee are considering the Conservators' communications work. It was considered that a simple communications plan with key messages would be helpful in assisting the team to deliver the communications work.</p>	<p>Exec</p>
<b>24/19</b>	<p><b>Forest Amenity and Education</b> Nothing to report</p>	
<b>25/19</b>	<p><b>Retail Offer and Trading Arm</b> Nothing to report</p>	
<b>26/19</b>	<p><b>Strategic Plan and Conservation Management Plan review</b> <u>26.01/19</u> Urgent action needed before next meeting – Working Group The Committee was advised that the Conservation Management Plan expires in 2020. This will need to be reviewed and potentially expanded to include non-conservation Forest management work. The Conservation Officer agreed that a broader Forest plan is vital, but his current workload is reactive with no time for planning.</p>	
<b>27/19</b>	<p><b>Management Information</b> Nothing to report</p>	
<b>28/19</b>	<p><b>Any urgent item for which the Clerk has notice in order to pass to the Chairman</b> Nothing to report</p>	

The meeting closed at 16:35