

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

Monday 20 January 2020

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, Mr M Cooper, Cllr C Hardy and Mr S Alton (Conservation Officer)

Co-opted Members/Advisors

Also present: Mrs L Meehan (Finance Officer), Mr R Voden (Chief Executive)

Minutes taken by K Meade

There were no members of the public present

		Action
01/20	Apologies Apologies had been received from Cllr R. Stogdon, Mrs R St.Pierre	
02/20	Declarations of interest by Members of a Personal or Prejudicial Nature The wife of Mr Smith is the treasurer of SPGCT	
03/20	Matters arising RPA Update – No response has been received from the RPA. ACTION: The Conservation Officer will continue pressing for a response. Education Update – Nothing to report this meeting. ACTION: An update is requested for the next meeting	 SA KD
04/20	Financial Information for the Programme Committee <u>04.01/20 Countryside Stewardship Forecast 2019/20 and Budget 2020/21 PROG 01/2020</u> Two points were specifically discussed: the adjustments made to allow for the consultation project manager; the replacement of cattle grids over a 5-year rolling programme. There was some discussion about how an underspend will be managed whilst achieving the required level of compliance. Additionally, the Conservation Officer clarified the Broadstone Farm expenditure as land agent costs, fencing and some cattle handling costs. Cllr Tidy advised the committee that she had an understanding from the Director CET at ESCC that ESCC would be prepared to assist with cashflow if the Conservators are affected by late payment of the Countryside Stewardship grant. ACTION: The committee requested a formal agreement with ESCC relating to assistance with cashflow to be produced.	 ST

<p>05/20</p>	<p><u>Progress Reports</u></p> <p>The relevant items of 06/20 were discussed at this point.</p> <p><u>05.01/20 Conservation Officer's report</u> <u>PROG 02/2020</u></p> <p>The Committee discussed the impact of recent weather on the work and noted the good progress achieved with the winter work on the Forest despite these challenges. The use of fire on the Forest was considered as well as a discussion on the Gorse spraying trial.</p> <p>ACTION: An evaluation of the Gorse spraying trial was requested including its place in relation to the management of Gorse on the Forest.</p> <p>The Chairman highlighted and the Committee agreed with the need to explicitly consider climate change.</p> <p>ACTION: The Chairman asked for a policy or statement on climate change to be drafted for consideration by the Committee in the future.</p> <p>SAMMS – ACTION: The Chairman asked that the projects should be reviewed, and a simple strategy developed once the SAMMS Officer is in post.</p> <p>Sussex Pony Grazing Trust – No further progress will be made until SPGT is liquidated expected at the end of January/early February.</p> <p>White House Barn – Planning permission has been submitted.</p> <p>Communications Strategy – A meeting of a Communications Group had been held that involved a volunteer communications professional and writer. This group proposed a communications audit to be completed as part of developing a communications plan and strengthening communications capacity of the Conservators. ACTION: The Chief Executive will consider the proposed communications audit as part of future work.</p> <p>Deer Programme – The Committee discussed the sale of venison and an update on the cull. The number of carcasses to date was in the forties and the first carcass had been supplied to a local butcher for production of venison for retail. The purchase of refrigeration equipment should be taken forwards to enable storage of the processing venison. The Chief Executive advised there might be a need for a night shooting licence. The Health and Safety issues of this were discussed and included that thermal imaging sights would be used and so safety whilst stalking would not be noticeably degraded.</p> <p>Wealden Local Plan – Cllr Hardy updated the committee about the Wealden Local Plan following the rejection by the Planning Inspector. A new plan will be developed, and the Committee hoped the Conservators will be involved at an early stage to discuss mitigation measures.</p> <p>ACTION: The Chairman asked for Marion Ashdown from Natural England to be invited to talk to the committee about SNAPS (Site Nitrogen Action Plans) if appropriate.</p> <p>CONFIDENTIAL SESSION</p> <p><u>05.02/20 Grazing Officer's report</u> <u>PROG 03/2020</u></p> <p>END OF CONFIDENTIAL SESSION</p> <p><u>05.03/20 Deer programme report</u></p> <p>The update on the deer programme was covered as part of the Conservation Officer's report.</p>	<p>SA</p> <p>NM</p> <p>SA</p> <p>RV</p> <p>SA</p> <p>SA</p>
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06/20	<p>Specific Issues for Consideration</p> <p>The agenda for this section of the meeting was revised given that many of these issues had no specific decision, strategic consideration or paper associated with them and their updates were dealt with as part of the Conservation and Grazing Officers' reports.</p> <p>Mr Reid proposed that the Committee makes its position clear with regards to the option of the upcoming break point in the Countryside Stewardship contract. The Chairman asked for a show of hands for those that supported continuation of the Countryside Stewardship scheme for 2021-2025 and this was supported by all members of the Committee.</p>	
07/20	<p>Compliance Checklist and Monitoring</p> <p><u>07.01/20 Monitoring and evaluating the impact of management</u> Nothing to report</p> <p><u>07.02/20 CS compliance</u> The Conservation Officer advised that he had been recommended to regularly contact the RPA to enquire about the outcome of the 2019 inspection as the results of the RPA inspection have yet to be received.</p> <p><u>07.03/20 Strategic Risks</u> There was some discussion about the risk to the CS payment following the RPA inspection and the upcoming break point clause. The Conservation Officer clarified that any repayment in relation to areas such as the cricket grounds being included in the Countryside Stewardship grant would likely run to no more than a few thousand pounds.</p>	SA
08/20	<p>Strategic Plan and Conservation management Plan review</p> <p>The Chairman advised the committee that the current 5-year plan was coming to an end. The CEO stated that the focus of any review or updating of the plan should focus on Chapters 4 and 5 of the current plan if required. It was also proposed that a simple evaluation of progress from 2016 to 2020 and a work programme for 2021-2025 should suffice for the following 5 years.</p> <p>The Chairman acknowledged the amount of work achieved by the team.</p>	SA
09/20	<p>Management Information</p> <p>Nothing available</p>	
10/20	<p>Any urgent item for which the Clerk has notice in order to pass to the Chairman</p> <p>Nothing to report</p>	

The meeting closed at 16:20