

Minutes of the Meeting of the Programme Committee

Monday 03 October 2022 at 14:00

Ashdown Forest Centre

Committee Members present: Mrs S Tidy (Chair), Mr J Squire (Vice Chair), Mr N Mawdsley, Mrs L Maudslay, Cllr A Newton and Mrs E Riminton-Drury

Co-opted Members/Advisors present: Mr T Reid

Ex-officio: Mrs R St. Pierre

Also present: Mr J Adler (CEO) and Mr A Walmsley (Countryside Manager)

Minutes taken by the CEO.

There were no members of the public present.

		Action
14/22	Apologies Cllr J Howell	
15/22	Declarations of interest by Members of a Personal or Prejudicial Nature There were none.	
16/22	<p>Matters arising</p> <p><u>16.01/22 Management Plan update</u> The mapping and ground truthing is complete. The consultant is required to produce the plan by the 21 October. The committee look forward to receiving the plan before making final comments.</p> <p>The committee were shown the completed mapping work. The amount of the habitats was described on the Forest. This included a reflection on the CS habitat targets. On paper for the CS, bracken is more of an issue than gorse. However work is required to alter the age structure of the gorse.</p> <p>Natural England have offered funding to monitor vegetation and grazing activity.</p> <p><u>16.02/22 SAMMs update</u> An update on recruitment was given. The Lead Warden (SAMM) recruitment was launched today. The intention is that this role will build relationships with the local dog walking community to help them understand the needs of the ground nesting bird populations on the Forest.</p> <p>Mrs St Pierre enquired about the recruitment agency and whether the role is being published on various websites. This was acknowledged and confirmed. Mrs Riminton-Drury suggested the post holder should be well experienced in social media.</p>	
17/22	<p>Progress Reports</p> <p><u>17.01/22 Countryside Manager's report</u> The information is on the circulated report. The Chair invited any questions on the detailed report. Mr Squire asked on how connections with local land owners in relation to deer management was progressing.</p>	

	<p>There is work underway including building the relationships with the AONB, the South Downs NP and Natural England to progress this.</p> <p>The deer management programme was discussed by the committee with the understanding that management of deer on the Forest is important. However it will take all of our neighbours to support deer management for an impact on the overall population to occur.</p> <p>The Chair asked about floral monitoring on the Forest and whether the recording of numbers was linked to environmental conditions. This is work that will be undertaken.</p> <p>Mr Mawdsley asked about pony income. The ponies at Pippingford are chargeable. Mrs Riminton-Drury thanked Mr Walmsley for the financial figures on car park repairs.</p> <p><u>17.04/22</u> <u>Education programme report</u></p> <p>The Countryside Manager gave an update of the Education Programme. The committee agreed that improving education provision the Forest was important and finding long term, sustainable funding was important. It is also important to build the engagement with young people over time.</p>	
18/22	<p>Election of Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Committee for the following year</p> <p>The CEO sought nominations for the Chair and Vice Chair positions.</p> <p>Chair: Mrs Tidy was duly elected to the position of Chair. Vice Chair: Mr Squire was duly elected to the position of Vice Chair.</p>	
19/22	<p>Any Urgent Item for which the Clerk has notice in order to pass to the Chairman.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Chair paid tribute to Michael Cooper who has sadly died. Mr Cooper was a keen member of the Conservation committee for many years and contributed significantly to the Forest and its governance. • There have been recent announcements about the possibility of fracking, changes to laws protecting the environment and alterations to the CS replacement, Environmental Land Management. The CEO met with Nus Ghani MP to discuss Forest concerns about the potential impacts of changes on the Forest. Ms Ghani asked the CEO to write to her for clarity on the recent announcements which she could use to ask the relevant departments for a formal response. • The Forest has been approached by a group led by the Kent and Sussex Wildlife Trusts and the Wildwood Trust. They have identified the Forest and Bedgebury Arboretum as potential Pine Marten reintroduction sites. They are leading a diverse group of stakeholders from a variety of interests through an engagement exercise before a decision is made on whether to introduce. We are hosting those meetings. A Farming in Protected Landscapes application has been made to support this work by the Wildlife Trusts. • The Countryside Manager reported dog attacks on sheep over the preceding weekend which had killed at least seven sheep. This is being taken up with the Police who are in contact with the possible owner. A commoner is also involved in the response to the dog attacks. • Natural England have offered funding for the Black Grouse feasibility report. 	

The meeting closed at 15:40