

## Minutes of the Meeting of the Programme Committee

**Monday 05 February 2024 14:00**

**Ashdown Forest Centre**

**Committee Members present:** Mrs S Tidy (Chair), Mr J Squire ( vice Chair) , Mrs I Manweiler, Mr N Mawdsley, Cllr R Millward, Ms Rimington-Drury

**Board Members Present:** Mr T Reid, Mr R Stogden

**Ex-officio:** None

**Also present:** Mr M Pearson (CEO), Mr A Walmsley (Countryside Manager) and Ms Z Nichols ( Administration Manager)

Minutes taken by the Administration Manager

There were no members of the public present.

		<b>Action</b>
	Introduction of Darren Kilner , the new Deer Ranger.	
<b>01/24</b>	<b>Apologies</b> Ms L Maudslay.	
<b>02/24</b>	<b>Declarations of interest by Members of a Personal or Prejudicial Nature</b> Cllr Tidy declared a personal interest as she attends Fairwarp church and the car park will be raised in AOB.	
<b>03/24</b>	<b>Matters arising</b>	
<i>03.01/24</i>	<i>Countryside Stewardship/ Landscape recovery update</i>  The Countryside Manager advised that there are meetings with DEFRA to understand why the Landscape Recovery bid was unsuccessful. Parts of the bid did well, but fell short on two primary sections of biodiversity and the Carbon element. The application was for the Development and not the implementation stage. It is likely that the criteria will change slightly for the next round of applications which are likely to be at the end of this year. Cllr Tidy asked about Countryside stewardship and the Countryside Manager said that an application would be made to either extend the current application or make a whole new application. He and the CEO will discuss with Natural England. There has been an uplift in the Countryside Stewardship rates this year.	
<i>03.02/24</i>	<i>Bracken Management update</i>  The Countryside Manager confirmed that Asulox is no longer being manufactured. Therefore chemical management is no longer an option. More will need to be spent on contractors to cut and collect and this may have to be done slightly earlier in the year and then there may be a risk for nesting birds. In April the Countryside Manager will contact volunteers to help with bracken pulling in May/ June. Cutting can take years to cause a decrease in viability. Cllr Millward said that she is happy to assist with awareness of need for volunteers.	

	<p>Bracken clearance is very manual and volunteers will need gloves and secateurs. Ms Rimington-Drury asked about the use of Glyphosate and the Countryside Manager said this is not an option being considered at the moment. If the bracken is not controlled then Natural England may say what is required.</p>	
<b>04/24</b>	<b>Progress Reports</b>	
04.01/24	<p><i>Countryside Manager's report incorporating:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <i>Grazing Report</i></li> <li>2. <i>Deer Program Report</i></li> </ol> <p>A question was raised on the maintenance of car parks and specifically Fairwarp Church and Poundgate. The Countryside Manager said that the annual car park assessment would be undertaken again. There is a pro-active work programme, but this needs to be done within budget. More car park works have been done this year than in recent years.</p> <p>The monies from car parking are for core funding and not specifically for car park maintenance.</p> <p>St John's car park has been repaired, which is used by the community as well as the school.</p> <p>Graffiti/ vandalism has reduced.</p> <p>Mr Squire raised a question on the survey of dangerous trees. The Countryside Manager said that there is proactive management and the forest has been split into three for the purpose of management and mapped to show high risk areas.</p> <p>Exmoor Ponies were discussed and livestock. There are two types of grazing on the forest, commoners on the south chase and the Conservators herds of Rigit Galloway, sheep and the ponies. The sheep and cattle go off the forest for winter.</p> <p>The Ponies kept at Pippingford were discussed.</p> <p>The Countryside manager confirmed that there is now a Bull on loan and that there is an issue with rare breeds and small gene pool.</p> <p>The Countryside Manager confirmed over 100 deer have been culled and that the deer Drone Survey will assist in showing Deer behaviour on the Forest.</p>	
04.02/24	<p><i>SAMMS report</i></p> <p>There is a meeting for the Zoning study this week.</p> <p>There was the question raised as to how to drive footfall towards paths and away from nesting birds. The Countryside Manager said this is difficult, but signs will go out as last year.</p>	
04.02/24	<p><i>Education Programme Report</i></p> <p>The report shows positive steps with secondary schools, especially with the Natural History GCSE coming through.</p> <p>The youth group has picked up momentum. The issue is how to get the volunteers in the 18-27 age bracket. Some work experience is currently offered.</p> <p>The CEO said that there will be a campaign to recruit volunteers to the Forest.</p>	
<b>05/24</b>	<b>Any Urgent Item for which the Clerk has notice in order to pass to the Chairman.</b>	
	<i>Access for all opportunities</i>	

	<p>There are now the changing places facilities, and an expression of interest has been submitted to High Weald Access for All for funding for a Boardwalk to make the Forest more accessible to those who are less active/ mobile. The Boardwalk would be of recycled composite, and Natural England will need to approve. The CEO said that the idea is to remove barriers.</p> <p>Mr Squire brought up two things that have been discussed previously: a Coronation Clump and Memorial for James Adler. The result of a further discussion was the idea of a fruit tree Coronation Clump with a tree commemorating James in the centre. The CEO and Countryside Manager to discuss further and talk to Natural England.</p> <p>The Countryfile episode from the forest which will be broadcast next week was mentioned.</p> <p>Mr Maudsley asked if there was any Gatwick update and the Countryside Manager confirmed that the Forest's comments have been logged.</p> <p>Cllr Millward mentioned the Wealden Draft Local Plan and said that the draft included that the 400m zone from Ashdwon forest which cannot be developed would be from the curtilage of the property , not the property itself. There will be a public consultation from March to May before submission.</p> <p><i>Fariwarp:</i> There will need to be a meeting between the CEO and other relevant people to discuss the Church car park further.</p>	MP and AS
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The meeting closed at 15:35