

# West Sussex Growers' Association (WSGA)

Executive Meeting – 12<sup>th</sup> September 2016

Report to Members – John Hall (Consultant)

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## 1. National Living Wage

WSGA fully supports NFU in lobbying Government on the following points :-

- No requirement for Employers National Insurance contributions for seasonal workers.
- No pensions auto-enrolment requirement for seasonal workers, so they are not captured by this administratively burdensome process that delivers minimal value in pensions accrued.
- Further support for investment in productive technology, automation and mechanisation, and to support science funding for research and development on the same. This support needs to be made more accessible to smaller business.
- Accommodation Offset to apply to National Living Wage, and the level of the offset to be increased, taking into account increases in rental prices in the wider accommodation market.
- For Government's ambition for NLW to reach 60% of median earnings by 2020 to be pushed back into the next session of Parliament to allow industry time to adapt to the unanticipated substantial increases in labour costs.
- The Low Pay Commission to be given more powers to set minimum and living wage rates independently of government.
- The timing of the NLW and National Minimum wage increases to be aligned in a cost neutral way, rather than having separate rises in April and October.
- A new Seasonal Agricultural Workers Scheme (SAWS) to be introduced for the benefit of the Agricultural & Horticultural Industries.

## 2. Improvements to the A27 – Options

Following the sudden removal of the 2 Northern options by Highways England, there are now only 5 options currently on the table. Option 2; that includes a link road between the Fishbourne roundabout and N Mundham, is the preferred option of WSGA.

### **3. Chichester District Council (CDC) – Horticultural Development Areas (HDAs)**

WSGA representatives are continuing discussions with senior officers at CDC around issues of land availability within the HDAs.

### **4. Arun District Council (ADC)**

ADC has recently adopted measures for the provision of Food Enterprise Zones – specifically for horticulture. Karl Roberts (ADC- Director of Planning & Economic Regeneration) will give a presentation on the subject to the WSGA Executive on 12<sup>th</sup> September 2016.

### **5. Rural Statement**

A *Rural Statement* has been produced by Coast to Capital (C2C), illustrating some of the socio-economic issues and opportunities for rural businesses in the C2C area. The Statement includes references to WSGA and the Horticultural Industry on the Coastal Plain.

### **6. Water**

Meetings have continued to be held with NFU, the Environment Agency, Defra, Portsmouth Water and Southern Water and other stakeholders to address issues around the planned reforms to water abstraction and water trading.

WSGA will be represented at the next meeting to be held at Defra in London to further discuss these issues on 10<sup>th</sup> October 2016.

### **7. Bank of England**

A group of WSGA members met Andrew Holder (Agent of the Bank of England) on 22<sup>nd</sup> August at the offices of Growtrain. The main issues discussed included: Brexit, the National Living Wage, Migrant Labour, Exchange Rates, Cost Pressures including Energy, Planning & Infrastructure.

### **8. Agricultural & Horticultural Development Board (AHDB)**

On 8<sup>th</sup> July 2016 WSGA was pleased to receive a visit from senior officers from AHDB, including: Gary Taylor (Chairman – AHDB Horticulture), Steve Tones & Tom Hind (AHDB Strategy). Our thanks go to the Directors & Managers at Tangmere Airfield Nurseries, Hall Hunter Partnership, Madestein UK, Growtrain and Roundstone Nurseries for hosting a very successful and worthwhile day.

### **9. WSCC, C2C & CDC**

WSGA hosted a visit to Tangmere Airfield Nurseries on 21<sup>st</sup> July 2016 from Nathan Elvery (WSCC – Chief Executive), Jonathan Sharrock (C2C – Chief Executive) and Paul Over (CDC - Executive Director).

### **10. Plant Health**

On 31<sup>st</sup> August 2016 a number of WSGA members attended a meeting at Hilliers, Ampfield, Romsey, to discuss current Plant Health issues.

### **11. West Dean Gardens**

On 11<sup>th</sup> July 2016 a group of WSGA members met at West Dean Gardens to present a cheque for £1,000 as a donation towards the greenhouse renovation programme.

### **12. Autumn Dinner – 2<sup>nd</sup> December 2016**

The WSGA Autumn Dinner will be held at the Vicars' Hall, Chichester on the evening of Friday 2<sup>nd</sup> December 2016.

Our Guest Speaker will be Ali Capper (Chair-NFU Board for Horticulture).

### **13. Recent Visitors and Meetings – 2016**

- 29<sup>th</sup> June – Defra – Water Abstraction Meeting – London.
- 6<sup>th</sup> July – C2C – Rural Statement Launch – Brinsbury.
- 8<sup>th</sup> July – AHDB visit to WSGA.
- 11<sup>th</sup> July – Presentation and visit to West Dean Gardens.
- 21<sup>st</sup> July – WSCC, C2C & CDC visit to WSGA.
- 25<sup>th</sup> July – A27 consultation with Highways England – Chichester.
- 22<sup>nd</sup> August – Bank of England visit to WSGA.
- 31<sup>st</sup> August – Plant Health – Hilliers, Ampfield.

### **14. Upcoming Events & Meetings – 2016**

- 12<sup>th</sup> September – WSGA – Executive Meeting – Aldingbourne.
- 5<sup>th</sup> October – UK Irrigation Association – Visit to WSGA Nurseries.
- 10<sup>th</sup> October – Meeting with Defra in London – Water Abstraction.
- 3<sup>rd</sup> November – Coastal West Sussex Meeting.
- 7<sup>th</sup> November – WSGA Executive Meeting.

**John Hall – 12<sup>th</sup> September 2016**

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