

## West Sussex Growers' Association (WSGA)

Executive Meeting – 1<sup>st</sup> June 2015

Report to Members – John Hall (Consultant)

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### **1. Chichester District Council (CDC)**

We have had discussions with CDC concerning a proposed visit to members' nurseries by Councillors, Executives and Senior Officers during September; followed by a conference in November 2015. Invitees to the conference would include key CDC personnel, growers, farmers and other stakeholders. The final format and details are yet to be agreed, but it is envisaged that there will be a number of keynote speakers at the conference.

It is possible that the November conference may be scheduled to fit in with the WSGA Autumn Dinner and GroSouth.

Further discussions will take place between CDC, NFU & WSGA on 8<sup>th</sup> June 2015.

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

ADC has been successful in applying for a £50,000 grant from Defra to carry out a feasibility study into the provision of Food Enterprise Zones. Reading Agricultural Consultants have been appointed to carry out the feasibility study and will be commencing interviews with stakeholders in late June 2015.

In principle, West Sussex Growers' Association supports anything that simplifies the planning system and helps to identify suitable land that meets the relevant criteria for horticultural development. On the other hand; members are concerned that we don't end up with the same issues and problems that we have with Horticultural Development Areas (HDAs) in the Chichester District i.e. monopoly of land ownership and the instant increase in perceived land values within designated areas; once lines are drawn on maps.

### **3. LEAF – Eric Wall and Tangmere Nurseries**

A very successful LEAF (Linking Environment and Farming) Demonstration Farm day was held at Eric Wall's Pollards Nursery and Tangmere Airfield Nurseries on 13<sup>th</sup> May 2015.

Leaf Demonstration Farms are commercial farms and nurseries which show the beneficial practices of Integrated Farm Management (IFM) to a broad range of audiences, through organised visits. They communicate an understanding of IFM in order to encourage uptake by farmers, support from the industry and political awareness of sustainable food and farming.

### **4. Broadband**

WSCC has recently committed a further £6m towards the "*better connected*" initiative to bring most areas up to *superfast* levels of +24Mb. Concerns remain though that some do not have *good* levels of broadband; let alone *superfast*.

Discussions have started with new wireless broadband providers to look at the possibility of using existing radio masts on the South Downs to reach many of the less accessible areas.

## **5. Energy efficiency**

Through the *Your Energy Sussex* initiative, WSCC is offering finance to businesses wishing to improve energy efficiency on their premises. With a £66 million investment fund from the Coast to Capital LEP available to fund energy saving work, there is scope to finance projects both large and small.

From renewable energy solutions to energy-saving building retrofits, *Your Energy Sussex* will consider supporting a broad range of projects. Potential projects must be backed up by a robust business case, because the cost of the project will need to be paid back from the energy savings made or the renewable energy generated. The commercial terms on offer will depend on the project and the security that the partner can provide.

## **6. Water**

The SE regional NFU Horticultural Board met at Rochester, Kent on 18<sup>th</sup> May 2015; primarily to discuss issues around possible new rules for water abstraction, new licence agreements, currently unlicensed trickle irrigation, water trading and the Water Framework Directive.

Recent research papers and initiatives were discussed, including:

- a) East Malling Research – Paul Dracott*
- b) NFU – Paul Hammett – Water Availability in a Changing Environment – River Lark & Wissey Catchment*
- c) Cranfield University – Financial Impacts of Abstraction Licence Changes – Cam & Ely Catchment*

## **7. University of Chichester**

The University of Chichester has won a grant of £8m from the Growth Fund through Coast to Capital (C2C) to fund a new Engineering & Technology Centre at the Bognor Regis Campus. Some of the post graduate courses being developed will be attractive to managers currently working in the local Agricultural and Horticultural Industries.

## **8. Horticultural Development Company (HDC) & Defra**

Gary Taylor (Chairman of HDC), Kathleen Kelliher (Defra Team Leader – Horticulture & Potatoes) and Barbara Silberstein (Defra), visited WSGA members nurseries on 21<sup>st</sup> May 2015.

The itinerary included: Walberton & Binsted Nurseries, Farplants Distribution, Roundstone Nurseries, the Hall Hunter Partnership at Donaldsons Nursery and Madestein at Leythorne Nurseries.

A number of growers took the opportunity to discuss issues and concerns with our visitors during the day, including: water, planning and research and development.

## **9. Horticultural Trades Association**

Senior members of the HTA (Carol Paris, Raoul Curtis-Machin & Martin Simmons) visited WSGA nurseries on 23<sup>rd</sup> April 2015.

The itinerary included: Walberton and Binsted Nurseries, Farplants Distribution, Eric Wall – Pollards Nursery, Hill Brothers at Runcton and Langmeads at Walton Farm, Bosham.

## **10. Forestry Commission**

The Forestry Commission has received a grant of £600k towards the cost of establishing wood chip hubs in the SE of England.

We have had three meetings with Alison Field (Regional Director of Forestry Commission), including visits to members nurseries, to discuss how this might benefit WSGA members.

At least 5 WSGA members have installed, or are about to install, wood chip boilers on their nurseries.

## **11. Website**

The WSGA website is currently being redeveloped to provide an improved resource for members and stakeholders. [www.wsga.co.uk](http://www.wsga.co.uk)

## **12. Recent & Upcoming Events – 2015**

13<sup>th</sup> April – WSGA – AGM – Aldingbourne

15<sup>th</sup> April – Presentation to Selsey Town Council – Selsey

16<sup>th</sup> April – WS Climate change Board – The Dome – University of Chichester

23<sup>rd</sup> April – Horticultural Trades Association – Visit to WSGA

7<sup>th</sup> May – Environment Agency – Worthing

13<sup>th</sup> May – LEAF – Eric Wall and Tangmere Nurseries

14<sup>th</sup> May – Rural West Sussex Partnership meeting – Billingshurst

21<sup>st</sup> May – Horticultural Development Company & Defra – Visit to WSGA

26<sup>th</sup> May – Pepper Technical Group – Visit to WSGA

1<sup>st</sup> June – Manhood Peninsula Partnership meeting – Visit to WSGA

1<sup>st</sup> June – WSGA – Executive meeting – Aldingbourne

8<sup>th</sup> June – CDC – Meeting to discuss Conference

11<sup>th</sup> June – NFU/WSGA/CLA – Meeting to discuss Farming & Rural Issues Group – Ardingly

18<sup>th</sup> June – Coastal West Sussex Partnership – Worthing

18<sup>th</sup> June – Portsmouth Water – Havant

**John Hall – 1<sup>st</sup> June 2015**

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