

West Sussex Growers' Association (WSGA)

Executive Meeting – 5th December 2016

Report to Members – John Hall (Consultant)

1) Brexit

Following the outcome of the EU referendum, the Association has written to Ministers and local MPs, highlighting our concerns around a number of issues, including:

- The all year-round requirement of the Horticultural Industry for access to migrant workers from within the EU i.e. the need for the continued free movement of people within European borders.
- If the free movement of people across Europe cannot be maintained; then other Work Permit schemes should be introduced to satisfy the need for additional workers in the Horticultural Industry.
- The Industry needs clarity as to future trading agreements between the UK, the EU and the rest of the world.
- The falling value of the pound will have a negative effect on most horticultural businesses, as the cost of key inputs such as transport, energy and the import of raw materials will rise sharply.

2) National Living Wage

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

- There should be no requirement for Employers National Insurance contributions for seasonal workers.
- Auto-enrolment requirement for seasonal workers onto pension schemes should be abolished, 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 should apply to the National Living Wage, and the level of the offset should be increased, taking into account increases in rental prices in the wider accommodation market.
- The Government's ambition for the NLW to reach 60% of median earnings by 2020 should be pushed back into the next session of Parliament to allow industry time to adapt to the unanticipated substantial increases in labour costs.

3) Improvements to the A27 – Options

Option 2; that includes a link road between the Fishbourne roundabout and N Mundham, is the preferred option of WSGA.

Option 2 at Chichester is also the preferred option of Rolls Royce, Goodwood Estates and the Coastal West Sussex Partnership.

In conjunction with Rolls Royce and Goodwood Estates; WSGA has issued a joint statement to Highways England making it clear that of the options now on the table; option 2 is our preferred option.

WSGA will also be proactive in engaging with consultations on the proposed improvements to the A27 at Arundel and Worthing.

4) 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.

5) Arun District Council (ADC)

Discussions have commenced with ADC, concerning the proposed Horticultural Conference for autumn 2017.

The format is likely to be similar to the conference held with CDC at Farbridge, Lavant in November 2015, including speakers on a range of subjects.

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.

AHDB, Ricardo & NFU are carrying out further surveys on water use for irrigation on farms and nurseries.

7) Autumn Dinner – 2nd December 2016

65 members and guests attended the WSGA Autumn Dinner at the Vicars' Hall, Chichester on the evening of Friday 2nd December 2016.

In their after-dinner speeches; Ali Capper (Chair-NFU Board for Horticulture) and Graham Bryant (WSGA Chairman) raised the issues that have been faced by our Industry during the last year and the key issues that now face us post Brexit.

Many members and guests have already told me how much they enjoyed the evening; including the venue itself, the very high quality of the food, the entertainment by Roger

Lapin - the table magician, the speeches and of course the opportunity to catch-up with friends and colleagues. Here's to next year.

8) Membership & Subscriptions

David Fox and I will be reviewing and updating current membership details during December 2016 and sending out annual subscription requests for 2017.

9) Recent Visitors and Meetings – 2016

- 3rd November – Coastal West Sussex Partnership Meeting.
- 9th November – Grow Show South – Roundstone Nursery.
- 17th November – Richard Hopkins (Fargro) – Visit to WSGA.
- 30th November – Institute of Horticulture – Conference.
- 2nd December – Autumn Dinner – Vicar's Hall, Chichester.

10) Upcoming Events & Meetings – 2016/2017

- 5th December – WSGA Executive Meeting at Growtrain.
- 6th December – Coast to Capital Meeting – Horsham.
- 8th December – Coastal West Sussex Partnership – Meeting with Caroline Wood.
- 9th December – Environment Agency Meeting – Worthing.
- 13th December – Meeting with Defra Ministers – London.
- 22nd December – Meeting with Matt Baker – NFU Mutual – Growtrain.
- 17th January – Coast to Capital Meeting – Rural Economy – Horsham.
- 14th March – Coastal West Sussex Partnership – Big Bang STEM – Butlins.
- 21st March – Farming & Rural Issues Group South East – Brinsbury College.
- 23rd March – Coastal West Sussex Partnership – Bank of England Update – Littlehampton.
- Summer 2017 – Chichester Chamber of Commerce & Industry/WSGA – Meeting at Tangmere Airfield Nurseries.
- Autumn 2017 – Horticultural Conference with Arun District Council.

John Hall – 5th December 2016

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