



Minutes of the meeting of the Board of Conservators of Ashdown Forest
Monday 13 March 2017 at 14.00
Ashdown Forest Centre

Present: Cllr R Stogdon (Chairman), Cllr S Tidy (Vice Chairman), Cllr J Barnes, Mr A Reid, Mr M Cooper, Cllr M Ensor, Mr J Francis, Mr R Galley, Mr P Glyn, Cllr C Hardy, Cllr L Keeley, Mr C Smith, Cllr R St Pierre, Cllr F Whetstone and Mr J Spicer.

In attendance: Mrs P Buesnel (Director) Mrs K Dirs (Clerk) Mrs L Meehan (Finance Officer).
 Minutes were taken by Mr J Clow.

There was 1 member of the public present.

Presentation by Mr Glen Poland, Deer Programme Co-ordinator

The Deer Programme Review 2016-2017. Mr Poland introduced his presentation and demonstrated how he has changed the original sites on a map of Ashdown Forest to better aid the stalker success rates; he then presented the past and present cull figures. The stalkers have been able to achieve almost double the number of adult female fallow deer culled last year. With the right coordination, Mr Poland is aiming to increase the deer cull numbers by 50% in 2017-2018. Mr Poland showed photographs of the Deer enclosure plots installed by the Deer Initiative in 2011. The photographs illustrated the contrast between the ground flora inside the enclosure to that outside which is under pressure from grazing deer. The new venison chiller will be installed by the end of July 2017 and venison will soon be on sale at the Forest Centre.

	Item	Action
01/17	Apologies. There were apologies from Cllr P Holloway. Cllr L Keeley arrived during item 04/17.	
02/17	Declarations of any interest by Members of a Personal or Prejudicial Nature. There were none	
03/17	To approve the minutes of the Board meeting of 21 November 2016, and matters arising – BD 01/17 The minutes of the last meeting had been circulated and assessed by the Board for accuracy. The minutes were duly received and were approved in accordance with Standing Order 2.6. <i>03.01/17 Matters arising</i> Mr Francis queried the progress by Wealden District Council (WDC) in supplying further information regarding the Nitrogen Monitoring project. The Director confirmed a Briefing Document of Ashdown Forest Nitrogen Deposition was expected shortly.	
04/17	To receive the minutes of the Conservation Committee meeting of 9 January 2017 – BD 02/17 The minutes of the last meeting had been circulated and assessed by the Board for accuracy. The minutes were duly received and were approved in accordance with Standing Order 2.6. <i>04.1/17 Matters arising minute 04/17</i> Mr Francis reported that the Conservation team had completed all scheduled work with the exception of some external contracts that were held up due to funding delays from DEFRA. <i>04.2/17 Matters arising minute 04.1/17</i> Mr Francis tabled a draft fencing consultation document for which he sought Board approval to circulate to a wider audience. After some discussion Cllr Stogdon advised the document should not be circulated in its current format and raised concern that the document lacked essential information to address the necessity for roadside fencing. The Conservation Officer, Mr Alton, explained he had had one day to prepare the document and it was by no means a final version. Mr Francis further sought approval from the Board to approach a legal representative and ascertain	

	<p>costs for professional guidance to clarify the Conservators liabilities and responsibilities to extend conservation grazing while protecting the public. Mr Glyn clarified the request was merely to inform the Board in principle. Cllr Stogdon confirmed that the matter should be raised at the next Conservation Committee meeting and that the Board should have input if the professional fees were significant.</p> <p>The Board discussed the need to expand the Commoner grazing area and to educate the public on the advantages and disadvantages of invisible fencing and/or permanent fencing. Cllr St Pierre understood that fencing the highways was already a priority because of the need for road safety and the number of deer collisions. Mr Reid highlighted the importance of informing Natural England if there is likely to be a delay (as the experiment is unfolding) as this might affect funding.</p>	
05/17	<p>The Roads, Planning & Amenities Committee meeting of 30 January 2017 - BD 03/17</p> <p>The minutes of the meeting had been circulated and assessed by the Board for accuracy. The minutes were duly received and approved in accordance with Standing Order 2.6.</p> <p><i>05.1/17 Matters arising</i> Mr Glyn asked whether the Wealden Plan gave reference to the SAMMS income and expressed his disappointment over delays. Mr Galley stated that the Wealden Local Plan written last year was in part driven by Forest Policy and he thought it appropriate that the Conservators respond to it in some way and asked for it to be added to the next RPA Committee agenda. The Director confirmed that there had been no progress on SAMMS projects and WDC Officers had indicated that no funds would be forthcoming in the near future.</p> <p><i>05.2/17 Matters arising minute 03.03/17</i> Cllr Whetstone queried the intention of the proposed signage for the Golf Club and raised concern of additional traffic using Tompsets Bank. Mr Spicer advised the Board that the Secretary of the Golf Club had submitted the wrong location plans in his original request for new signage and Mr Spicer understood that the intention of the direction signage was to redirect traffic away from the Tompsets Bank access.</p> <p>The Board entered confidential session The Board left confidential session</p>	
06/17	<p>The Forest Centre Development Committee of 06 February 2017 – BD 04/17</p> <p>The minutes of the meeting had been circulated and assessed by the Board for accuracy. The minutes were duly received and approved in accordance with Standing Order 2.6.</p> <p><i>06.1/17 Matters arising minute 03/17</i> Cllr Tidy reported that the Capital Grant from Wealden District Council to refurbish the kitchen in the Education Barn had been awarded. The Director confirmed that the grant was being match funded with the use of staff and volunteer hours.</p> <p><i>06.2/17 Matters arising minute 03/17</i> There were no questions concerning the Sewage Treatment Works and the Wood Store although the Board acknowledged work must go ahead as quickly as possible.</p>	
07/17	<p>The Finance & General Purposes Committee meeting of 27 February 2017 – BD 05/17</p> <p>The Board entered confidential session The Board left confidential session</p>	
08/17	<p>To receive the Director’s report - BD 06/17</p>	

	<p>The Director spoke to her report. She welcomed James Clow who is providing maternity cover at the Forest Centre. A coffee morning for the Volunteers will take place Thursday 16th March at the Education Barn. The Grazing team gave a presentation at the AFRA AGM this month also attended by Mr Galley to provide a governance update. The Parish Liaison Panel is becoming increasingly significant with recent initiatives that include working together on Planning Applications and exploring funding opportunities. The Director reported on initiatives with the Police to tackle crime on the Forest. The Police have provided three wildlife cameras to be deployed at our discretion. The Ashdown Forest Triple Bill event hosted by the Forest Row Film Club was well supported and very successful with approximately one hundred attending, raising around £300 in donations.</p>	
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09/17	<p>To receive the Clerk's report - BD 07/17</p> <p>The Clerk spoke to her report. The Clerk reported that Colin Smith had won the election at the Commoners Annual Meeting on 03 March and would commence his five year term from 01 April 2017. The Clerk expressed some surprise that a number of Commoners were still unaware of the process for voting and unaware of the meeting itself, adding that the office did all it could to advertise the meeting.</p> <p>The Clerk advised that a number of Bye-Law breaches and encroachments were being pursued by County Hall but the process to initiate action was sometimes slow. She further reported that Fly-tipping was extremely prevalent across the Forest, the clearance of which placed a strain on the team.</p> <p>The Clerk spoke of a number of serious dog incidents that had recently occurred which had attracted widespread social media coverage.</p> <p>A reformatted 'Final Demand' letter had been issued to all Commoners and Residents owing money which had generated circa £3,000. The balance outstanding of circa £6,000 is a dramatic improvement in comparison to 2015/2016 of circa £12,000.</p> <p>The Clerk concluded her report informing the Board that the land swap at Yew Tree Cottage had been finalised and the Land Registry Titles updated. A proposal to request donations for the use of Forest vehicles to act as emergency recovery services had been successful.</p>	
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10/17	<p>Governance Review Verbal update</p> <p>The Board entered confidential session</p> <p>The Board left confidential session</p>	
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11/17	<p>Any Urgent Item of which the Clerk has notice in order to pass to the elected Chairman</p> <p>There were none.</p>	
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This part of the meeting closed at 16:15 approx.

Chairman _____
June 2017

Clerk _____