

**Minutes of the
EXTRAORDINARY FINANCE AND GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE MEETING OF THE
BOARD OF CONSERVATORS OF ASHDOWN FOREST**

Friday, 8 July 2011
1430 Ashdown Forest Centre

Committee members present: Cllr F Whetstone (Chairman), , Mr R Galley (*ex officio*), Mr P Glyn, Mrs D Hurrell, Cllr A Reid, Mr J Spicer, Cllr R Stogdon, Mr R Thornely-Taylor (*ex officio*). Minutes taken by Mrs R Marriott (Clerk).

Action

16/11 Election of Chairman and Vice-Chairman.

In accordance with Standing Orders, Mrs Hurrell was co-opted on to the Committee. The Clerk then invited nominations for Chairman. Mr Whetstone was proposed by Mr Stogdon and seconded by Mr Glyn. There were no other nominations and Mr Whetstone was accepted unanimously. The Clerk then invited nominations for Vice Chairman. Mrs Hurrell was proposed by Mr Whetstone and was seconded by Mr Rupert Thornely-Taylor. There were no other nominations and Mrs Hurrell was accepted unanimously.

17/11 Apologies.

There were no apologies. It was noted that Cllr Bennett had resigned from the Board and Cllr Sylvia Tidy had been appointed by East Sussex County Council as his replacement. It was agreed that Mrs Tidy would be co-opted onto the Committee.

18/11 Declarations of any interest by Members of a Personal or Prejudicial Nature.

There were no declarations of an interest.

19/11 To discuss how central government policy was affecting the Board's finances as agreed in Board Minute 38/10 confirming FGP recommendation Minute 20/10:

"Any urgent item for which the Director has notice in order to pass to the elected Chairman". Cllr Reid said it would be sensible of the Board to discuss, at the end of the first quarter of the new financial year, how central government policy was affecting the Board's finances. He said that the picture would be clearer and it was wise to discuss how the Board would move forward through the next three years. It was agreed that this would be wise."

Mr Whetstone invited Mr Reid to open the discussion. Mr Reid stated that he felt, in the current difficult financial times, it was important that the Board look several years ahead when planning its budget. The task was to prioritise work, allocate a budget and look at income. He suggested a small working party be formed to build a model which could be brought to the next FGP meeting. It would seek officer input as necessary in order to identify priorities. He thought it advisable that the Board prepare its budget and present it to the County Council before the latter prepares its own budget.

Mr Whetstone reported that he had had discussions previously with Sean Nolan, the Director of Corporate Resources at ESCC. He understood that the County's contribution was to be reduced by 25% over three years; 10% this year, 8% in 2012/13 and 7% in 2013/14. He had also heard that Higher Level Stewardship (HLS) money was being reviewed by the EU.

Mr Galley suggested that there were two interrelated problems; short term threats such as the reduction in the number of horse riders etc and income post HLS. The immediate tasks

were to identify the threats to income and opportunities for new income streams, which tasks were essential and which optional. The Board should look over both the medium and the longer term.

Mr Thornely-Taylor queried the legal duties of the Board should there be no replacement for HLS when it finishes in 2016. He cited the example of the work requested by English Heritage of the Conservation Committee; technically this was not the Board's statutory duty and a formal request should have been made by the Ashdown Forest Trust as landowner. He also commented that the Board has no legal duty to maintain the SSSI; this was the responsibility of the landowner. Mr Reid agreed to seek legal advice from the County's legal department in order to define the Board's liabilities and how they should be discharged.

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Mr Reid thought a constructive dialogue with the County Council's officers would be useful once the Board had made its plans.

Mr Glyn suggested the working party should use the current five year Management Plan as a starting point. He stated that the Board should be clear about its legal liabilities; his paper, now on the Forest web site www.ashdownforest.org/docs/Legal_summary.pdf lists the legislation that affects the Forest. Mr Thornely-Taylor commented that the implications of employing a Centre Manager had to be considered.

It was anticipated that the working party would prepare a paper for the next FGP Committee meeting giving a framework for progressing the project.

FGPWP

There being no other business the meeting closed at 15.25.