

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE BOARD OF CONSERVATORS OF
ASHDOWN FOREST HELD AT THE ASHDOWN FOREST CENTRE, WYCH
CROSS ON MONDAY 28 JUNE 1999 AT 2.30 pm.**

Present: Mr D H O Allen (in the Chair), Mrs D M Bagshawe, Miss M McPherson,
Mrs S Stokes, Dr H D V Prendergast, Messrs D C Cumming, L J Gillham,
P J Glyn, D L Hall, R I F Parsons, A G Reid, R M Thornely-Taylor,
F W J Whetstone, A N White.

ITEM 1 Apologies for absence

1.1 Apologies for absence had been received from Mr M Skilton.

ITEM 2 To elect a Chairman and Vice Chairman

2.1.1 The Clerk invited nominations for Chairman. Mrs Stokes nominated Mr Allen. There being no other nominations, Mr Allen was elected unanimously as Chairman.

2.1.2 Mr Allen offered the Board's thanks and appreciation to Mr Cumming for his clear leadership and perceptive handling of the complex issues that had arisen during his three years as Chairman.

2.1.3 After welcoming the members of the public present, the Chairman asked for nominations for Vice-Chairman. Mr Parsons was proposed by Mr Cumming. There being no other nominations, Mr Parsons was elected unanimously.

ITEM 3 To approve the Minutes of the Meeting held on 22 March 1999

3.1 The Minutes of the last Meeting, which had been previously circulated, were presented by the Chairman. Item 7.2 was corrected to read "...The Board noted the Committee's decision that during the illness of John Linton, a Ranger covering the additional duty week ...". The Minutes were then approved and signed as an accurate record.

ITEM 4 Matters arising

4.1 Traffic Calming In response to questions, the Clerk informed the Board that he had no knowledge of any speeding prosecutions to date but added that during the last four weeks, there had been three speed traps on Forest roads. Currently wires crossing the roads measured both numbers of vehicles and speed. Mr White reported that traffic speeds through Duddleswell were reduced during the middle of the day but were still averaging 50 mph during rush hour.

4.2 Education at the Forest Centre The Clerk informed the Board that no progress had been made to date.

4.3 Fox hunting Referring to the motion put forward but not considered at the Board's meeting in March, Mr Gillham stated the subsequent outcome in terms of reporting and coverage had been wholly predictable. He expressed his concern particularly as all members of the Board were in possession of the legal advice and aware the action

that had been proposed could not have been taken without risk of serious legal challenge.

ITEM 5 To receive the Minutes of the Conservation Committee Meeting held on 19 April 1999

- 5.1 The Minutes, which had been previously circulated, were presented by Mr Gillham.
- 5.2 Bracken Mr Thornely-Taylor expressed his concern over the vigorous bracken growth this year and the fact that he understood bracken spores to be carcinogenic. The Clerk informed the Board that bracken covered approximately 1400 acres of Forest Land. A biannual programme of mowing sections where possible, weakened the plants but the slit trenches and steep terrain made mowing in some areas impossible. It was known that the eating of bracken fronds can cause cancer but no known research data was available to indicate the degree of risk between contact with bracken spores and any incidence of cancer. Dr Prendergast commented that as the prevailing wind from the south west passed over considerable stretches of bracken, little could be done in isolation to reduce any risk. It was agreed that the Conservation Committee should consider the control of bracken at its next meeting.
- 5.3 Temporary hide to photograph nesting Dartford warblers The Clerk informed the Board that the applicant had understood the reason for the Board's refusal to allow the construction of a temporary hide to photograph Dartford Warblers. He had been able to use the licence from English Nature on private land.
- 5.4 There being no further questions, Mr Gillham moved the adoption of the Minutes. This was agreed.

ITEM 6 To receive the Minutes of the Roads, Planning & Amenities Committee Meeting held on 17 May 1999

- 6.1 The Minutes, which had been previously circulated, were presented by Mrs Stokes.
- 6.2 Planning applications
- 6.2.1 Phie Forest Gardens: Mr Parsons reported that the application would be heard on 1 July. He understood that it would be recommended that permission be granted for five years and the situation then reviewed. The erection by the owner of a robust fence between the Forest and the site, to be maintained by the owner, would be one of the conditions. Other conditions would be that no more than 6 horses could use the site at any one time and attendance should be managed if users were not members of the site owner's family.
- 6.2.2 Wrens Warren: Mr Parsons informed the Board that an appeal has been lodged over the refusal of planning permission for the seven large houses and the three phase application would be considered in the immediate future.
- 6.2.3 Millbrook car park: The Clerk informed the Board that he had received a letter from the Highways Department which advised that limited resources meant work to improve the safety of the car parks could not be considered in this year's work programme. However, in due course, it may be possible to link an improvement of the surface water drainage to some form of safety feature.

- 6.3 There being no further questions, Mrs Stokes moved the adoption of the Minutes. This was agreed.

ITEM 7 To receive the Minutes of the Finance & General Purposes Committee Meeting held on 7 June 1999

- 7.1 The Minutes, which had been previously circulated, were presented by Mr White.
- 7.2 The unaudited Accounts
- 7.2.1 Mr White informed the Board that as a result of new legislation which required the Board to sign the Accounts before they are seen by the Auditor, a local firm of accountants had been asked to inspect the Accounts and had signed a statement that the Accounts appeared correct.
- 7.2.2 Mr Thornely-Taylor proposed that legal advice be sought over the pros and cons of the Conservators holding land acquired for the Forest over the years.
- 7.2.3 Mr White moved the adoption of the Accounts. This was agreed and the Chairman signed the Accounts on the Board's behalf.
- 7.3 Duty Ranger "on call" payment **The Board agreed the Committee's recommendation that a payment of £20 per night would be paid to a Ranger for "on call duty".**
- 7.4 New Licence between the Conservators and the Secretary of State for Defence The Clerk informed the Board that the Licence had been issued.
- 7.5 The new County Council decision making process Mrs Bagshawe informed the Board that the pilot scheme had already started. It was agreed that the County Councillor responsible for matters which affected the Forest should be invited to the Centre for a briefing session. The Chairman asked the members of the Board who were County Councillors to keep the Board informed of progress with the scheme and the best time for a briefing.
- 7.6 Composition of Committees The Board agreed the Chairman's suggestion that Mr Cumming should replace Mr Parsons on the Roads, Planning & Amenities Committee and the Finance & General Purposes Committee.
- 7.7 Press Briefing
- 7.7.1 Mr White informed the Board that Mr Oxley, the Editor of the Courier Newspapers, had been invited to the Centre and had been given a full briefing, including a slide presentation, on the management of the Forest and the current legal position of the Board with regard to the fox hunting issue. Mr Oxley had invited the Clerk to attend his monthly reporters meeting so that he could give the reporters a similar brief.
- 7.7.2 It was agreed that a letter from all members of the Board stating their position should not be sent to Mr Oxley at this stage. However, a letter should be sent in three or four weeks time if no progress was made as the Board felt it important that the public

should be made aware of the Board's position in view of the escalating legal costs of Somerset County Council, which now exceed £750,000,. In the meantime, it was agreed that a press release should be issued following the Board Meeting.

- 7.8 There being no further questions, Mr White moved the adoption of the Minutes. This was agreed.

ITEM 8 The Clerk to report on sundry matters

8.1 "One Spark" campaign. The Clerk informed the Board that the RSPB and the East Sussex Fire Service were launching a joint campaign aimed at raising children's awareness of fire risks in the countryside. The Centre had been chosen as the venue for the media launch.

8.2 Fly tipping The Clerk informed the Board that there had been 17 instances of fly tipping this year. The six in the month of June, included 15 tons of rubble and some carpets in Millbrook car park. Mr Parsons asked if the incidents were reported to East Sussex County Council. The Clerk replied that when any evidence was found, he reported the incident to the County and District Councils, otherwise, he sent a summary to them at the end of each year.

ITEM 9 Any other business

9.1 Heath Week Dr Prendergast asked if any events were planned on the Forest for Heath Week which began on 5 July. The Clerk informed the Board that the launch of the "One Spark" campaign coincided with Heath Week and a Ranger led Nightjar walk was arranged for 10 July.

9.2 Holiday Complex at Horney Common Mr Reid brought to the attention of the Board a potential development within the old pale that might have an impact on the Forest in terms of traffic and visitor pressure. The Clerk informed the Board that he would pick up any future developments through the planning applications list sent by Wealden District Council to the office each week. He would ask for detailed plans of anything which he felt could have an adverse impact on the Forest.

9.3 There being no further questions, the meeting closed at 4.30 pm.

Chairman _____
13 September 1999

Clerk _____