

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE BOARD OF CONSERVATORS OF
ASHDOWN FOREST HELD AT THE ASHDOWN FOREST CENTRE,
WYCH CROSS ON MONDAY 18 JUNE 2001 AT 2.30pm.**

Present: Mr RIF Parsons (in the Chair), Mrs D Bagshawe, Miss M McPherson, Mrs S Stokes, Mrs J Wirdnam, Messrs DC Cumming, LJ Gillham, P Glyn, DL Hall, FJC Marshall, AG Reid, R Stevens, RM Thornely-Taylor, FWJ Whetstone, AN White.

The Chairman opened the meeting and welcomed Mrs Wirdnam to her first Board meeting and the members of the public present

ITEM 1 Apologies for absence

1.1 There were no apologies for absence.

ITEM 2 To approve the Minutes of the Meeting held on 12 March 2001 and the Urgency Meeting held on 23 March 2001

2.1.1 The Minutes of the last Meeting, which had been previously circulated, were presented by the Chairman. The Minutes were then approved and signed as an accurate record.

2.1.2 The Minutes of the Urgency Committee Meeting held on 23 March 2001 were presented by the Chairman. The Minutes were then approved and signed as an accurate record.

ITEM 3 Matters arising

3.1 There were no matters arising.

ITEM 4 To receive the Minutes of the Conservation Committee Meeting held on 9 April 2001

4.1 The Minutes which had been previously circulated, were presented by Mr Gillham.

4.2 Grazing The Clerk reported that 53 head of cattle were now grazing in the 100 acre enclosure. They represented the stock of two Commoners.

4.3 The Board endorsed Mr Gillham's words of praise and thanks to the staff for completing the planned winter work despite the most adverse of conditions.

4.4 There being no further questions, Mr Gillham moved the adoption of the Minutes. This was agreed.

ITEM 5 To receive the Minutes of the Roads, Planning & Amenities Committee Meeting held on 30 April 2001

5.1 The Minutes, which had been previously circulated, were presented by Mrs Stokes.

- 5.2 Footpath in the vicinity of the Forest Row Pavilion Mr Whetstone conveyed to the Board the appreciation of the Forest Row Parish Council for the prompt and excellent work carried out on the footpath between Shalesbrook Lane and Chapel Lane.
- 5.3 Travellers The Clerk advised the Board that the costs of the bailiffs and the repairs to the damaged site entrance were met by the Conservators.
- 5.3 Planning Applications
- 5.3.1 Ashdown Forest Golf Hotel and the Forest Row Pavilion The Clerk informed the Board that only the plans for the hotel site had been seen and those for the pavilion had not yet been issued. It was his understanding that the Wealden District Planning Authorities would be considering both sets of plans together; he would advise Committee Members as soon as the plans were available.
- 5.3.2 Isle of Thorns The Clerk informed the Board that he had not seen any plans for the new access but he understood from attending a site meeting that these would be considered together with the development plans for the site.
- 5.4 There being no further questions, Mrs Stokes moved the adoption of the Minutes. This was agreed.

ITEM 6 To receive the Minutes of the Finance & General Purposes Committee Meeting held on 4 June 2001

- 6.1 The Minutes, which had been previously circulated, were presented by Mr White.
- 6.2 To consider the Board's unaudited accounts for FY 2000/2001
- 6.2.1 Public Notices After a general discussion about the high cost of advertising statutory public notices, it was acknowledged that this was a cost that had to be borne by all public bodies.
- 6.2.2 **The Board agreed the Committee's recommendation to accept the Accounts for the FY 2001/2001 as presented, that they represent fairly the financial position of the Conservators at 31 March 2001 and reflect its income and expenditure during the year.**
- 6.3 VAT status The Clerk informed the Board that a letter of appeal had been sent by the County Secretary's Office to the headquarters of Her Majesty's Customs and Excise on 7 June 2001.
- 6.4 The proposed new Access Licences After a general discussion, it was agreed:
- Property owners would require the new Perpetual Licence for access and any service that was essential to the property, but the old style Licence may be used for properties that only required pipes or signs but no access in perpetuity.

- The Board should retain all monies raised through preparation fees and annual acknowledgment rents.
- The up front charge and Preparation Fee will be £500 plus VAT where levied, in the first instance and this will be reviewed each November in line with other charges.
- It was agreed that the Chairman and vice Chairman of the Board, the Chairman of the Finance and General Purposes Committee and the Clerk should have a mandate to proceed to finalise matters with the Solicitors and the County Council.

6.5 Vehicles The Clerk informed the Board that an agreed form of words indicating the support given by Simpsons would appear on the Toyota pick-ups in future. He would discuss with the Secretary of the Friends of Ashdown Forest whether there should be similar recognition of the Friends' support.

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

Before Item 7 on the Agenda, Councillor Stevens asked to address the Meeting as he had to leave early. He informed the Board that within the next few days he cease to be Chairman of the County Council and Lord of the Manor. During his term he had come to appreciate the dedication of the Board and the Staff in maintaining the Forest. On behalf of the Board, the Chairman thanked Mr Stevens for his support.

ITEM 7 The Clerk to report on sundry matters

7.1 Foot and Mouth Disease update

7.1.1 The Clerk informed the Board that when the County Council lifted the restrictions on Public Rights of Way on 8 June 2001, the Board no longer had legal grounds to exclude the public from the limited grazing area. He had sought advice from the relevant authorities with a view to extending grazing to the whole of the grazing area. He had been advised by the MAFF veterinary officers at Reigate that the limited area could not remain closed to the public. The officers at Reading confirmed that the opening of the Rights of Way had been done following a risk assessment. As the County was disease free, there were now no grounds to keep grazing off the 1300 acre site. The Clerk then wrote to the Trading Standards Office (TSO), responsible for the movement of stock onto common land, giving a comprehensive brief on the situation including the fact that the public would have full access to the grazing area. The TSO agreed that stock could be put out into the grazing area but the farmers would need to obtain movement licences before doing so.

7.1.2 Signs warning traffic that animals would be in the area from 4 July 2001 were to be placed along the C3 at the beginning of the week commencing 25 June. At the same time, signs would be placed at all access points to the grazing area advising the public to keep away from the stock and to keep their dogs on leads when near stock. The

signs would also encourage the public to walk their dogs in the stock-free areas of the Forest.

- 7.1.3 The Clerk informed the Board that the principal grazier had requested to be allowed to turn out stock in excess of his commonable rights. Last year he had grazed 80 cattle and 750 sheep; this year he would like to graze 90 cattle and 800 sheep. The Board agreed that as the grazing stock were an essential part of the management of the heathland and the total was well under the maximum stocking level, permission would be granted for this year. However, their agreement should not be seen as a precedent for future years.
- 7.1.4 The temporary fencing would remain until winter but gaps would be cut into it so that stock could move freely.
- 7.2 Fires The Clerk informed the Board that there had been two fires on the Forest; 116 acres Wrens Warren Valley and 20 acres adjacent to Misbourne. The former had had a considerable impact on the fauna as it had occurred late in the fire season, the latter had been contained by the fire breaks.

ITEM 8 Any other business

- 8.1 Mrs Bagshawe asked if she could sit on the Finance and General Purposes Committee in future. This was noted by the Clerk who replied that it was customary for new Councillors to start on the Conservation Committee and he would make the necessary adjustments when he received the names of newly appointed Councillors from the County Council.
- 8.2 Mr White expressed the appreciation of the Ashdown Forest Riding Association for the good work done on the tracks.
- 8.3 The Chairman on behalf of the Board thanked all the County Council appointees for their support in the past and wished those who would be leaving the Board well in the future.
- 8.4 There being no other business, the Chairman declared the Meeting closed at 4.30 pm.

Chairman _____
10 September 2001

Clerk _____