

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE BOARD OF CONSERVATORS OF
ASHDOWN FOREST HELD AT THE ASHDOWN FOREST CENTRE,
WYCH CROSS ON MONDAY 17 JUNE 2002 AT 2.30pm.**

Present: Mr PJ Glyn (in the Chair), Mrs D Bagshawe, Miss M McPherson, Mrs S Stokes, Mrs J Wirdnam, Messrs LJ Gillham, FJC Marshall, AG Reid, P Scott, T Slack, RM Thornely-Taylor, M Tunwell, FWJ Whetstone, AN White.

The Chairman opened the meeting and welcomed the member of the public present.

ITEM 1 Apologies for absence

1.1 There were apologies for absence from Mr C Dowling and Mr RIF Parsons.

ITEM 2 To approve the Minutes of the Meeting held on 18 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.

ITEM 3 Matters arising

3.1 In response to a question, the Clerk informed the Board that the Business Plan was in preparation.

ITEM 4 To receive the Minutes of the Conservation Committee Meeting held on 8 April 2002

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

4.2 The typographical errors in the Conservation Minutes were corrected.

4.3 Consideration of other aspects of grazing management Mr Slack asked what the benefits of grazing were. In response Mr Gillham outlined the gains in improved biodiversity and habitats. He also explained that grazing by livestock was the most efficient and natural method of controlling scrub vegetation on heathland following mechanical clearance of an area.

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 29 April 2002

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

5.2 Royal Ashdown Forest Golf Club and Management of the West Course

5.2.1 Mr Scott enquired about the ecological impact of the proposed new parking area. The Clerk informed the Board that a vegetation survey had been carried out in house and said the area was one of secondary successional birch wood with an impoverished ground flora dominated by bramble and that it currently acts as a barrier between the existing car

park and the fairway. It should be noted that 60 less parking slots will be needed at the Recreation Ground site.

- 5.2.2 It was suggested that the Clerk should contact the local Wealden District Councillor with a view to clarifying the position over Tree Preservation Orders. The Clerk informed the Board that he hoped to fix an appointment to see Wealden District Arboriculturist next week.
- 5.2.3 **The Board accepted the Committee's recommendation and agreed in principle to the extra parking requested on the proposed site adjacent to the RAFGC clubhouse, subject to the Board seeing detailed planning proposals.**
- 5.3 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 27 May 2002

- 6.1 The Minutes, which had been previously circulated, were presented by Mr White.
- 6.2 The unaudited Accounts for FY 2001/2002
- 6.2.1 The Clerk informed the Board that he had written to Mr Charles Hendry MP for Wealden, to seek his help in resolving the VAT situation and ascertaining the reason why Ashdown Forest had not been covered by Section 33 of the VAT Act 1994. Mr Hendry had replied, offering his help. He had asked for a written brief before meeting with the Clerk to discuss the best way forward. The Clerk was in the process of preparing the brief.
- 6.2.2 **The Board agreed the Committee's recommendation to accept the Accounts for the FY 2001/2002 as presented and agreed they represent fairly the financial position of the Conservators at 31 March 2002 and reflect its income and expenditure for the year.**
- 6.3 Car Parking charges on Ashdown Forest
- 6.3.1 As additional background information the Clerk informed the Board that he had spoken to his opposite number at the Malvern Hills to hear of their experience. The Malvern Hills Conservators have charged for parking in eight car parks for the past twelve years. The parking fee is £1.50 per day and the car park machines are emptied by two wardens employed by the Conservators. Displacement parking is a real problem, and this was one of the main concerns of the New Forest Verderers when they were considering parking charges eighteen months ago. The Clerk said his understanding of the 1988 Road Traffic Act indicated that cars parking on common land within 15 yards of the highway are not in breach of Section 34 of that Act which otherwise make it an offence to drive a vehicle on common land. It being so, displacement parking on Ashdown Forest would be very difficult to curb.
- 6.3.2 Mr Slack felt that other car parking consultants should be consulted and a pilot scheme carried out.
- 6.3.3 Mr Gillham felt that the issue should not be regarded solely as a revenue raising exercise. The internationally high profile of Ashdown Forest in the biodiversity campaign required

the Board to manage the Forest in an ecologically sound manner. Public support was important but management of the habitat had to take precedence.

- 6.3.4. Mr Thornley-Taylor felt the Board should formally consult ESCC and WDC despite the lack of available detail on how such a scheme of charging for car parking may run on the Forest. He felt public perception would be that charging for car parking was levying a tax.
- 6.3.5. Mrs Stokes informed the Board that she had visited Friston Forest and Seven Sisters Country Park. Both car parks could be totally controlled and the nature of the access roads prevented displacement parking. The meters were solar powered and unobtrusive being dark green in colour. However, large signs were needed to draw visitors' attention to the car park charges. The car parks were closed between 6 pm and 8 pm.
- 6.3.6. Mr Scott would like to see the benefits of car park charges being explained to the general public.
- 6.3.7. Mrs Bagshawe said that ESCC had a duty to the tax payers and would expect recipients of their grants to seek alternative sources of income where possible. She said the Board would have to have a good reason for not exploring further a scheme for charging in Forest car parks.
- 6.3.8. After further discussion, it was decided on a show of hands, to consult formally with East Sussex County Council, Wealden District Council, The Society of Friends of Ashdown Forest and other grant making bodies to obtain their views on the introduction of such a scheme on the Forest. This consultation should take place before seeking further information from other car parking consultants and management organisations,
- 6.4 Crown Prosecution Service The Clerk informed the Board that he had had no response to his letter seeking an explanation for the CPS dropping the case to prosecute the owner of a dog caught in the act of killing sheep on Ashdown Forest in 2001. The Board felt that the CPS had had plenty of time to respond and it was agreed that the Chairman of the Board should write to the CPS to query why there had been no response. Mr Tunwell, as Lord of the Manor, agreed to write a letter of support.
- 6.5 There being no further comments or questions, Mr White moved the adoption of the Minutes. This was agreed.

ITEM 7 **The Clerk to report on sundry matters** There were no sundry matters.

ITEM 8 **Any other business**

- 8.1 Mr Whetstone said he had been advised by a member of the Royal Ashdown Forest Golf Club that the Board allowed two covered buggies on the golf course. The Clerk replied that he had given permission for only one buggy for one particular individual two years ago at the request of the Golf Club Secretary. It was agreed that he would confirm with the Secretary that this was still the situation.
- 8.2 Mrs Wirdnam enquired if fly-tipping continued to be a problem. The Clerk replied that there had been no significant increase in the overall number of incidents of fly-tipping on the Forest. But, following the closure of the Crowborough household waste recycling site, there had been a rise in the number of fly-tip incidents around the east side of the Forest and this was almost certainly direct consequence of the closure of the

Crowborough site. Mrs Wirdnam then complimented the Clerk and staff for the tidy state of the Forest, commenting that she rarely saw rubbish on the Forest.

8.3 Mr Tunwell expressed a wish to meet the staff, and invited all members of the Board and all the staff to a lunchtime reception at the Centre before the next Board meeting on 9 September.

8.4 There being no other business, the meeting closed at 4.15 pm.

Chairman _____
9 September 2002

Clerk _____