

Minutes of the

MEETING OF THE BOARD OF CONSERVATORS OF ASHDOWN FOREST HELD AT THE ASHDOWN FOREST CENTRE

1430, Monday 14 June 2004

Ashdown Forest Centre

Present: Mr R. Parsons (in the Chair), Mrs D. Bagshawe, Mr M. Cooper, Mr L. Gillham, Mr P. Glyn, Mr F. Marshall, Dr H. Prendergast (Clerk), Mr A. Reid, Mr T. Slack, Mr R. Tidy, Mr F. Whetstone, Mrs J. Wirdnam, Mr A. White.

The Chairman opened the meeting and welcomed Cllr Bob Tidy who had been appointed to the Board following the appointment of Mrs Bagshawe to Chairman of the County Council and therefore sits on the Board as the representative of the Lord of the Manor. The Board congratulated Mrs Bagshawe and also Mr Reid who had been appointed Deputy Leader.

The Chairman informed the Board that Mrs Madeline Reader, who worked at the Centre as a Volunteer and edited the Ashdown Forest News on behalf of the Friends, had had a heart attack but was making a good and steady recovery. The Board asked that their good wishes be sent to Mrs Reader. The Clerk informed the Board that he had arranged for some flowers to be sent to Mrs Reader, while she had been in hospital, on behalf of the Board and staff at the Centre.

ITEM 1 Apologies for absence There were apologies for absence from Miss M McPherson and Messrs F Brown, C Dowling and P Scott.

ITEM 2 Election of Board Chairman and Vice-Chairman

2.1 **The Board agreed that in future, elections for the Chairman and Vice-Chairman would be held in June. This would allow for local authority elections and appointments to take place.**

2.2 It was noted that traditionally, the post of Chairman had alternated between a Local Authority Councillor and a Commoner. The Chairman expressed his appreciation of Mr Glyn's support as Vice-Chairman and proposed that he become the Chairman. The Board unanimously agreed. Mr Glyn thanked the Board. It followed that a Councillor should therefore become Vice-Chairman. As Mr Reid had agreed that his name be put forward, Mr Parsons proposed that he be appointed Vice-Chairman. The Board unanimously agreed.

ITEM 3 To approve the Minutes of the Meeting held on 14 March 2004 and matters arising

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

3.2 Access Maps Following the Board's concern at the discrepancies apparent in the newly published maps, Mr Parsons confirmed that the maps were to be reviewed.

ITEM 4 To receive the Minutes of the Conservation Committee Meeting held on 19 January 2004

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

4.2 Archaeology The Clerk confirmed that he had not yet received the Report. Mr White asked that the Board be kept informed of its progress.

- 4.3 Encroachments Mr Parsons congratulated the Clerk on the letter about the Bye-laws which had been sent to residents with the Forest Rate/Acknowledgment Rents Demand. The Clerk informed the Board that there seemed to have been a good response.
- 4.4 Heathland Conference The Clerk informed the Board that the programme was currently being developed.
- 4.5 There being no further questions, Mr Gilham moved the adoption of the Minutes. This was agreed.

ITEM 5 To receive the Minutes of the Roads, Planning & Amenities Committee Meeting held on 26 April 2004

- 5.1 The Minutes, which had been previously circulated, were presented by Mr Glyn in the absence of Miss McPherson.
- 5.2 Mountain biking Mrs Bagshawe raised the matter of mountain bikes on the Forest. Pressure is increasing for the ban on mountain bikes to be considered. The Clerk informed the Board that he was gathering information on the impact of mountain bikes on sensitive conservation sites. It was agreed that the matter should be considered by the Conservation and Roads, Planning and Amenity Committees.
- 5.3 Public abuse of Rangers Mr Cooper asked what redress or action could Rangers take if public abuse them. It was suggested that each Ranger carry a digital camera so that the offender could be photographed and a record could be kept at the Centre of abusive visitors. The Clerk informed the Board that a personal safety training day for all staff and volunteers who wished to attend had been arranged for 19 July.
- 5.4 Planning Mr Parsons confirmed that the Wealden Planning Department valued the Forest's opinion on planning issues.
- 5.5 There being no further questions or comments, Mr Glyn moved the adoption of the Minutes. This was agreed

ITEM 6 To receive the Minutes of the Finance & General Purposes Committee Meeting held on 7 June 2004

- 6.1 The Minutes, which had been previously circulated, were presented by Mr Glyn.
- 6.2 The unaudited accounts for 2003/2004
- 6.2.1 Mr Glyn went through the accounts which had been previously circulated. There were no queries. He moved the adoption of the accounts. This was agreed.
- 6.2.2 Mr Parsons thanked Mr White for his help in the preparation of the accounts.
- 6.3 There being no further questions or comments, Mr Glyn moved the adoption of the Minutes. This was agreed.

ITEM 7 *All together better. A tourism strategy and action plan for Wealden. 2004-2009*

- 7.1 Mr Gillham wished to record his opinion that he felt the document was grossly insulting to Mike Constantine because, as Forest Superintendent, he did not form policy but simply carried forward and expressed the policy of the Board. He felt it important that

everybody realised policy was determined by the Board, not the Superintendent. The Board concurred.

- 7.2 Mrs Bagshawe recognised Wealden District Council's role to formulate strategy but thought the document should acknowledge the Board's explicit duties under the Ashdown Forest Act 1974. Mr Gillham stressed that adequate funding governs what the Board can do.
- 7.3 The Board considered a draft response circulated by the Clerk for their consideration. After some discussion, it was agreed that it should be sent to Wealden District Council in time for the Cabinet meeting on 7 July.
- 7.4 Mr Parsons proposed that the three Committees review the Tourism Strategy and bring to the next Board meeting what is appropriate. The Board agreed that they would dictate their own timing.

ITEM 8 Action Plan: *Annual Report, Bye-law breaches etc.*

- 8.1 The Clerk informed the Board that a record of persistent breaches of the Bye-laws and brazen disregard of requests to comply with the Bye-laws was being compiled. It may be necessary to take someone to court in the future. Mr Cooper stressed the importance of publicity in the event of a successful action.

ITEM 9 Any other business

- 9.1 Mr White congratulated the staff on the prompt action taken to encourage the New Age Travellers to move off the Forest.

There being no further business, the Board moved to a confidential session.

Following the Confidential session, Mr Gillham thanked Mr Parsons on behalf of the Board for all his dedication and hard work as Chairman of the Board.

The meeting closed at 5.25pm.

Chairman _____
20 September 2004

Clerk _____