

## Corrections to the Minutes of the

### MEETING OF THE BOARD OF CONSERVATORS OF ASHDOWN FOREST

1430, Monday 20 June 2005  
Ashdown Forest Centre

Present: Mr P. Glyn (in the Chair), Mr J Barnes, Mr F. Brown, Mr M. Cooper,  
Mr L. Gillham, Mr F. Marshall, Mr R. Parsons, Mr A. Reid, Mr R. Stogdon,  
Mrs J. Wirdnam, Mr A. White, Mr F. Whetstone and Dr H. Prendergast (Clerk).  
Minutes taken by Mrs R. Marriott.

The Chairman opened the meeting and welcomed the members of the public present. He then welcomed Mr Barnes, recently appointed Chairman of the County Council, who now acts as Lord of the Manor for the Ashdown Forest Trust, and Mr Stogdon, Mr R. Lock, and Mrs M. O'Keeffe who had also been appointed by the County Council to the Board.

The Chairman invited Mr M. Wales, representing Danehill Parish Council and Mr N. Collier, representing the residents of Chelwood Gate, to address the Board for five minutes each on the access issues to the Isle of Thorns site following its development by the Cats Protection.

**ITEM 1**      Apologies for absence Mr Lock and Mrs O'Keeffe.

**ITEM 2**      Access issues

- 2.1 Mr Gillham gave a brief history of the subject in relation to the problem at the Isle of Thorns, Chelwood Gate for the benefit of the new members.
- 2.2 The issue had highlighted the need to standardise the Board's approach to requests for access to properties across Forest land.
- 2.3 In the distant past, the Board had taken a percentage of the development value of any plot or plots in return for a new access. The Board then developed a policy which resisted any new access unless an old one was closed and land, at least equal in area to that of the new access, was returned to its 'natural' state.
- 2.4 The development at Wrens Warren had been developed unsympathetically for some years. When residential development was suggested, the Board were eager to encourage this option and agreed to a diversion. In retrospect, the Board felt the matter would be handled differently today.
- 2.5 In the case of the Cats Protection, the Board agreed to depart from its usual policy due to the problems with the sub-standard entrance via Laundry Lane and the associated difficulties for the residents. Having regard to its fiduciary duty to the Forest, the Board considered an exchange of land. It was never suggested that the area of land in question would be anything other than substantial and this point was recognised in Cats Protection's Supporting Statement to Wealden District Council which stated: 'Potentially, a significant area of land would be place under control of the Conservators... and managed accordingly'.
- 2.6 When, in October 2004, the Cats Protection refused the area of land in which the Board had expressed an interest, the Board was faced with two options: to a) return to its policy and refuse a widened access or b) try to reach an agreement on a different basis which could then be used as a model for any future similar cases. The Board chose the latter course.

- 2.7 Mr Parsons acknowledged that the new access would be in the best interest of road safety for the residents of Chelwood Gate. This special access would be outside the Board's normal policy limits and would be a significant visual impact on Ashdown Forest, a fact noted by the Appeal Inspector in his initial refusal.
- 2.8 Mr Parsons informed the Board that a voluntary agreement (a 106 Agreement) had been arrived at between the ESCC, WDC and the Cats Protection.
- 2.9 Mr Parsons acknowledged that the Board had an issue over access across the Forest for properties other than residential dwellings. However, he confirmed that the Board would be prepared to issue a Perpetual Licence for an access as defined in Planning Application WD/2004/1084 with an appropriate annual acknowledgement rent.
- 2.10 The Chairman asked the Board to agree a method of assessing the change in value of a property when access is altered. He suggested the Board appoint a professional advisor who would assess a fair licence fee linked to the value of the property. This would enable the Board to have a workable model for future reference.
- 2.11 Mr Reid acknowledged the Board had given more time than usual to assess all the options. He felt the proposed action was the fairest way forward; it was transparent and could be used for future negotiations. Once the value had been assessed, then a fair annual rate could be decided. Above all, a process was needed that would be understood by the general public.
- 2.12 **The Board agreed the appointment of Mr Tim Raikes to negotiate on its behalf with an advisor to Cats Protection on the licence fee and that a solution should be found within six weeks, i.e. 1 August 2005. The Chairman proposed, and it was agreed, that as soon as possible the Urgency Committee should meet to deal with the response between the two professional advisors. If no solution could be found at the end of six weeks, the matter should go to arbitration. It was suggested that the District Valuer could be a potential arbitrator. The Board accepted the principle of basing the charge for a Perpetual Licence for access to business operations on the Forest upon any consequent change to the valuation of the property.**
- 2.13 It was agreed a Press Release should be sent to the local media.

**ITEM 3      To approve the Minutes of the Meeting held on 14 March 2005 and matters arising**

- 3.1 The Minutes of the last Meeting, which had been previously circulated, were presented by the Chairman. Paragraph 5.3 was amended to read “ ... English Nature would need to be consulted before any foreign material could be used for the improvement of the access.”
- 3.2 English Nature policy on fencing common land The national report would be issued in due course; in the meantime, it was proposed that each site should be judged on its merit. The fencing proposal for Chailey Common had failed; unallocated funds may be redirected elsewhere in the High Weald. The Conservation Officer is examining the feasibility of close shepherding on the Forest.
- 3.3 There being no further comments, the Minutes were then approved and signed as an accurate record.

**ITEM 4     To receive the Minutes of the Conservation Committee Meeting held on 4 April 2005**

- 4.1     The Minutes, which had been previously circulated, were presented by Mr Glyn.
- 4.2     Mr Glyn expressed his appreciation of the work done by Mr Marrable for the invertebrate study.
- 4.3     There being no further questions, Mr Glyn moved the adoption of the Minutes. This was agreed.

**ITEM 5     To receive the Minutes of the Roads, Planning & Amenities Committee Meeting held on 25 April 2005**

- 5.1     The Minutes, which had been previously circulated, were presented by Mr Marshall.
- 5.2     Forest Centre Development
- 5.2.1   The High Weald Unit Forest Ridge Lottery bid, which includes an element for the development of the Centre, will be submitted towards the end of November, not the end of September as previously planned.
- 5.2.2   The Clerk will be contacting a specialist who is to advise on the provision of refreshments at the Centre.
- 5.2.3   The Interpretation Strategy will be presented to the Board for their approval in due course.
- 5.3     Millbrook Car Parks There had been no contact from East Sussex County Council with regards to the lease. The Estate Team still empty the bins and clear the site of litter as necessary. All wheelie bins are emptied by Wealden District Council.
- 5.4     Interpretation Panels One panel at Ellisons Pond had been destroyed by aggressive vandalism. Other interpretation panels, that have degraded through poor manufacture, are to be replaced at no cost to the Forest.
- 5.5     There being no further questions or comments, Mr Marshall moved the adoption of the Minutes. This was agreed.

**ITEM 6     To receive the Minutes of the Finance & General Purposes Committee Meeting held on 13 June 2005**

- 6.1     The Minutes, which had been previously circulated, were presented by Mr Parsons.
- 6.2     The unaudited accounts
- 6.2.1   Reserves Mr White agreed to approach the Charities Aid Foundation to ascertain if the Board was eligible to invest.
- 6.2.2   Ashdown Forest Trust It was agreed that the contribution by the Trust would appear in the accounts with the other Local Authority grants.
- 6.3     Stock barn at Whitehouse Farm The funding for the barn remained undecided between English Nature and DEFRA. Mr Gillham suggested that the process for the legal transfer of the land should be started.

- 6.4 Riding Permits It was agreed that the issue of Summer Permits should be looked at by the next RPA and F&GP Committees.
- 6.5 There being no further questions or comments, Mr Parsons moved the adoption of the Minutes. This was agreed.

**ITEM 7 A talk by the Clerk: *Establishing sustainable tourism in the Ashdown Forest area***

- 7.1 The Clerk, who had just returned from Japan to where he had been invited to a conference on sustainable tourism. He presented one of the talks he gave there.

**ITEM 8 Any Other Business**

- 8.1 The Chairman suggested that the style of the information leaflet issued to Commoners should be updated. The Clerk confirmed that all the information leaflets are gradually being updated.

The meeting closed at 4.50pm.

Chairman \_\_\_\_\_  
19 September 2005

Clerk \_\_\_\_\_