

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE BOARD OF CONSERVATORS OF
ASHDOWN FOREST HELD AT THE ASHDOWN FOREST CENTRE,
WYCH CROSS ON MONDAY 12 MARCH 2001 AT 2.30pm.**

Present: Mr DHO Allen (in the Chair), Miss M McPherson, Mrs S Stokes,
Messrs DC Cumming, LJ Gillham, P Glyn, DL Hall, FJC Marshall, TR May,
RIF Parsons, AG Reid, RM Thornely-Taylor, AN White.

The Chairman opened the meeting and welcomed the members of the public present. In view of the Foot and Mouth disease outbreak in the country, the Board agreed to hear the Clerk's update on the situation in relation to Ashdown Forest directly after Item 3 on the Agenda.

ITEM 1 Apologies for absence

1.1 There were apologies for absence from Mr R Stevens and Mr FWJ Whetstone.

ITEM 2 To approve the Minutes of the Meeting held on 20 November 2000

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 12 December, 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 There were no matters arising.

ITEM 4 Foot and Mouth Disease Outbreak

4.1 The Clerk briefed the Board on the measures that had been taken in relation to the Forest as a result of the outbreak of Foot and Mouth Disease. The problem had first been considered at the Finance and General Purposes Committee meeting held on Monday 26 February. The aim then had been to discourage visitors to the area. The Clerk had cancelled all planned and organised activities on the Forest.

4.2 On Wednesday 28 February, the ESCC imposed a ban on all public rights of way. After discussions with the County Secretary, the Clerk closed the Forest to all users on Wednesday evening as a precautionary measure to prevent the spread of the disease to the deer population.

4.3 Although there had been overwhelming support from the general public for the above action, some people were still driving into the car parks. Large tree trunks were being placed across the entrances to all the car parks except for the two large lorry parks on either side of Millbrook Hill.

4.4 The Golf Course had been closed to players since Wednesday but the green keepers had been allowed to continue working as essential maintenance needed to be carried out at this time of year to prevent a fungus destroying the greens. Forest staff were not working on Forest land.

- 4.5 One Ice Cream van had been allowed to park in Millbrook East Car Park as both these major car parks on the A22 remained open. The Clerk informed the Board that the financial implications for the Board would be considered at the end of the outbreak.
- 4.6 The Board gave its full support for these measures.

ITEM 5 Report on the Commoners' Annual General Meeting

- 5.1 Mr Glyn presented his report of the Commoners' Annual General Meeting. 46 people had attended. The Meeting had been Chaired by Sir Frederick Sowrey.
- 5.2 Mrs Janet Wirdnam had been elected to stand as a Commoner Conservator for a period of 5 years from 1 April 2001.
- 5.3 The Forest Rate, as set by the Department of the Environment for the year from 1 April 2001 to 31 March 2002, was presented by Mr White. The Commoners agreed the increase of 4.3%, being the RPI on 1 November 2000 plus 1%.
- 5.4 Mr Allen and the Forest Superintendent gave their reports on Forest matters. The Forest Superintendent gave an update on the work of the Pooh Bridge Working Party.

ITEM 6 To receive the Minutes of the Conservation Committee Meeting held on 22 January 2001

- 6.1 The Minutes which had been previously circulated, were presented by Mr Gillham.
- 6.2 Joint Fire Training Exercise The Clerk informed the Board that this had been very successful. He had had very constructive feedback from the Fire Service. He expected they would be supportive of further exercises in the future.
- 6.3 There being no further questions, Mr Gillham moved the adoption of the Minutes. This was agreed.

ITEM 7 To receive the Minutes of the Roads, Planning & Amenities Committee Meeting held on 12 February 2001

- 7.1 The Minutes, which had been previously circulated, were presented by Mrs Stokes.
- 7.2 Planning Applications
- 7.2.1 Isle of Thorns The Clerk informed the Board that he had received a reply from the Cats' Protection League to his letter which had expressed the Board's concerns about their initial planning application. It would appear that the CPL have considered the problems and will resubmit fresh plans in the near future having addressed the Board's concerns.
- 7.2.2 King's Standing Mr Parsons informed the Board that Wealden District Council had told the Planning Agents for the Sussex Police that the height of the catering block was unacceptable. Further negotiations were due.
- 7.2.3 Property Access Licences The Clerk informed the Board that he had sought legal advice and it would appear that under terms of their Trust Deeds the Ashdown Forest Trust could not issue a Right of Access over the Forest to property. However, the

Board could issue a non personal Licence in perpetuity to the property. The Clerk had seen and commented on the redrafted licence prepared by the Board's solicitors and this had now been sent to the County Council's solicitor for comment. When the final draft had been approved, the Clerk will ask the Finance and General Purposes Committee to consider the costs to be charged.

7.2.4 Pooh Bridge The Clerk presented the Board with copies of the Pooh Bridge Management Proposals. He reported that the working party was now meeting on a monthly basis and attempting to resolve the points raised. The Board's policy not to allow an extension of the existing car park on Forest land and their preferred option for a car park on private land remained. However, the landowner of the proposed site was still concerned about the relocation of the bridleway.

7.2.5 Meridian Television were to screen a programme featuring Pooh Bridge on 18 March. Miss McPherson undertook to see if the programme could be cancelled, or failing that, a message put out at the end that the bridlepath and Forest was closed.

7.3 Fly-tipping and litter

7.3.3 The Clerk passed round copies of a letter he had sent to the DETR expressing his concerns over the impact of the Landfill Tax and the cost of fly-tipping to the Forest. He illustrated the problem by showing a few slides of major fly-tipping incidents during the past few years.

7.3.4 Mr Gillham expressed his views very strongly on the general level of litter along the roadsides through the Forest. He asked if the appointed members of the Board could raise this issue at their respective Councils. Mr Thornely-Taylor informed the Board that WDC had experienced an increase in letters on the subject. The topic had been the subject of a recent meeting of the East Sussex Branch of the Local Government Association. A joint working party had been set up to explore solutions to the problem. The Clerk said that he had been told an East Sussex-wide seminar on the subject was planned in the near future at Uckfield. A long-term educational programme was required. Mr Parsons suggested that a letter could be sent to local schools highlighting the problem. It was agreed that the topic should be added to the Teacher's Pack.

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

ITEM 8 To receive the Minutes of the Finance & General Purposes Committee Meeting held on 26 February 2001

8.1 The Minutes, which had been previously circulated, were presented by Mr White.

8.2 VAT The Clerk informed the Board that the VAT officer had spent the morning at the Centre and had clarified the procedure for working out the amount of VAT which can be reclaimed in the future, following the redefinition of the Board's VAT status by the Customs and Excise. He anticipated that there would be a significant reduction in the amount which can be claimed back with a consequent impact on the annual budget..

8.3 The East Sussex Act 1981 in relation to meetings of Commoners In regard to the requirement to publish notices about the Annual General Meeting, Miss McPherson informed the Board that procedures for all Local Authority elections within the County

were governed by the East Sussex Act 1981. Therefore, if others were experiencing difficulty in advertising elections as directed, it might be that the appropriate Section of the Act itself may need to be rewritten. In the meantime, it was agreed the suggestion put forward at the Commoners' AGM that a note should be added to this year's Forest Rate Demand asking Commoners to notify the Centre of their e-mail address if they had one.

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

ITEM 9 The Clerk to report on sundry matters

9.1 Notification of Rates Referring to the WDC leaflet accompanying this year's Rate Demands, the Clerk informed the Board that he had queried the amount shown in the leaflet as being the County Council's contribution to the Forest which was higher than the planned figures. It had been explained to him that the difference between the two figures was due to "internal capital charges".

9.2 The Clerk informed the Board that a new Wealden Tourist Information Centre will be opening at Easter at the Ashdown Forest Llama Park. It will be known as the Sussex Country Information Centre North.

ITEM 10 To elect a Chairman and Vice Chairman, effective from 1 April 2001

10.1 As Mr Allen, a Commoner Conservator, did not stand for re-election following the completion of his term of office, a new Chairman and Vice chairman would be needed from 1 April 2001. The Chairman invited nominations for Chairman of the Board and Mr Gillham proposed Mr Parsons. Mr Marshall seconded the nomination and the Board unanimously agreed. It was noted that Mr Parsons' continued appointment as a WDC representative was subject to ratification by WDC at their meeting on 23 May 2001. The Chairman then invited nominations for the post of Vice-Chairman of the Board. Mr Glyn was proposed by Mr Reid and was seconded by Mrs Stokes. The Board unanimously agreed.

ITEM 11 Any other business

11.1 Special Area of Conservation (SAC) In response to a question the Clerk said that Ashdown Forest was still a candidate SAC. It would be several months before this designation was confirmed.

11.2 Mr Parsons thanked Mr Allen for all the support he had given the Forest during the time he had been a Conservator and for his efficient Chairmanship of the Board. All members of the Board unanimously agreed. Mr Allen thanked all the Board members and the staff for their support during his term of office.

11.3 There being no other business, the meeting closed at 4.00 pm.

Chairman _____

18 June 2001

Clerk _____