

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE BOARD OF CONSERVATORS OF
ASHDOWN FOREST HELD AT THE ASHDOWN FOREST CENTRE,
WYCH CROSS ON MONDAY 18 MARCH 2002 AT 2.30pm.**

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

The Chairman opened the meeting. There were no members of the public present.

ITEM 1 Apologies for absence

1.1 There were apologies for absence from Mr C Dowling.

ITEM 2 To approve the Minutes of the Meeting held on 19 November 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 There were no matters arising.

ITEM 4 Report on the Commoners' Annual General Meeting

4.1 Mr Glyn presented his report of the Commoners' Annual General Meeting. 79 people had attended. The Meeting had been Chaired by Mr David Allen.

4.2 Mr Frederick Marshall had been elected to stand as a Commoner Conservator for a period of 5 years from 1 April 2002.

4.3 The Forest Rate, as set by the Department of the Environment for the year from 1 April 2002 to 31 March 2003, was presented by Mr White. The Commoners agreed the increase of 2.7%, being the RPI on 1 November 2001 plus 1%. After some discussion, it was agreed by a majority that the Forest Superintendent would write to DEFRA to seek an increase in the Forest Rate of 30%.

4.4 Mr Parsons and the Forest Superintendent gave their reports on Forest matters.

4.5 There had been some discussion over the possibility of changing the date of the AGM so that the Financial Report would cover more recent dates. However, Section 7.6 of the Ashdown Forest Act 1974 states "An election of one person to take the place of the elected Conservator going out of office on 31 March in any year shall be held by the commoners at a meeting to be held in that month." The date of the next meeting will therefore be on Friday 7 March 2003.

4.6 It was agreed that a note should be added to the Forest Rate demand stating that the accounts could be inspected after they had been audited at the Forest Centre.

4.7 A few suggestions for increasing income had been made after the meeting. These would be discussed at a future Finance and General Purposes Committee meeting.

ITEM 5 To receive the Minutes of the Conservation Committee Meeting held on 21 January 2002

- 5.1 The Minutes which had been previously circulated, were presented by Mr Gillham.
- 5.2 The Board complimented Ranger Chris Marrable on the work he had done to date on the Vegetation Survey. It was agreed that this would prove an invaluable tool for the management of the Forest. The Board asked that they should be briefed on the Vegetation Survey as appropriate.
- 5.3 There being no further questions, Mr Gillham moved the adoption of the Minutes. This was agreed.

ITEM 6 To receive the Minutes of the Roads, Planning & Amenities Committee Meeting held on 11 February 2002

- 6.1 The Minutes, which had been previously circulated, were presented by Mrs Stokes.
- 6.2 Planning Applications
 - 6.2.1 Rydon Homes/Forest Row Pavilion Mrs Stokes informed the Board that she had attended a meeting the previous week at which residents and the developers had discussed the access track to the developments from the top of Chapel Lane. Although the funding for the Pavilion had not yet been finalised, the residents hoped that the two developments would take place at the same time.
 - 6.2.2 It was unlikely that East Sussex County Council would adopt the road as no overall increase in traffic was anticipated. However, it is expected that the improvement of the track will be a planning requirement and it was suggested that the developer should be asked to put a lump sum into a trust for the upkeep of the road. The Clerk will be contacting Rydon Homes to discuss the road surfacing details.
- 6.3 Traffic Calming The Clerk informed the Board that he had been advised by the Highways Department that the experiment at the Lampool end of the B2026 had been a marginal success. The road markings will remain but the scheme will not be extended to other roads on the Forest.
- 6.4 There being no further questions, Mrs Stokes moved the adoption of the Minutes. This was agreed.

ITEM 7 To receive the Minutes of the Finance & General Purposes Committee Meeting held on 25 February 2002

- 7.1 The Minutes, which had been previously circulated, were presented by Mr White.
- 7.2 Representation to East Sussex County Council
 - 7.2.1 Mrs Bagshawe wished the Board to know that the Committee had unanimously agreed to approach the County Council. She felt a joint meeting to discuss future needs and aims of the Board would be beneficial but the County Council would not be able to give a commitment before its budget was set.

7.2.2 After some discussion, **the Board agreed the Committee's recommendation to approach East Sussex County Council formally, with a business plan, to determine the Council's intention regarding its level of funding of the work of the Board for the next three financial years.**

7.3 The Duties of the Responsible Financial Officer **The Board agreed the Committee's recommendation to accept the Duties of the Responsible Financial Officer as presented.**

7.4 Current financial matters

7.4.1 Mr White informed the Board that following an unexpected increase in the annual BT wayleave payment and confirmation of the new East Chase Stewardship Scheme, it is anticipated that there will be a small surplus on the accounts this year.

7.4.2 The Clerk had received confirmation that the annual grant from the Ashdown Forest Trust would be increased from £4000 to £18000 for 2002/03 and thereafter.

7.4.3 Mr Gillham sought clarification over the payment for work done on Bunkers Hill. The Clerk confirmed that he had initially approached English Nature but as they had no residual funds available, he had then approached the Ashdown Forest Trust. However, in view of the improved financial situation, the cost had now been met from within the Board's funds.

7.5 Car Parking Mr Slack informed the Board that he had arranged for a meeting with a parking specialist on 11 April at 2.15pm at the Ashdown Forest Centre to discuss parking issues on the Forest.

7.6 Racial Equality Policy

7.6.1 **The Board agreed the Committee's recommendation to accept the following policy on racial equality and equal opportunity:**

The Board of Conservators, as an employer, is committed to the principles and good practices of equal opportunity, both in employment and delivery, to ensure that our employees, prospective employees and the public are treated fairly and equitably and without discrimination through gender, race, culture, creed or ethnic background.

7.6.2 Mrs Bagshawe said the policy would need to be monitored to demonstrate that the implementation was working.

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

ITEM 8 **The Clerk to report on sundry matters**

8.1 Fire Engine The Clerk informed the Board that the Land Rover fire engine had been badly damaged while attending a fire in the Army Training Ground. The engineer from the insurance company was expected in the near future. Should the damaged vehicle be written off, a simpler solution on the lines of a long base Land Rover with an independent pump and water storage tank would be the favoured option.

- 8.2 Weight restriction on the Crowborough Road, Nutley The Clerk informed the Board that the Crowborough Road Residents' Association had sought the Board's support for an increase in the weight restriction on the Crowborough Road. Mr Reid said that the County Council was also interested in the view of the Board. After some discussion, it was felt that the status quo should be preserved.

ITEM 9 **Any other business**

- 9.1 Mr Thornely-Taylor expressed concern over the risk of a member of the public falling into a slit trench. The Clerk informed the Board that there were numerous slit trenches all over the Forest and it would be impractical to place warning signs. The Board had public liability insurance.
- 9.2 There being no other business, the meeting closed at 4.15 pm.

Chairman _____
17 June 2002

Clerk _____