

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE BOARD OF CONSERVATORS OF ASHDOWN
FOREST HELD AT THE ASHDOWN FOREST CENTRE,
WYCH CROSS ON MONDAY 17 MARCH 2003 AT 2.30pm.**

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

ITEM 1 Apologies for absence

There were apologies for absence from Mr C Dowling.

ITEM 2 To endorse formally the appointment of Dr Hew Prendergast as Clerk to the Board of Conservators and Forest Superintendent and to authorise him to undertake such duties and responsibilities as the post requires

- 2.1 The Chairman welcomed Dr Hew Prendergast on behalf of the Board.
- 2.2 The Board authorised Dr Prendergast to undertake such duties and responsibilities as the post requires.

ITEM 3 To approve the Minutes of the Meeting held on 18 November 2002

- 3.1 The Minutes of the last Meeting, which had been previously circulated, were presented by the Chairman. An amendment was made at 6.4.2 to read ... “the Transport and Environment Member”... The Minutes were then approved and signed as an accurate record.

ITEM 4 Matters arising Mr Thornely-Taylor advised the Board that the consultation period for the new WDC Local Plan had expired. Although a letter had been sent to WDC listing factual amendments, the suggested amendment for the old recreation ground at St Johns had been missed. The Clerk thought the matter might be resolved through typographical adjustments.

ITEM 5 To receive a report on the Commoners’ Annual General Meeting held on 7 March 2003

- 5.1 In briefing the Board Mr White reported that he had been the only nomination for election, and had therefore been re-elected to the Board unopposed. He had produced a report for the Commoners on the Forest’s finances comparing the audited accounts for 2001/2002 with the income and expenditure to date in 2002/03. He had been asked why no balance sheet was available and had explained that the majority of the balances were as cash in the bank but he was not presenting the accounts for approval, merely advising on the state of the Board’s finances. It had been suggested again that the AGM be moved to coincide with the financial year and he had confirmed that this was not possible as the Ashdown Forest Act determines the date of the annual commoners’ meeting.

- 5.2 The increase in the Forest Rate by 30% had been accepted with six Commoners registering their disapproval. There had been a lively discussion about the scrub clearance programme and the damage to tracks by contractors' vehicles.
- 5.3 The Chairman of the Board and the Forest Superintendent had both given reports and there had been no questions.
- 5.4 Mr Glyn had given a vote of thanks to the Forest Superintendent on behalf of the Commoners.

ITEM 6 To receive the Minutes of the Conservation Committee Meeting held on 20 January 2003

- 6.1 The Minutes which had been previously circulated, were presented by Mr White.
- 6.2 Departure of Mr Patrick McKernan Mr Gillham wished to record his own appreciation of the work done by Mr McKernan.
- 6.3 Kings Standing sewage works Mr White confirmed that just the old sewage treatment site on the Forest that was to be demolished.
- 6.4 Global Positioning System The Clerk confirmed that the Trimble GPS would be retained.
- 6.5 There being no further questions, Mr White moved the adoption of the Minutes. This was agreed.

ITEM 7 To receive the Minutes of the Roads, Planning & Amenities Committee Meeting held on 10 February 2003

- 7.1 The Minutes, which had been previously circulated, were presented by Mrs Stokes.
- 7.2 The sale of land at Londonderry Farm The Clerk informed the Board that should all the strips of land be sold, each new owner would receive the basic commoner's rights dependent upon acreage. It was agreed that the situation should be kept under review.
- 7.3 Relocation of the Pooh Bridge Bridleway
 - 7.3.1 **The Board agreed the Committee's recommendation to agree in principle the relocation of the existing bridleway to the alignment shown as Option 1 on the ESCC plan dated 6 November 2002.**
- 7.4 Mr Whetstone expressed his concern over the absence of litter bins in some car parks. The Clerk explained that some litter bins had been vandalised or damaged by fire.
- 7.5 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 24 February 2003

- 8.1 The Minutes, which had been previously circulated, were presented by Mr Glyn.
- 8.2 Car Park charges
- 8.2.1 **The Board agreed the Committee's recommendation to obtain an independent consultant's report into charging for parking in Forest car parks, if funding could be obtained from the County Council for the study.**
- 8.3 Planning and Compulsory Purchase Bill Mr Thornely-Taylor informed the Board that the South East England Regional Assembly was now in existence and he recommended close scrutiny of any changes proposed in the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Bill.
- 8.4 VAT Tribunal It was proposed and agreed that Mr Thornely-Taylor should act on behalf of the Board and carry forward the VAT issue to Tribunal if he felt this was still appropriate when he had gathered all the facts.
- 8.5 There being no further comments or questions, Mr Glyn moved the adoption of the Minutes. This was agreed.

ITEM 9 The Clerk to report on sundry matters

- 9.1 East Grinstead relief road
- 9.1.1 The Clerk informed the Board that he had been approached by Forest Row Parish Council expressing concern about the relief road being proposed should a major housing development be built to the south and south west of East Grinstead. They argued that increase in traffic would be detrimental to the village and to Ashdown Forest and asked for the Board's support.
- 9.1.2 After some discussion, it was agreed that the Clerk should write to Forest Row Parish Council and send a copy to the County Council to the effect that the Board felt any increase in traffic on the A22 through Ashdown Forest would be detrimental to the Forest. But as the road proposal was only a developer's scheme at the moment it would be inappropriate to comment at this stage. If the scheme went ahead, the Board would consider support for a Public Enquiry.
- 9.2 Fairwarp Playground The Clerk informed the Board that Fairwarp Village Green Committee had sought permission to improve the drainage and increase the size of the playground. In addition, they wished to improve the surface to comply with current safety standards. The Board agreed unanimously.

ITEM 10 Any Other Business

- 10.1 Mr Tunwell informed the Board that his term of office expired before the next Board meeting. He thanked the Board for its courtesy during his tenure.

- 10.2 Mrs Bagshawe expressed her concern over the length of time taken to present the Committee Minutes. In view of the fact that the Minutes are circulated ten days before the Board meetings, she proposed that the Chairmen should only pick out any salient points and then allow more time for discussion. It was agreed the matter should be discussed at the next F&GP Committee meeting.
- 10.3 The Chairman reported that Forest Row was in a shadow area for the radio network for emergency planning purposes. In view of this, he asked the Board to reconsider its position with regards to allowing an aerial at the Forest Centre. It was agreed that the matter would be discussed at the next RPA Committee meeting.
- 10.4 The Chairman thanked Mrs Susan Stokes, Mr Thornely Taylor and Mr Tunwell, who would all be retiring before the next Board Meeting, for their invaluable contributions to the Forest and wished them well in the future.
- 10.5 The Chairman then acknowledged that this was the last Board meeting that Brigadier Constantine would attend as Clerk. He said he hoped to express his gratitude more fully at the reception to be held on 25 April 2003.
- 10.6 There being no other business, the meeting closed at 4.15 pm.

Chairman _____
16 June 2003

Clerk _____