

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

Present: Mr RIF Parsons (in the Chair), Mrs D Bagshawe, Mrs J Wirdnam, Messrs MJ Cooper, PJ Glyn, FJC Marshall, AG Reid, Mr P Scott, T Slack, FWJ Whetstone, AN White.

ITEM 1 Apologies for absence

There were apologies for absence from Miss M McPherson, Mr F Brown, Mr L Gillham and Mr R Thomas.

ITEM 2 To approve the Minutes of the Meeting held on 8 September 2003

2.1 The Minutes of the last Meeting, which had been previously circulated, were presented by the Chairman. Clause 8.2 was amended to read ... "The Board needed to establish its aims and objectives for the Information Centre" ... and clause 9.5 was amended to read ... "The Board moved into confidential session at 16.50 when the meeting was updated on the theft of the hired equipment." The Minutes were then approved and signed as an accurate record.

ITEM 3 To receive the Minutes of the Conservation Committee Meeting held on 29 September 2003

- 3.1 The Minutes, which had been previously circulated, were presented by Mr Parsons.
- 3.2 Land at Whitehouse Farm The Clerk reported that the costing of the scheme had not been finalised to date. In view of the need to move the project forward, it was agreed that an emergency meeting could be called should the need arise but it was unlikely the barn would be ready for this winter.
- 3.3 Archaeology on the Forest Mr White informed the Board that he understood DEFRA were supporting the preservation of another deer park in Whitcliff, Gloucestershire, thereby setting a precedent for funding preservation of the pale. The Clerk reported that a date had yet to be fixed for the meeting with English Heritage and the County Archaeologist.
- 3.4 Extension of Grazing The Clerk reported that Ranger Marrable had spent considerable time researching other grazing schemes. It would appear that, if fencing is required, detailed monitoring of the effects of current grazing is essential. Schemes to fence common land in other parts of the country have failed as sufficient quantitative data were not collected to demonstrate the benefits of grazing.
- 3.5 Use of Dump by ESCC There has been no further contact from ESCC, so a date for the trial of the mobile crusher has not been arranged.
- 3.6 There being no further questions and after a few minor amendments, Mr Parsons moved the adoption of the Minutes. This was agreed.

ITEM 4 To receive the Minutes of the Roads, Planning & Amenities Committee Meeting held on 13 October 2003

- 4.1 The Minutes, which had been previously circulated, were presented by Mr Marshall who expressed his concern at the low number of members who had attended the meeting. Mrs Bagshawe sought clarification of the standing of co-opted members. It was agreed to follow common practice in local authorities; co-opted members could take part in a discussion but could not vote. Mr Glyn reminded the Board that the powers of the Committees had been agreed at the Board meetings held on 11 September 2000 and 20 November 2000. (See appendix.)
- 4.2 Fairwarp Green **The Board agreed the Committee's recommendation to transfer the licence for the management of the land that had been allocated for recreational purposes in 1976 to the land on which the play area is situated and the village fete is held. The Licence is to be issued to the Trustees of the Village Hall.**
- 4.3 Royal Ashdown Forest Golf Club – Warning signs and seats
- 4.3.1 **The Board confirmed the Committee's approval for warning signs to be erected at the top of Chapel Lane and at the club house about golf balls.**
- 4.3.2 **The Board confirmed the Committee's approval for a memorial seat for Mr Humphrey Wills (formerly Chairman of the Board) by the 5th and 6th tee. It was agreed that no more than the current twelve seats will be allowed but these seats could be replaced when necessary.**
- 4.3.3 **The Board confirmed the Committee's approval of positioning a wrought iron bench at the top of Chapel Lane under the Jubilee Oak.**
- 4.4 Perpetual Licence
- 4.4.1 **The Board confirmed the Committee's decision that property owners who are unable to provide evidence of right of way of access to the property should be advised that a Perpetual Licence will be issued at the current cost.**
- 4.5 Persistent breach of the Bye-laws
- 4.5.1 The Clerk reported that he had had a site meeting with the County Solicitor who had agreed to compile a letter to be sent to an offender.
- 4.5.2 **The Board confirmed the Committee's decision to apply for injunctions when a breach of the Bye-laws persisted despite written warnings.**
- 4.6 Endurance Ride 2004
- 4.6.1 Some concern was expressed by Mr White over the increase in charges to horse riders over the past year. It was agreed that pricing decisions should be taken by the F&GP Committee in future.
- 4.7 **The Board agreed the Committee's recommendation that the Endurance Ride could go ahead and that different pricing policies should in future be applied for works associated with charity and commercial events on the Forest.**
- 4.8 There being no further questions or comments, Mr Marshall moved the adoption of the Minutes. This was agreed.

ITEM 5 To receive the Minutes of the Finance & General Purposes Committee Meeting held on 3 November 2003

- 5.1 The Minutes, which had been previously circulated, were presented by Mr Glyn.
- 5.2 Wood Permits NB Subsequent to the Board Meeting of 17 November, it was determined that whilst contractors needed valid chain saw certificates to operate on the Forest, private individuals were exempt from this ruling by the Health and Safety Executive. However, it was determined that commoners and private individuals who operate chainsaws on public access land must have adequate public liability insurance cover.
- 5.3 East Sussex County Council Contribution Mrs Bagshawe agreed to propose to the Cabinet of the County Council that an additional grant should be awarded to the Forest from the Ashdown Forest Trust of 50% of the increase in the insurance premium. Mr Glyn expressed the Board's appreciation.
- 5.4 Suggested changes to charges and charging
- 5.4.1 Mr White expressed his concern over the increase in charges to horse riders. The Clerk gave some background of the pricing history. Mrs Bagshawe felt that Mr White should not speak to riding fees as he had a personal interest. However, the Chairman felt that the Board would benefit from Mr White's knowledge of the issues involved. Mr Scott suggested that all prices and costs should be reviewed further and the Clerk agreed to monitor the riding costs over the next year.
- 5.4.2 Mrs Bagshawe proposed that the proposed increases should be voted on in their entirety. Mr Glyn proposed that all but the Endurance Ride and Link charges be accepted. **Mrs Bagshawe's proposal was carried and the Board agreed the Committee's proposed increase in prices and charges.**
- 5.5 Change of title of Forest Superintendent **The Board agreed that the title of "Forest Superintendent" would be reviewed as part of the overall review of the corporate image.**
- 5.6 There being no questions or comments, Mr Glyn moved the adoption of the Minutes. This was agreed.

ITEM 6 Key points for the Forest's future – presentation by the Clerk

- 6.1 Ashdown Visitor Network The Clerk informed the Board that he would be attending an awareness day on 19 November. This was being hosted by the Ashdown Visitor Network, a group representing businesses which wished to promote sustainable tourism in the area. All would sign up to basic "green" principles. The Clerk had joined the group in an effort to discover how the Forest might benefit from such a group. The Chairman confirmed that, like the Board, the County Council and the District Council needed to be well aware of the proposals.
- 6.2 Deer casualties The Clerk informed the Board that there had been 154 casualties to date. Most of these had been after normal working hours and it had become necessary to redefine the area covered by the Rangers. The policy was confirmed that the Rangers, when requested, should attend any deer casualty that occurred within the ancient pale but only attend injured deer outside the pale at their own discretion. They should not deal with dead deer outside the pale.

- 6.3 Management of Ashdown Forest The Clerk presented his initial proposals for the aims and objectives for the future management of the Forest. He proposed that the areas of management should be based on those covered by the three Board Committees. There was no time for discussion but, on handing round a complete print-out of the draft management plan, the Clerk requested feedback.

ITEM 7 Urgent Business at the discretion of the Chairman

- 7.1 The Chairman informed the board that he had written to Vice Air-Marshall Robert Kyle to thank him for speaking at the Remembrance Day service at Airman's grave on 9 November. It had been a well attended event.
- 7.2 The Chairman reported that appraisals of new members of staff would take place at the end of their six month probationary period.
- 7.3 The Clerk reported that there had been no progress in resolving the theft of the hired equipment.

Chairman _____
15 March 2004

Clerk _____