

Minutes of the

MEETING OF THE BOARD OF CONSERVATORS OF ASHDOWN FOREST

1430, Monday 15 November 2004
Ashdown Forest Centre

Present: Mr P. Glyn (in the Chair), Mr M. Cooper, Mr L. Gillham, Miss M. McPherson, Mr F. Marshall, Mr R. Parsons, Mr P. Scott, Mr R. Tidy, Mrs J. Wirdnam, Mr A. White and Dr H. Prendergast (Clerk). Minutes taken by Mrs R. Marriott.

The Chairman opened the meeting and welcomed the members of the public present.

ITEM 1 **Apologies for absence** Mrs D. Bagshawe, Mr F Brown, Mr C. Dowling, Mr A. Reid, Mr T. Slack and Mr F. Whetstone.

ITEM 2 **To approve the Minutes of the Meeting held on 20 September 2004 and matters arising**

2.1 The Minutes of the last Meeting, which had been previously circulated, were presented by the Chairman. There were no matters arising.

2.2 The Minutes were then approved and signed as an accurate record.

ITEM 3 **To receive the Minutes of the Conservation Committee Meeting held on 27 September 2004**

3.1 The Minutes, which had been previously circulated, were presented by Mr Gillham. Mrs Wirdnam stated that she had sent her apologies and the Minutes were amended accordingly.

3.2 Barn for over-wintering stock The Clerk reported that he had no progress to report.

3.3 Extension of fencing. The last paragraph of Item 2 was amended to read “The Committee asked for a firm proposal about fencing to go before the Board at a future meeting.” There had been no progress on fencing; English Nature still awaited the results of the national survey on the fencing of common land.

3.4 Bracken control It was agreed that the public relations aspect of mechanical spraying bracken on Forest land with herbicide needed to be handled sensitively, mowing being the favoured method of control at present.

3.5 Encroachments The Clerk reported that a fly-tipper on the Forest had recently been successfully prosecuted by the Environment Agency. A press release had been sent out.

3.6 Ordnance Survey Explorer map Mr Parsons commented on the various anomalies in the new map in relation to the Forest boundary and open access boundaries. The Clerk commented that Ordnance Survey had said corrections would be made during the decadal review.

3.7 There being no further questions, Mr Gillham moved the adoption of the Minutes. This was agreed.

ITEM 4 To receive the Minutes of the Roads, Planning & Amenities Committee Meeting held on 11 October 2004

- 4.1 The Minutes, which had been previously circulated, were presented by Mr Marshall.
- 4.2 Forest Row Sports Ground Association The Clerk reported that the FRSGA had expressed disappointment with the Committee's decision.
- 4.3 Parking on the Forest The Board agreed that a policy should be developed that looked at individual properties as the need arose and based on the protocol presented. The fees for parking on Forest land will be considered at a future F&GP meeting.
- 4.4 Mountain biking The Clerk informed the Board that he had had a meeting with a representative of Sustrans to discuss issues in relation to the introduction of mountain biking on Ashdown Forest. The Wealden Tourism Strategy encourages cycling; the problem was the method of control. Following discussions with various groups, the Clerk found that cyclists are confused as to the topography of the Forest. Mr Scott recommended that disabled people should be consulted for their views on the impact of bikes on their use of the Forest.
- 4.5 Pooh Bridge access
- 4.5.1 Mr White expressed his concern about the new access from the proposed car park to the Forest. The new route had not been agreed by the Board when it was first proposed two years ago. Mr Scott said that he would raise the matter with the County Council. The Clerk expressed his concern that the route of the original path crossed the Pale; the new route used existing paths with minimum damage to it.
- 4.5.2 The Chairman asked the Clerk to inform Wealden District Council that a decision had not been made and that the Board required more detail. Mr Gillham pointed out that any change in a Committee's decision must be referred to the Board.
- 4.5.3 The Clerk stressed the archaeological importance of the ancient pale.
- 4.6 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 1 November 2004

- 5.1 The Minutes, which had been previously circulated, were presented by Mr Parsons.
- 5.2 Revised Estimates
- 5.2.1 It was agreed that a note should be added to the estimates for 2005/06 to the effect that provision is made within the capital budget of £50,000 for the construction of a barn at Whitehouse Farm.
- 5.2.2 The Chairman proposed the acceptance of the revised estimates. This was agreed.
- 5.3 Income and Expenditure figures There was some discussion as to whether the figures for actual income and expenditure had been supplied for the Board's consideration in the past. (Afternote: although the Financial Regulations of the Board, agreed on 19 November 2001, state under Section 3.4 "The Responsible Financial Officer shall provide the F&GP Committee with a full statement of actual income and expenditure under each head of the revenue and capital budgets for the first six months of the

financial year at the November meeting...”, in practise this has **not** been done as shown in the past Minutes.

- 5.4 VAT Tribunal The Board expressed its appreciation for all the work carried out by Mr Thornely-Taylor.
- 5.5 Byelaw contraventions The case against Forest residents due to be heard on 8 November was to be settled out of Court. The Clerk informed the Board that he was due to negotiate the time scale for the removal of the byelaw breaches. Any publicity and costs would be a matter for the County Council’s legal department.
- 5.6 There being no further questions or comments, Mr Parsons moved the adoption of the Minutes. This was agreed.

ITEM 6 Forest Centre Development Working Party

- 6.1 The Clerk informed the Board that, following the third meeting of the group, it was thought a competition for the design of the Centre would maximise the possibilities for the development. Each building would have a dedicated function. He advised that the building project must be linked to wider issues and there should be no constraints on ideas as projects could always be reduced.
- 6.2 It was proposed that a one page project brief would be prepared for presentation to architects and WDC Planning department (for advice). The Heritage Lottery fund might be a source of funding. The process could take up to two years.
- 6.3 There would be one more meeting to finalise the brief and this would be presented to the Board at its next meeting.

ITEM 7 Forest Superintendent’s update

- 7.1 Job evaluations The process was almost complete; he had a meeting planned in early December to finalise matters.
- 7.2 Forest signs Pictures of the proposed Forest signs to be placed at the roadside entrances to the Forest and in Forest car parks were presented to the Board. It was agreed that the RPA Committee would discuss the matter at their next meeting.
- 7.3 Forest visit The Director of the Malvern Hills Conservators have expressed a wish to visit Ashdown Forest in July 2005 with some of his Board members. The Board welcomed the visit.
- 7.4 Greetings cards Six new designs by David Gadsby had been commissioned. Two were particularly suitable as Christmas cards. The Board would be advised by e-mail when they are available for purchase.
- 7.5 Chelwood Vachery
- 7.5.1 A meeting had been held with Chris Hannington of WDC who thought the area (including both Forest and private land) was suitable for inclusion in the WDC Gardens of Historical Importance project. Of particular interest were the series of lakes and weirs and plantings, particularly along the limestone gorge. The railway that had been constructed across the Forest when the garden was built is of historical interest.

7.5.2 As a result of the Board's policy of non-intervention, the area has become very overgrown. The Board agreed that it would be appropriate to develop the site as an amenity area.

ITEM 8 Any other business

9.1 The presence of a white buck seen on the perimeter of the Forest was mentioned. Mr Marshall advised the Board that a number had been sighted over the years. The colouring was a genetic accident, not an indication of ill health.

9.2 The Clerk informed the Board that the launch of the book *Dragonflies of Sussex* of which he is a co-author, would take place at the Centre in early December.

There being no further business, the Board moved to a confidential session.

The meeting closed at 4.45pm.

Chairman _____
14 March 2005

Clerk _____