



**Minutes of the meeting of the Board of Conservators of Ashdown Forest  
Monday 28 November 2011 at 14.30  
Ashdown Forest Centre**

Present: Mr R Thornely-Taylor (Chairman), Cllr J Barnes, Mr M Cooper, Cllr C Dowling, Mr J Francis, Mr R Galley, Mr P Glyn, Cllr C Hardy, Mrs D Hurrell, Cllr A Reid, Mr J Spicer, Cllr R Stogdon, Cllr R St. Pierre, and Cllr S Tidy.

In attendance: Mr C Marrable (Acting Forest Superintendent) Mrs R Marriott (Clerk).

The Chairman welcomed the members of the public present and invited questions.

A member of the public expressed his concern at the suggestion that residents on the Forest should be charged for parking permits. He asked the Board to consider the impact on the relationship between residents, staff and the Board should a charge be introduced. The Chairman replied that the matter would be raised under Item 37 and he hoped the matter would be resolved.

Item	Action
<b>33/11 Apologies.</b> Apologies were received from Cllr F Whetstone.	
<b>34/11 Declarations of any interest by Members of a Personal or Prejudicial Nature.</b> Mr Galley expressed an interest under RPA Minute 30.3/11. Mr Francis expressed an interest under RPA 33/11 and FGP 28.5/11	
<b>35/11 To approve the minutes of the Board meeting of 5 September 2011, and matters arising – BD 21/11 and Confidential Minute BD 22/11.</b> The minutes of the last meeting had been circulated and were assessed by the Board for accuracy. The Minutes were then approved.	
<i>35/11 Matters Arising</i> <i>Formal reply to the High Weald Unit in regards to Ashfest.</i> The Chairman informed the Committee that he had visited the High Weald Unit with Cllr Tidy. He felt that useful partnership working could benefit the Forest. When writing, the HWU will be advised that any future events similar to Ashfest would be dependent on funds being available.	RM
<i>Action Log</i> The Board noted the Action Log.	
<b>36/11 To approve the minutes of the Conservation Committee meeting of 26 September 2011 – BD 23/11.</b> The Chairman asked Cllr St Pierre to present the minutes of the meeting which had been assessed by the Committee for accuracy. There were no changes. The Minutes were duly received and approved in accordance with Standing Order 2.6.	
<i>36/11 Matters Arising</i> <i>32/11 Statutory obligations placed on landowners in relation to scheduled monuments.</i> Mr Marrable advised that the remedial work at the Greenwood Gate enclosure had been carried out and the site would be kept free of invasive vegetation in future.  <i>31/11 Wych Cross Reservoir</i> Cllr St Pierre advised that she had met the Chairman of SE Water who had said that the situation was a disgrace. Mr Marrable reported that SE Water had carried out considerable work recently but there was still a significant leak.	

<p><b>37/11</b></p>	<p><b>To approve the minutes of the Roads, Planning &amp; Amenities Committee meeting of 17 October 2011 – BD 24/11.</b></p> <p>The Chairman asked Mr Cooper to present the minutes of the last meeting which had been assessed by the Committee for accuracy. There were no changes. The Minutes were duly received and approved in accordance with Standing Order 2.6.</p> <p><i>36/11 Matters Arising</i>  <i>30/11 Site Visit – minute RPA 14/11</i>  The Clerk reported that a letter had been written to the property owner advising him of the Committee’s decision. A reply had been received acknowledging the decision and thanking the Committee for their consideration.</p> <p><i>30.3/11 Millbrook Farm</i>  The Acting forest Superintendent and Clerk had met with the owner who had proposed that an alternative parcel of land be offered for exchange. This had subsequently be found to be already in the ownership of the Board. A letter was to be written to the owner to advise them of this and to seek an alternative proposal.</p> <p><i>31.2/11 Doves Nest Cottage.</i>  Cllr Hardy reported that Wealden District Council had allowed five of the structures within the grounds of Doves Nest Cottage Lawful Development Certificates. He added that he was aware that the Council were considering further action and the Board would be informed in due course.</p> <p><i>33/11 Resident car parking charges and stakeholder consultation – minute RPA 17/11 taken with minute FGP 28.5/11</i>  After some discussion the following proposal was agreed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>the existing policy with regards to parking permits is reaffirmed;</b></li> <li>• <b>the position in regard to existing permits for private residents is confirmed ie no new charge;</b></li> <li>• <b>that should a new permit be granted to a private resident, the Board will be minded to make an appropriate additional charge;</b></li> <li>• <b>that the Board, if it felt it necessary to accord a business permission to park on the Forest, a commercial payment would be enforced.</b></li> </ul>	<p>RM</p>
<p><b>38/11</b></p>	<p><b>To approve the minutes of the Finance &amp; General Purposes Committee meeting of 7 November 2011 - BD 25/11.</b></p> <p>The Chairman asked Mrs Hurrell to present the minutes of the last meeting which had been assessed by the Committee for accuracy. There were no changes but Cllr Stogdon’s briefing note for the FGP Working Party which had been omitted from circulation was distributed. The Minutes were duly received and approved in accordance with Standing Order 2.6.</p> <p><i>38/11 Matters Arising</i>  <i>28.1/11 Weald Forest Ridge Partnership Scheme</i>  It was confirmed that the expected match funding had been received with written confirmation the third payment would be made in the next financial year.</p> <p><i>28.2/11 Approach to Charles Hendry MP re VAT</i>  The Chairman noted that since he had last considered the matter, other organisations of a comparable remit to the Board’s had been added to Section 33 of the VAT Act. He had met with Mr Hendry and put forward the Board’s case. He felt that his approach had been heard sympathetically and was cautiously optimistic about the outcome.</p> <p><i>30.1.4/11 Recommendations from the Working Party</i>  It was noted that the agreement of the Ashdown Forest Trust and the identification of parcels of land suitable for transference to the Trust would be necessary. A briefing paper describing the pros and cons of transferring any land should be prepared for the next Board meeting.</p>	<p>RM/FG PWP</p>

	<p>Subject to the above, the Board agreed the FGP Working Party's recommendations as follows:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. the Action Plan should be regularly reviewed;</li> <li>2. closer partnerships with the County Council and other organisations such as the High Weald Unit and Natural England should be established;</li> <li>3. policies with regards to land owned by the Conservators should be confirmed;</li> <li>4. a confidential three year draft budget should be prepared for discussion.</li> </ol>	CM/RM
39/11	<p>To receive the minutes of the Executive Committee of 7 November 2011 – BD 26/11.</p>	
	<p><i>39/11 Matters Arising</i></p> <p><i>1.6 The appointment of a consultant to advise the Executive Committee in the recruitment of a replacement for the Director.</i></p> <p>The Chairman confirmed that the consultant was currently working on defining the job description and would report to the Executive Committee early in January. It was agreed that this was of prime importance and a draft would be circulated in strict confidence. The Board would be kept fully informed and would have an opportunity to consider the short list of candidates. The re-evaluation of existing posts would be completed in the near future and funds will determine the hours available.</p> <p>Cllr Tidy queried the cost of appointing a consultant and asked how such decisions were taken. The Chairman confirmed that Cllr Whetstone had approached the Human Resources Department at County Hall for advice. However, it was felt that the potential cost of its services had been too high and the consultant appointed, who was known to be very experienced in such matters, had agreed to work at a very favourable rate. The costs incurred would come from savings in the wages budget for the current financial year.</p> <p>It was agreed that publicity for the post might prove to be a news item with attendant success in attracting candidates from further afield than might arise from traditional advertising. It was confirmed that an appointment would ideally be made in March which would allow for any contingencies. The acting Forest Superintendent confirmed that he would support the Board for as long as necessary.</p>	Exec. Cttee
40/11	<p><b>Financial Matters – BD 27/11</b></p>	
	<p><b>40.1/11 To receive the financial update.</b></p> <p>Mr Galley expressed his appreciation of the accompanying commentary and it was agreed that this should be a regular addition to the financial reports. It was noted that following confirmation of the potential contribution from ESCC, the budget for 2012/13 had been revised since the FGP meeting.</p> <p><b>Cllr Reid proposed acceptance of the revised forecast for 2011/12 and the estimate for 2012/13. Mr Spicer seconded the proposal. The Board agreed the proposal unanimously.</b></p> <p><b>40.2/11 To agree the Forest rate and charges for activities 2012/2013</b></p> <p>Details of the proposed Forest Rate and charges for activities in 2012/2013 had been previously circulated.</p> <p><b>Cllr Barnes proposed acceptance of the proposed Forest Rate for 2012/13. Mr Cooper seconded the proposal. The Board agreed the proposal unanimously.</b></p> <p><b>Mrs Hurrell proposed acceptance of the proposed charges for activities for 2012/2013. Cllr Hardy seconded the proposal. The Board agreed the proposal unanimously.</b></p>	

<b>41/11</b>	<b>To approve the meeting dates for 2012/2013 – BD 28/11</b>					
	<p>The proposed dates for meetings of Committees and the Board had been previously circulated. After a few minor amendments, the dates were agreed as follows:</p> <table border="0"> <tr> <td data-bbox="172 286 762 501"> <p><b>Conservation Committee</b></p> <p>9 January 2012 26 March 2012 11 June 2012 24 September 2012 7 January 2013</p> </td> <td data-bbox="762 286 1401 501"> <p><b>Roads, Planning &amp; Amenity Committee</b></p> <p>6 February 2012 16 April 2012 30 July 2012 22 October 2012 4 February 2013</p> </td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="172 537 762 748"> <p><b>Finance &amp; General Purposes Committee</b></p> <p>20 February 2012 21 May 2012 13 August 2012 12 November 2012 25 February 2013</p> </td> <td data-bbox="762 537 1401 748"> <p><b>The Board</b></p> <p>5 March 2012 25 June 2012 10 September 2012 26 November 2012 11 March 2013</p> </td> </tr> </table>	<p><b>Conservation Committee</b></p> <p>9 January 2012 26 March 2012 11 June 2012 24 September 2012 7 January 2013</p>	<p><b>Roads, Planning &amp; Amenity Committee</b></p> <p>6 February 2012 16 April 2012 30 July 2012 22 October 2012 4 February 2013</p>	<p><b>Finance &amp; General Purposes Committee</b></p> <p>20 February 2012 21 May 2012 13 August 2012 12 November 2012 25 February 2013</p>	<p><b>The Board</b></p> <p>5 March 2012 25 June 2012 10 September 2012 26 November 2012 11 March 2013</p>	
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<b>42/11</b>	<b>Forest Centre Working Party – verbal update</b>					
	<p>42.1/11 Mr Cooper thanked Cllr Tidy for joining the working party. The working party now consisted of four Board members, four volunteers and the Clerk.</p> <p>42.2/11 The planning process was proceeding well. Steps were being taken to resolve issues raised by Natural England. Mr Hurst was now providing continuity with the planning officer. The focus had moved to emphasise the improved educational and interpretation facilities the new development would offer and it was anticipated that this would significantly mitigate for any impact the increased visitor numbers might have. Mr Lawrance was leading this initiative and was working closely with the Sussex Wildlife Trust. Having looked at provision for school children, attention was now being focussed on adults.</p> <p>42.3/11 Mr Cooper had approached the Ashdown Forest Conservation Trust for financial support for the production of a brochure to accompany the appeal for funds. Mr Hassell had offered his professional guidance to prepare the appeal. He was to attend a conference with the Chairman.</p> <p>42.4/11 Mr Cooper expressed his confidence that the planning permission would be given in the near future. However, a caution was raised due to the requirement for an appropriate assessment and this may cause a delay.</p> <p>42.5/11 It was agreed that the Executive Committee should review the situation and identify the tasks and problems that needed to be solved.</p>	<b>Exec Cttee</b>				
<b>43/11</b>	<b>Clerk and acting Forest Superintendent's Report – verbal update</b>					
	<p><i>Acting Forest Superintendent</i></p> <p>43.1.1/11 The acting Forest Superintendent informed the Board that he had attended the following regular meetings; Parish Liaison, the AF Villages Road Safety Partnership, the Ashdown Area Deer Management Group, the Ashdown Central Area Deer Group and the Joint Action Group at Crowborough. He produced figures which showed that deer road casualties were in decline which he felt could indicate that the deer cull of the past two years was having an effect, although the harsh winters could also be a contributory factor. The Deer Warden scheme had taken some of the pressure off the Rangers. He had also met with the developer and ecologist for the development of seventy four homes in Crowborough and with Natural England to report on the continued need for fencing (a requirement of the consent to fence in 1996) and the future of grazing on the Forest.</p> <p>43.1.2/11 The acting Forest Superintendent had also attended the official opening ceremony of the Kings Standing Police Training Centre; the Epping Forest fenceless fencing demonstration, the Fairwarp Public Enquiry about a footpath designation; a conference led by the Natural England South</p>					

East land managers group at Reading on the future of HLS and led three Sunday conservation tasks with volunteers.

43.2/11 It was agreed that the Conservation Committee would consider the fenceless grazing issues.

Clerk

43.3.1/11 The Clerk reported that she had attended two meetings concerned with tourism in the area. The new film promoting tourism around Ashdown Forest had been launched at a meeting attended by Charles Hendry MP who had expressed his support for the local tourism businesses. She had also attended the Weald Forest Ridge Forum meeting which had highlighted the need for developing projects to complete the scheme. These had been identified and were in production.

43.3.2/11 There had been three successful events: the Fungi Day, the East Sussex Archaeology and Museum Project Neolithic Day at the Centre and the now traditional Remembrance Sunday gathering at Airmen's Grave. The exhibition space in the Information Barn was now booked until April 2014, details would be on the web site in time. Communications with the public were working well with 391 subscribers to the e-news service, 188 of which were riders; over 700 followers on Twitter and 108 Friends on Facebook in addition to the Autumn/Winter of Ashdown Forest Life being distributed. 195 school children had come to the Centre on School Visits since June.

43.3.3/11 Twelve Mounted Volunteer Rangers have begun patrolling the Forest at varied times to help Rangers monitor the Riding Permit system and report any matter of concern. Any breaches are reported to the duty Ranger or the office. Good relations are developing between commercial dog walkers and other dog walking groups in an attempt to promote responsible dog walking.

43.3.4/11 The Rangers have begun issuing wood permits. Currently 112 requests have been received, 49 from Commoners. 29 have been processed to date.

43.3.5/11 The new Ford Ranger truck and the new radio system, funded by the Friends of Ashdown Forest, have been received and are in use.

43.3.6/11 The application for a three year Service Level Agreement has been submitted to Wealden District Council.

Cons  
Ctee

**44/11 Any Urgent Item of which the Clerk has notice in order to pass to the elected Chairman.**

There was none. The meeting moved to Confidential Session at 16.55.

**45/11 Update on FGP Confidential Session – BD 29/11**

These Confidential Minutes were agreed.

The meeting closed at 17.05

Chairman \_\_\_\_\_

5 March 2012

Clerk \_\_\_\_\_