

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE BOARD OF CONSERVATORS OF  
ASHDOWN FOREST HELD AT THE ASHDOWN FOREST CENTRE, WYCH  
CROSS ON MONDAY 13 SEPTEMBER 1999 AT 2.30 pm.**

Present: Mr D H O Allen (in the Chair), Mrs D M Bagshawe, Miss M McPherson, Mrs S Stokes, Dr H D V Prendergast, Messrs D C Cumming, L J Gillham, D L Hall, R I F Parsons, A G Reid, M Skilton, R M Thornely-Taylor, F W J Whetstone, A N White.

**ITEM 1      Apologies for absence**

1.1      Apologies for absence had been received from Mr P Glyn and Mr T May.

**ITEM 2      To approve the Minutes of the Meeting held on 28 June 1999**

2.1      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      Fox hunting Mr Skilton informed the Board that it was unlikely the County Council would find the money necessary for a public consultation. He suggested that those who wished to pursue the issue may like to raise the funds necessary to cover the costs. Mr Gillham pointed out it was not just the cost of the consultation exercise the Board was seeking but also the underwriting of costs arising from any legal challenge based on the Board's decision after the consultation.

**ITEM 4      To receive the Minutes of the Conservation Committee Meeting held on 12 July 1999**

4.1      The Minutes were presented by Mr Allen who had chaired the meeting in Mr Gillham's absence.

4.2      Heathland clearance Mr Skilton expressed his concern over the use of machinery for heathland clearance; he had spoken to English Nature who suggested the use of Exmoor ponies. The Clerk informed the Board that fencing would be a problem and ponies were not commonable animals on Ashdown Forest. However, it was agreed to discuss the idea at the next Conservation Committee meeting as part of a review of the grazing scheme to date.

4.3      Heathland Area Assessment Dr Prendergast had forwarded some suggestions to improve clarity. The Clerk advised that the modified and completed document would be presented at the next meeting of the Conservation Committee.

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

**ITEM 5      To receive the Minutes of the Roads, Planing & Amenities Committee Meeting held on 26 July 1999**

5.1      The Minutes, which had been previously circulated, were presented by Mrs Stokes.

5.2      Planning Applications

5.2.1 Forest Row Pavilion **The Board agreed the Committee's recommendation to endorse the revoking of the existing Recreation Ground Licence to be replaced with a 25 year Licence for the Recreation Ground to Forest Row Parish Council on the payment of an annual fee of £10 (ten pounds).**

5.2.2 Wrens Warren Mr Parsons informed the Board that the appeal over the refusal of the first application would be heard over three days from 19 October. The subsequent applications would be considered by the Area Plans North Committee of Wealden District Council on 23 September. The fifth application was for seven houses of a slightly smaller but similar style to the first application. The Clerk reminded the Board that there had not been an offer of land to the Conservators, it was only an idea put forward by the developers for consideration at a later stage.

### 5.3 Management Protocol

5.3.1 Dr Prendergast expressed his concern that the Minutes did not reflect his view that a mere list of signs to be located on the Forest was sufficient for the Protocol; the latter should also reflect the interpretation policy and type of signs.

5.3.2 **The Board agreed the Committee's recommendation to address their policy on 'interpretation' and the way ahead.**

5.4 There being no further questions, Mrs Stokes moved the adoption of the Minutes. This was agreed.

## **ITEM 6 To receive the Minutes of the Finance & General Purposes Committee Meeting held on 23 August 1999**

6.1 The Minutes, which had been previously circulated, were presented by Mr White.

6.2 Staff matters The Clerk confirmed that the pay scales used were broadly those of the County Council. Mr Gillham pointed out that although the Board were not bound to use these scales, any pay award in excess may not be funded.

6.3 Health and Safety Mr Skilton informed the Board that it could call upon the expertise of the County Council and the Fire Authority when reviewing the policy, particularly for work carried out on the Forest rather than the Centre. **The Board agreed the Clerk should pursue this course of action and only approach the Consultant used previously if absolutely necessary.**

6.4 Heritage Lottery Fund Bid The Clerk briefed the Board on the history of the bid and explained that £50,000 had been bid for over a 5 year period.

6.5 Management Protocol After some discussion, it was agreed that a small working party should be set up to produce the first draft of the complete document. Dr Prendergast expressed his wish to be a member of the working party.

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

## **ITEM 7 The Clerk to report on sundry matters**

- 7.1 The Ashdown Forest Panel The Clerk informed the Board that the Ashdown Forest Panel, which had managed the Ashdown Forest Trust in the past, no longer existed following the reorganisation of the County Council. Matters affecting the Trust are now handled through the County Secretary, the County Treasurer and the Lead Member. Mr Skilton assured the Board that the reorganisation would lead to closer links between the County Council and the Board of Conservators and he agreed to inform the Board in writing of the current position with the Ashdown Forest Trust.
- 7.2 Sheep casualties The Clerk informed the Board that six sheep had been killed in one incident on the C3 in the previous week. This had been the first major incident this year and speed was thought to be the prime factor. The matter was now being dealt with by the police and the owner of the sheep. The Clerk added the police had informed him that speed checks were now being regularly carried out on the B2026 between Fairwarp and Duddleswell and near Friars Gate; a request had been made to the police to carry out speed checks on the C3.

**ITEM 8      Any other business**

- 8.1 Press releases Mrs Stokes had prepared a Press Release following the last Board Meeting. Unfortunately, it had not been printed by any newspaper. She agreed to prepare one for this meeting and it was proposed that it should also be placed on the Ashdown Forest web site.
- 8.2 Fox hunting
- 8.2.1 The Chairman informed the Board that although its policy and the reasons underlying it had been clearly stated, two issues had been raised through letters received from the Ashdown Forest Wildlife Protection Group:
- i) what constituted an “Assembly” under the terms of Article 23 of the Ashdown Forest Act
  - ii) the offer from AFWPG, made in an open letter to the press, of a £400 donation to ban hunting on the Forest.
- 8.2.2 The Chairman informed the Board that Counsel’s advice had already been sought in the first case and after discussion, it was unanimously agreed that the Clerk should write to AFWPG and explain that due to legal restraints, the Board would have to decline their offer.
- 8.3 There being no further questions, the meeting closed at 4.15 pm.

Chairman \_\_\_\_\_  
22 November 1999

Clerk \_\_\_\_\_