

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE BOARD OF CONSERVATORS OF
ASHDOWN FOREST HELD AT THE ASHDOWN FOREST CENTRE,
WYCH CROSS ON MONDAY 9 SEPTEMBER 2002 AT 2.30pm.**

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

The Chairman opened the meeting and thanked Cllr Tunwell who, as Lord of the Manor, had invited all members of the Board and all the staff to a delicious buffet lunch.

ITEM 1 Apologies for absence

1.1 There were apologies for absence from Mrs D Bagshawe, Mrs J Wirdnam and Mr P Scott.

ITEM 2 To approve the Minutes of the Meeting held on 17 June 2002

2.1.1 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 6.3.7 Mr Marshall expressed his concern over this minute in which the word “grant” had been used in relation to the duty of ESCC to cover any short fall in the Board’s income.

3.2 6.4 Crown Prosecution Service. The Clerk informed the Board that he had not heard from the Crown Prosecution Service. Mr Tunwell said he was still prepared to sign a letter to the CPS if this would help.

ITEM 4 To receive the Minutes of the Conservation Committee Meeting held on 1 July 2002

4.1 The Minutes which had been previously circulated, were presented by Mr Gillham.

4.2 Membership of the Committee

4.2.1 **The Board agreed the Committee’s recommendation to invite the County Archaeologist to join the Conservation Committee as a co-opted member in accordance with Section 13 of the Ashdown Forest Act 1974.**

4.3 West Chase Stewardship Scheme The Clerk informed the Board that the West Chase Stewardship Scheme had been signed up the previous week and was therefore confirmed for the next ten years.

4.4 Water table levels The Clerk reported that the Environment Agency had informed him of four locations on or around the Forest where the water table level was monitored. He was awaiting data which he hoped might explain the reduction in wet heath.

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

ITEM 5 To receive the Minutes of the Roads, Planning & Amenities Committee Meeting held on 29 July 2002

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

5.2 Forest Signs

5.2.1 Interpretive panels Mr Marshall informed the Board that he had had discussions with Ranger Sutton who had suggested a design for the plinth that will keep the surface of the panel protected.

5.2.2 Forest Signs The Clerk reported that he had been unable to locate an alternative manufacturer to date.

5.2.3 The Four Counties Distance Dial The Clerk informed the Board that the Friends of Ashdown Forest had agreed to fund a replacement Distance Dial.

5.3 Low flying helicopters Following a helicopter low flying incident on 16 July the Clerk sent a case to the MOD requesting the Forest should be declared an exclusion zone for low flying helicopters. He informed the Board that in their response the MOD replied that very few areas in the country were excluded as a matter of policy, and this enabled them to spread low flying thinly across the country, rather than to concentrate it and impose pressure on a few specific areas. The request was rejected.

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 19 August 2002

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

6.2 Staff Salaries

6.2.1 **The Board agreed the Committee's recommendation to increase staff salaries in line with the percentage increases proposed for local government employees in the 2002 pay round as negotiated by ACAS and currently awaiting agreement between the unions and employers.**

6.3 VAT The Clerk reported that he awaited a response from Mr Charles Hendry.

6.5 There being no further comments or questions, Mr Glyn moved the adoption of the Minutes. This was agreed.

ITEM 7 The Clerk to report on sundry matters

7.1 Government White Paper on Commons Registration

- 7.1.1 The Clerk informed the Board that he had only recently been made aware of the White Paper issued in 2000 entitled ‘Greater Protection and Better Management of Common Land in England and Wales’. It would appear that the White Paper had been put out for consultation in February 2000 and some 500 organisations, including Local Authorities had been consulted. As the paper contained some fairly radical proposals covering registration of commons, grazing rights and extinguishment of commoners’ rights the Clerk said he would have expected some robust comments to have been submitted by the local authorities. However, it appeared that, for whatever reason, neither ESCC nor WDC had responded to the consultation document.

Following on from the consultation DEFRA issued their “**Common Land Policy Statement 2002**” in July. Whilst the policy document contains significant issues of concern to the common land registration authority and the planning authority, of particular concern to the Board of Conservators are proposals to permit changes to the Common Land Register and for owners of unwanted rights of common to voluntarily surrender them for extinguishment. These issues, if pursued, might have a significant impact on the Board’s budget by reducing income from commoners’ rates. The Clerk added that there were also recommendations that County Councils will be encouraged to establish management bodies for common land but at the same time the policy document gives no indication how common land should be treated where statutory bodies (such as the Board) already exist!

The Clerk said that he would try and follow up these issues with DEFRA, if he could establish a point of contact.

[After note. The Clerk spoke to the Head of the Common Land Division, DEFRA, who asked him to submit these points by letter as they appeared not to have been covered in the consultation.]

- 7.2 CROW Act 2000 – Right to Roam. The Clerk informed the Board that after the first round of consultations (where the Board submitted some 16 observations) the mapping published by the Countryside Agency covering East Sussex was something of a shambles. This was mainly due to the fact the registration authority had still not reconstituted the common land register after a fire in 1990, and therefore the Agency could not show common land in the County. The second round map therefore only represents “open land” over which it is proposed the public may roam. So far as the Forest is concerned this map will only serve to confuse as the Agency has left off all the woodland over which the public already has a right to roam!
- 7.3 Fly-tipping. The Clerk reported that two pigs had been abandoned on the Forest in Broadstone Car Park. The owners could not be traced and animal movement restrictions and registration rules meant that no animal rescue organisation could take them. On advice from DEFRA a local knacker had been contracted to put down the pigs and incinerate the carcasses.
- 7.4 Estate Workers’ vehicle The Clerk informed the Board that the Estate Workers’ vehicle had been involved in an accident ten days previously. It had been taken to Tresslers in Uckfield and he awaited an assessment of the cost of repairs. [After note. The vehicle was beyond economical repair]

ITEM 8 Any other business

8.1 There being no other business, the meeting moved into Confidential Session at 3.50 pm.

Chairman _____
18 November 2002

Clerk _____