



**Minutes of the meeting of the Board of Conservators of Ashdown Forest
Monday 10 September 2012 at 14.30
Ashdown Forest Centre**

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

In attendance: Mrs P Buesnel (Director), Mrs R Marriott (Clerk)

The Chairman welcomed the one member of the public present and invited questions. There were no questions.

The Chairman reported the sad news of the death of Mr Robert Watson who had chaired many Commoners meetings over the years and who was a long standing Trustee of the Ashdown Forest Conservation Trust. A memorial service was due to be held on 25th September at Forest Row church and a letter of condolence had been sent to his widow.

NB – There are no Conservation Committee Minutes to be approved at this meeting.

Item	Action
26/12 Apologies. Apologies were received from Cllr J Barnes, Cllr C Dowling Mr I Hurst and Cllr M Weaver.	
27/12 Declarations of any interest by Members of a Personal or Prejudicial Nature. Mr Galley and Cllr Reid expressed an interest under minute 29/12 in relation to Millbrook Farm 920.2/12). The Chairman and Mr Glyn expressed an interest under minute 30/12 in relation to the Ashdown Forest Conservation Trust.	
28/12 To approve the minutes of the Board meeting of 25 June 2012, and matters arising – BD 17/12. The minutes of the last meeting had been circulated and were assessed by the Board for accuracy. The minutes were duly received and approved in accordance with Standing Order 2.6.	
29/12 To approve the minutes of the Roads, Planning & Amenities Committee meeting of 9 July 2012 - BD 18/12. The Chairman asked Mr Spicer to present the minutes of the meeting which had been assessed by the Committee for accuracy. The minutes were duly received and approved in accordance with Standing Order 2.6.	
<i>29.1/12 Matters Arising</i> In regards to <i>minute 20.2/12</i> the Clerk reported that a further letter had been sent to the property owner. As yet no reply had been received and the matter remained on going. <i>29.2/12</i> In regards to <i>minute 22.1/12</i> there had been further incidents of bye-law breaches which included mowing and the use of a 'weed killer'. The Ranger had, by chance, met the one of the property owners and explained, again, what could and could not be done. Mr Cooper said that a stronger line should be taken. The Chairman replied that evidence was required before further steps could be taken. Cllr Tidy said that the Board should be attempting to build a relationship with the property owners and find out why they were unconcerned about the bye-law breaches. The Chairman pointed out there was a history of encroachment issues in this locality that had been discussed for several years. The Clerk said that she had been in touch with Natural England. They were now aware of the situation but, without evidence, they could not intervene. However, if evidence became available they would be willing, and able, to help as they were shocked by what was happening. There was general agreement that a site visit by the RPA Committee, along with an invitation to meet with residents might be a worthwhile exercise. <i>29.3/12</i> There was a short discussion regarding to <i>minute 22.2/12</i> on increasing fines for bye-law breaches and the process by which this could be done. Cllr Stogdon said there was a	

	<p>process to be put in place and there would be a cost to taking the matter forward. The Chairman said that the moving the procedure forward and finding the most cost effective way of doing it should be delegated to the RPA chairman and the Clerk and this was agreed.</p> <p>29.4/12 In regard to <i>minute 23.3/12</i> it was noted that this piece of work was outstanding had not yet been done. A letter had been sent to the Land Registry regarding the reported actions of the Church Commissioners. So far no response had been received.</p> <p>It was agreed that the RPA committee would make a site visit and invite residents to meet with the committee.</p> <p>It was agreed that the Chairman of the RPA committee and the Clerk would action the procedures required to increase the bye-law fines and by the most cost effective manner available.</p>	RPA JS/RM
30/12	To approve the minutes of the Finance & General Purposes Committee meeting of 13 August 2012 – BD 19/12.	
	The Chairman asked Cllr Whetstone 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><i>30.1/12 Matters Arising</i></p> <p>There was a discussion regarding <i>minute 20.2/12</i>. Mr Cooper expressed his concern regarding the Ashdown Forest Conservation Trust (AFCT)'s position with respect to making funds available for the Forest Centre development business plan. This was followed by several suggestions and on the actual wording of the AFCT Deed which, according to Cllr Stogdon, did not appear to place as many restrictions on the Trust as suggested by the Trust Chairman. Mr Cooper asked that a formal case be put to the Trustees for them to look again at funding. Cllr Tidy said it was vital that a vehicle for fundraising be found and that the AFCT was the best candidate for that. The Board noted that following the death of Robert Watson a new trustee would be appointed and the Clerk, who is also Clerk to the AFCT, noted that this might mean that a meeting of the AFCT would be convened in advance of their normal annual meeting.</p>	RTT /PG
31/12	To approve the minutes of the Forest Centre Development Committee meetings of 9 July and 6 August– BD 20/12 and BD 21/12. (Paper on the project brief to follow by e-mail and hard copies to be tabled – BD 22/12)	
	The Chairman asked Cllr Tidy to present both sets of minutes which had been assessed by the Committee for accuracy. A small amendment was to be made in the present list where Cllr Tidy was to be shown as 'Chairman. With that amendment made the minutes were duly received and approved in accordance with Standing Order 2.6.	
	<p><i>31.1/12 Matters Arising</i></p> <p>Mr Cooper said he wanted to re-iterate how important he considered giving others an opportunity to comment on the Forest Centre development plans was. The Director replied that this process was underway, starting with the Parish Liaison Panel meeting.</p>	
	<p>31.2/12 The Board then turned its attention to paper BD 22/12. Cllr Tidy asked the Director to present the paper who gave a short background. The paper was self-explanatory but it did raise a number of questions. Cllr Tidy said she assumed that the Board were still in favour of having a new Forest Centre and she had not heard anything to suggest the contrary. If this was the case a business plan was required to examine each of the options currently on the table. It was essential that the Board gave its consent and backing to all of the proposed projects and for them to run in parallel for the time being.</p> <p>31.3/12 Mr Cooper said it was worth re-stating, that the role of an upgraded Forest Centre was not to encourage visitors to the Forest but to educate and inform those that were already here. Mr Galley agreed with Mr Cooper and said that it was not the Board's role</p>	

to promote the Forest as a tourist destination; there were plenty of organisations already doing that, rather the Board were seeking to improve the quality of the visitors experience in tandem with the management of the Forest. Mr Galley went on to say he was in full agreement that a better Forest Centre, either here or elsewhere, was needed. He was also in full agreement that a comparative study of all the options currently on the table was required. He went on to say that a project manager was required and it was important that was taken forward. Furthermore, it was to be noted that a final decision from the planning inspector on the Wealden Core Strategy, which includes the requirement for mitigation in the case of development within 7km of the Forest, was not due until mid-October. Cllr Whetstone said he thought it better to wait until the planning inspector's decision was known.

31.4/12 Mr Francis said a meeting was planned to discuss mitigation strategies and there followed a discussion on what they might be. Cllr Tidy said that purchasing the Llama farm would be a mitigation in itself as the centre would not attract anywhere near the current 40,000 visitors it currently receives. She went on to say the planning officers were positive that mitigation strategies could be put in place if the current Forest centre site was upgraded. The Director said that the current Forest Centre site and the Llama Farm had potential but what was important was to give visitors who were already coming to the Forest the best educational experience allowing them to appreciate the uniqueness of the Forest and to win them to our side to support the Board's protection role.

31.5/12 After a lengthy discussion it was agreed that business plans, looking at all the options available, would be the best way of informing the next steps to be taken. Cllr Tidy noted that at present, there was no lee-way in the accounts to finance anything. A meeting was due with ESCC and if they were willing to finance the next steps a business plans could be commissioned.

FCDC

It was agreed, subject to an agreement with ESCC to make funding available, that business plans for all of the options currently under discussion, be commissioned.

32/12 To agree and approve the amendments to the Standing Orders and receive the appended Code of Conduct – BD 23/12.

32.1/12 The Standing Orders with the Code of Conduct had been previously circulated. A further amended version was tabled. It was agreed that the wording be added to in Section 7, "*a member may speak and vote on a matter of personal interest*". This wording could be found in the Standing Orders dated 31/07/2012.

32.2/12 There was a short discussion regarding the constitution of the Executive Committee and if there was a lack of Commoner representation. It was noted that both the Chairman and Vice Chairman were Commoners bringing the total of representatives to three. The Clerk reminded the Board that when attending meetings they were attending not as County or District councillors but as Conservators and this should be borne in mind. The Chairman replied that it was a well-made point. He went on to say that the balance between Commoners and non-commoners should be kept in mind when making up committees or nominations for Chairman and Vice-Chairman positions.

It was proposed by Cllr Whetstone and seconded by Mr Glyn, that the Standing Orders and Code of Conduct be adopted. There was a show of hands and the proposal was adopted.

RM

33/12 To receive the Director's report – BD 24/12.

33.1/12 The document had been previously circulated. The Director presented her report highlighting internships, apprenticeships, the recent very successful volunteer event, the strategic plan and key relationships. She went on to say Healthy Walks training was about to commence, that the Dog project was being discussed by the RSPCA and Kennel Club grant giving committees and drew the Board's attention to the final facts and figures. The report was welcomed and positively received by the Board. Mr Cooper said he had found meeting the volunteers to be a particularly interesting and enlightening process

	33.2/12 There was a short discussion regarding the management of Himalayan balsam and ragwort. The Clerk reported that there was a definite programme of pulling ragwort and removal of Himalayan balsam from Forest land. The former being a positive public relations exercise.	
34/12	To receive the Clerk's report – BD 25/12.	
	34.1/12 The document had been previously circulated. There were very few planning applications being posted at present; the sale of May Cottage was going ahead and the new purchaser had agreed to maintain the track and, finally, the Police had been to see the owner of the dog that had attacked the sheep. The officer presented the owner with a letter regarding the animal's behaviour. 34.2/12 The Clerk reported that a meeting had been held with the owners of Glenwood South. Permission had been given for the property deeds to be obtained from the Land Registry and these would be scrutinised to help resolve the matter. 34.3/12 The auditor, Mazars, had made some very minor comments in regards to the annual return. It was noted that the Risk Management Toolkit would be reviewed again in November to bring the process back into synch. There were some comments made in regards to the value of property shown in the asset register and it was agreed that this would be dealt with at the next FGP committee. The Board asked that the Auditors Report be formally tabled at FGP committees in future. 34.4/12 Mr Spicer said that he had undertaken some research on obtaining a formulae for calculating discounts for multiple users of access tracks, i.e., blocks of flats. It would be usual practice to offer a form of discount but there was no agreed way of doing this. It was agreed that in future, the Auditors Report be formally presented to the FGP Committee. It was agreed that Risk Management Toolkit would be assessed.	FGP FGP
35/12	To approve the minutes of the Confidential Session of the Forest Centre Development Committee of 25 August –BD 26/12.	
	The Board then went into confidential session.	
36/12	Any Urgent Item of which the Clerk has notice in order to pass to the elected Chairman.	
	There were none.	

The meeting closed at 16.35

Chairman _____
November 2012

Clerk _____