

# **ASHDOWN FOREST ROADS, PLANNING & AMENITIES COMMITTEE MEETING**

1430, Monday 7 February 2005

Ashdown Forest Centre

## **Minutes**

Present: Messrs F. Marshall (Chair), F. Brown, P. Glyn, Miss M. McPherson,  
Mr R. Parsons, Dr H. Prendergast (Clerk), Messrs C. Sutton  
(Ranger), B. Tidy, Mrs J. Wirdnam  
Apologies: Mr L. Gillham  
In attendance: Mr A. White

### **1) Planning matters: Old Forge Lane, Fairwarp (WDC's proposal for affordable housing)**

The Committee had a site meeting; see under 3) for the discussion.

### **2) Welcome to Gerry Sherwin, High Weald Unit**

In her absence, Dr Prendergast introduced Ms Sherwin from the High Weald Unit (HWU) who has joined the Committee. She is leading the HWU bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund for a project centred on the forests of the High Weald (including Ashdown) and, like Dr Prendergast, sits on the Ashdown Forest Tourism Forum. At his invitation she was also a member of the Forest Centre Development Working Party.

### **3) Planning matters**

#### **a) Old Forge Lane, Fairwarp**

The Committee a) saw no advantage in either amenity or conservation terms in the Board taking over ownership of the land offered by WDC in exchange for a widened access; b) recommended asking WDC whether there were other areas within the Pale that, owned by WDC, might be offered instead and c) whether WDC could approach ESCC to confirm the need for a widened access (its present width being 14 m); and d) agreed it was worth asking WDC for further details on how the listing for affordable housing works and if WDC might be open to negotiation on the Board having a special concession for Forest staff in affordable housing in Old Forge Lane or elsewhere locally. It was also agreed to check if the two houses having access over the same route have licences from the Forest for access.

#### **b) Cats Protection, Chelwood Gate**

Dr Prendergast said that a letter addressed to him had been copied to all Board members. Mr Marshall said that the last RPA Committee meeting had agreed a course of action and reported that Mr Tony Reid had been under pressure from local residents to resolve the issue. Dr Prendergast pointed out that the traffic (on Laundry Lane) at the heart of the issue was not visiting the Board, but Cats Protection. Mr Glyn said that no response should go against anything previously stated by the Board or by Dr Prendergast.

On the plots of land offered to the Board in exchange, Mr White described Plot 1 as inaccessible and Plot 3, with lifebelts on its fringe, as not in keeping with the Forest. Dr Prendergast thought both Plots 2 and 3 were worthy additions to the Forest, and reminded members that the latter was open to the public under the CROW Act.

The Committee agreed that further negotiations should be done by Dr Prendergast.

#### **4) Encroachments/byelaw breaches**

Dr Prendergast reported that the problems with the property owners by the A22 who were due to appear in court had been rectified; no case was necessary. Another case, on the South Chase, was being taken forward with the County Solicitor after two years of problems.

Mr Glyn, who had discovered that he has certain rights over the use of his neighbour's land, wondered if anyone might have similar rights on the Forest. No one knew of any such case.

There was a brief discussion about whether the parking of 15 vehicles in Toll Lane, associated with riding for the disabled, should be licenced. [NB. The Committee has previously discussed and agreed a protocol for assessing the licencing of parking on the Forest.]

#### **5) Forest Centre Development Working Party**

Dr Prendergast said that, at the request of the Chairman of the Board, all Board members had been sent a message asking for their endorsement of the Working Party's recommendation, from December 2004, to work with the HWU on a bid for funds to the Heritage Lottery Fund to develop the Forest Centre (*inter alia*). All members had replied positively so he requested a formal endorsement from the Committee for work to proceed.

Mr Tidy proposed, and Mr Parsons seconded, this endorsement.

#### **6) Ashdown Forest Tourism Forum, interpretation and recreation – update on progress and implications for the Forest**

Dr Prendergast reported some of the Forum's recent activities: the nearing of the completion of the survey of visitors to the Forest, funded by WDC and English Nature, and the start of an interpretation strategy for the Forest area (funded by the HWU); and the development of walks leaflets on which he was working with WDC, HWU and the Forestry Commission (still pending the latter's funding of woodland management work on the Forest, to be confirmed mid February 2005). There was also an initiative looking at new transport schemes in the area. Mr Tidy commented that the development of these was being done in tandem with the production of leaflets for circular walks.

Mr Parsons said that the Board needs to know about new initiatives like the interpretation strategy. Dr Prendergast agreed and said that a lot was happening on the Forest at the moment and that, inevitably, given the gaps between meetings of the Board and its Committees, there was a delay in keeping everyone up to date. In the case of the interpretation strategy, furthermore, it did not start until January 2005.

#### **7) 2005/2006 Action Plan – Amenity and Community**

Dr Prendergast introduced the Plan, emphasising some new elements. Given the lateness, it was agreed that members should submit comments to him. He said that he intended to get formal acceptance by the Board for the whole of the *Action Plan* at the next board meeting (March 2005).

#### **8) AOB**

Mr White reported complaints from riders about the water-logged, muddy state of the entrance onto the Forest at Boringwheel Mill. Mr Marshall added that this was also a public footpath. Dr Prendergast suggested that the remedy might be to close the access temporarily. Mr Tidy suggested the laying down of terram, covered with sandy gravel. [NB. This has in fact been done in previous years.] It was agreed to contact ESCC for advice. Mr White also drew attention to other problem tracks near Spring Garden Farm.

Having seen a burger van there over the weekend, Mrs Wirdnam asked about the status of the car parks at Millbrook. Dr Prendergast said that the Forest's lease of the car parks from ESCC had finished in August 2004. He was reluctant to renew the lease until his concerns about the car parks' safety, relayed to ESCC, had been allayed.

The meeting finished at 1739.