

**Minutes of the
ROADS PLANNING AND AMENITIES COMMITTEE MEETING OF THE
BOARD OF CONSERVATORS OF ASHDOWN FOREST**

Monday 17 October 2011

14.30 at Barnsden House and then 15.15 at the Ashdown Forest Centre

Committee members present: Mr MJ Cooper (Chairman), Cllr J Barnes, Mr JA Francis, Mr R Galley (*ex officio*), Cllr C Hardy, Mr C Marrable (*acting Superintendent*), Mr J Spicer (Vice Chairman) and Mr R Thornely-Taylor (*ex officio*). Minutes taken by Mrs T Buxton.

The Chairman opened the meeting and welcomed the member of the public present. Mrs Haig-McVitty said she had difficulty finding the documents she wanted on the Ashdown Forest website; however, it appears she was looking at the wrong site.

28/11 Apologies.

Apologies had been received from Cllr R St Pierre.

29/11 Declarations of any interest by Members of a Personal or Prejudicial Nature.

Mr Galley declared an interest in minute 30.3/11 and Mr Francis in minute 33/11.

30/11 Discussion of site visit – RPA 14/11.

After a short discussion there was agreement that the Committee should wait until there was a purchaser and then enter into discussions with that purchaser. It was agreed that the Committee would be amenable to discussions and would look sympathetically at suggestions. It was also agreed that any new licence prepared would clearly be for private equine use and not commercial equine use. Finally, it was agreed that there should be an exchange of land as a general principal.

It was agreed at the property owner would be written to inform him of the Committees decision.

30/11 Matters Arising – verbal reports.

30.1/11 Lamberts.

There were some invasive species to be managed on the site, but, otherwise the matter was finished.

30.2/11 Jessops.

Mr Marrable reported that the Secretary of State had been approached regarding the sale of this small area of land and a letter of response had been received from DEFRA containing ten probing questions. Mrs Marriott was currently spending a great deal of time researching the answers. There were many issues being raised and several had no precedents. There would not be a resolution in the short term. The Chairman asked that this item be kept on the agenda and an *aide memoir* provided for the February meeting.

30.3/11 Millbrook Farm.

The Chairman reported that it was proving difficult to set a mutually convenient meeting date with the property owners and that an acceptable land exchange had not been found. He was not confident that a *quid pro quo* would be found regarding land but remained hopeful that an amicable settlement would be reached.

30.4/11 Chelwood Gate Cricket Ground.

The Chairman asked for an update. Mr Marrable reported he had had an amicable meeting, a sensible compromise had been reached and an amended licence prepared. He went on to say that the site would be monitored for compliance.

30.5/11 Snuff Cottage.

After a brief discussion it was agreed that the site would be continually monitored and remain a standing item on the agenda. Mr Marrable said that there was no evidence to show that the

Action

RM/CM

property owner had ceased his bye-law breaching activities. However, it was proving difficult to catch him 'in the act'. Mr Spicer suggested that the ornamental azaleas planted on the Forest should be removed as a first step. Mr Marrable agreed and said that the plants were an alien species and would be treated as such. He would make a site visit with the Ranger.

It was agreed that the ornamental species would be removed as discussed in 30.5/11

CM/
Ranger

31/11 Planning and property issues – RPA 15/11.

31.1/11 *May Cottage, Browns Brook.*

Mr Marrable reported he had had a very amicable meeting with the property owner and had answered his many questions.

31.2/11 *Dove's Nest Cottage.*

Cllr Harding gave a brief report of the current situation which he described as being "a difficult case".

31.3/11 *Browns Brook, Fairwarp.*

The content was noted.

32/11 Briefing paper on the history of the Recreation Grounds – RPA 16/11.

Mr Marrable talked to the paper; he explained that there was a great deal of documentation for some recreation sites and, for others, almost nothing. There was general agreement that, to aid good governance, record keeping and to provide a consistent approach in the future, a dialogue should be opened with the recreation grounds. The Chairman suggested starting with the Coleman's Hatch Bowling Club as there was practically no information available.

The discussion moved on to the Ashdown Forest Golf Club. There was a meeting planned between the Club's finance committee and ESCC regarding a 999 year lease that would have very serious financial implications for the Forest. There was concern that any negotiations would take place without the knowledge and input of the Board.

It was agreed that Mr Marrable, Mrs Marriott and the Chairman of the Board seek an urgent meeting (before the next Board meeting) with Rupert Clubb of ESCC to discuss the lease of the Golf Club.

CM/RM
/RTT

It was agreed that Mr Marrable would contact all ESCC Board members to appraise them of the situation.

CM

It was agreed that the Golf Club would be an agenda item at the next Board meeting.

RM

It was agreed that the recreation grounds be written to in order to open a dialogue as proposed above.

CM/RM

16.30 Mr Spicer and Cllr Barnes left the meeting.

33/11 Resident car parking charges and stakeholder consultation – RPA 17/11.

There was a short discussion regarding car parking charges. The Chairman, Mr Marrable and Mr Thornely-Taylor had all received e-mails from a local resident setting out some clear and well considered objections. Mr Galley was concerned that managing car parking charges would be a burden on staff and not bring in enough revenue to justify the time that will need to be spent on it. However, all agreed in principal, it was a good idea and that parking charges could be imposed as and when necessary.

It was agreed that RPA 17/11 be passed to the FGP Committee to agree any charges and that a recommendation would be made to the Board.

FGP

34/11 Public car parking charges feedback from Parish Liaison meeting (verbal update).

Mr Marrable reported that the issue had been raised at the Parish Liaison meeting and the reaction was not a hostile one but the idea was not taken up. A discussion followed and the general opinion was that parking charges would be an unpopular move; it would be logistically difficult and that parking on verges would increase. It was agreed that the idea be shelved for the time being.

The discussion moved on to exploring if the Parish Councils would be willing to make a non-specific financial contribution to the Forest from their precept.

It was agreed that a brief exploratory letter regarding financial contributions to the Forest be drafted and sent to the Parish Councils.

CM

It was agreed that public car parking charges be shelved for the foreseeable future.

35/11 Forest Centre Working Party (verbal update).

The Chairman reported that the next Working Party meeting would be 7th November after the return of Mr Hassall who was crucial for taking the fundraising proposals forward. He said he was in discussions with Mr Parsons, Chairman of the Ashdown Forest Conservation Trust, about the provision of funds should there be further need to support items such as architect's drawings and a revised Business Plan as well as discussing the potential role of AFCT as a recipient of funds raised in the future. The Chairman also said he was maintaining contact with Mr Hurst. He went on to report that there was important detailed work being taken forward on the educational side of the proposals. This was being lead by Mr Lawrence who is very familiar with a disciplined approach to project management.

There was a short discussion regarding the objections to planning permission raised by Natural England and it was hoped that there would be a meeting soon to take this further. The Chairman confirmed he is in touch with Natural England regarding a meeting to review their concerns and he had discussed this with Mr Marrable.

36/11 Possible purchases of part of Charles Smith Wood – RPA 18/11

Mr Marrable reported that the Friends were, after looking at the site, keen to purchase the land. Mr Thornely-Taylor said that the matter would be put before the Board, however, if there was a time constraint the Executive Committee could take the matter forward on 7th November or earlier if time pressures required it. The Committee unanimously supported the proposed purchase.

37/11 Request for seating around Forest Row Sports Field.

It was agreed that this was a matter was the responsibility of the Sports Field (Forest Row Pavilion Sports Field Association).

38/11 Weald Forest Ridge Project Summary – RPA 19/11

All agreed this seems to have been very good and reasonable. It was noted that the Board should not fail to spend the monies allocated. It was also noted that the project had now come to an end.

39/11 Any urgent item for which the Director has notice in order to pass to the elected Chairman

Mr Marrable gave a brief report of the enquiry currently taking place at Fairwarp regarding pedestrian access across a small strip of privately owned land. It would be two months before the Inspector would publish a decision.

There was no other business. The next meeting is Monday 6th February 2012. The meeting closed at 17.00 hours.