

**MINUTES OF COMMONERS' ANNUAL MEETING
HELD ON 04 March 2022 AT UCKFIELD CIVIC CENTRE**

Five Commoner Conservators attended the meeting: Mr C Smith, Mr N Mawdsley, Ms S McAll, Mr C de Mestre, Ms L Maudsley. Approximately 110 commoners attended. The Minutes were taken by Mark Infield.

1. Reading of the notice convening the meeting by the Clerk

The Clerk read the notice convening the meeting.

2. Election of a Chairman for the meeting

Ms McAll opened the meeting and introduced members of the Board of Conservators to the Commoners attending the meeting. Ms McAll requested the Commoners present to elect a Commoner to chair the meeting. None being proposed, Ms McAll proposed that she chair the meeting, and this was accepted without comment from the floor.

3. Approval of the draft Agenda

A draft agenda was circulated amongst the Commoners and projected on a screen. The agenda was approved.

4. Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from:

Mr Henry Osbourne
Mr PD Cooper
Ms J Till
Mr & Mrs Dewhurst
Rev W St J Kemm and Mrs Kemm
Ms G Rolfe
Mr M Gellatly
Lady Davies

5. Minutes of the Annual Meeting held on Friday 01 March 2019

The minutes were accepted by the meeting and proposed by Mr Spicer and Mr Cox.

6. Election of one Conservator

The election was between Mr Neil Goldie-Scott and Ms Rachel Millward. Each of the contestants were invited to make a statement of their candidature. Following their statements Commoners were invited to put questions to the candidates. Commoners were requested to put questions that both candidates would answer.

Question 1. Muccini Iacopo

The recent storm which brought down many trees can be considered as providing a resource. Ashdown Forest produces many potential resources. Do the candidates have knowledge about 'biochar' that could be made from fallen trees?

Question 2. Andy Way

There is concern that land is being offered for development within the 400m buffer around Ashdown Forest. What is the position of the candidates on this?

Question 3. Nick Atwell

Is the priority concern for Ashdown Forest and the candidates landscape recovery and species conservation?

Question 4. Lorna Dawson Collins

How can the right balance be established between creating understanding and valuing of the Forest through exposure to it, and the disturbance and damage done by these visits?

Question 5. Flora Pethybridge

How do the candidates respond to the suggestion that land owned by one of them within the 400m planning exclusion zone for new residential properties around Ashdown Forest has been offered for development?

7. Presentation (during vote count)

While votes were cast and the ballots counted, Mr James Adler, CEO, gave a presentation about the history, ecology and management of Ashdown Forest.

8. Declaration of the successful candidate

Mr Neil Goldie-Scot	34 Votes
Ms Rachel Millward	32 Votes

Mr Goldie-Scot was duly elected to stand as a Commoner Conservator for a period of five years. Mr Goldie-Scot addressed the Commoners and thanked them for their support.

9. Overview of the Forest Finances – Chris de Mestre, Chair Finance and Regulatory Committee

The Chair for the Finance Committee, Mr de Mestre, gave a presentation on the finances of Ashdown Forest. For the 2021/22 period he drew attention to the income split between core Forest income and the Countryside Stewardship contract.

10. Annual Commoners Rate (Retrospective 2022/2023) and future review of rate

Mr de Mestre advised that the Forest Rates would increase by 5% for the next period.

11. Conservator updates

There were no individual updates as the CEO had covered much of the ongoing and future work of the Forest in his presentation.

12. Questions and any other business

Dr Atkins told the meeting that this was, in his view, the best Commoners' meeting he had attended and called for thanks to the organisers and for a round of applause.

Ms McAll thanked Colin Smith for his contributions to Ashdown Forest.

13. Agreement to hold the next Annual Meeting: Friday, 03 March 2023

The Chair proposed that the next meeting be held on Friday 3rd March 2023. There being no objection the proposal was accepted.

There being no further business, the meeting was closed.