



**Minutes of the Board Meeting of the Board of Conservators
Monday 21 November 2022 at 14.00
Broadstone Warren Scout Camp, Lewes Road, Forest Row, RH18**

Present: Ms S McAll (Chair), Mrs R St Pierre (Vice Chair), Mr C de Mestre, Mrs S Tidy, Mr R Stogdon, Cllr P Pragnell, Mr A Reid, Ms F Thomas, Mrs L Maudsley, Mrs E Riminton-Drury, Cllr J Howell, Mr N Goldie-Scot and Mr N Mawdsley

In attendance: Mr J Adler (CEO), Mr C Ball (Finance Officer) and Mrs K Dirs (Business Manager)

Minutes were taken by the Business Manager

Members of the public present: None

	Item	Action
	The Chair welcomed members and spoke of the recent sad passing of Michael Cooper who had served on the Board for over two decades. The Board expressed their condolences and gave thanks for Mr Cooper's great contribution to the Forest.	
38/22	Apologies Cllr Newton, Cllr Lunn and Mr Squire	
39/22	Declarations of any interest by Members of a Personal or Prejudicial Nature None	
40/22	To review the Board action log 1. Creation of a Youth Board The CEO explained a meeting was planned on 05 December with London Youth in Hindleap Warren, with a view to applying for a grant to develop the creation of an initial youth programme.	
41/22	To approve the minutes of the Board meeting of 27 June 2022 and matters arising The minutes had been circulated and assessed by the Board for accuracy The minutes were duly received and were approved in accordance with Standing Order 2.6	
42/22	CEO Update The CEO gave an update on key points of the last quarter. 1. Parking payments. Payments had been launched that day and although understandably there was some opposition, initial sales of annual passes had been positive. This included concessionary passes. Some teething issues with the payment platform had been identified which were being addressed by Horizon. 2. Fire. The CEO reported that the Forest had been lucky to avoid a major fire event during the drought of the summer and that many other heathland sites had been less fortunate. A meeting was held with East Sussex Fire and Rescue Service to consider reviewing the site's fire plan. The team will be identifying whether extra fire breaks are required in the coming months. 3. Management Plan. The production of the Management Plan had taken longer than anticipated but now includes comprehensive GIS mapping data. The plan is currently being refined before final review. Board members have been invited to comment on the draft plan during November. Accompanying the plan is a spreadsheet which details the work required within the individual parcels across the Forest to deliver the habitat visions within the plan.	

4. Attack on Nature. There has been considerable media coverage on recent government announcements about the environment. These include Fracking, The Retained EU Law (Revocation and Reform) Bill, and Environmental Land Management (ELM). The Retained EU Law Bill has the potential to revoke and remove a range of environmental protections which may include elements in the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) and the Conservation (Natural Habitats, & c.) Regulations 2010 (as amended). Ashdown Forest holds internationally important populations of qualifying species and habitats and there is concern that these vital protections may be at risk. The Conservators will intervene in national policy debates when they have the potential to impact on the Forest. Land managers around the country are waiting on an update from Defra on the ELM programme. This will be the successor to Countryside Stewardship. More information is likely to be presented in January or February.
5. Winnie-the-Pooh. A meeting was held to bring key stakeholders and organisations together to consider the creation of a global celebration of coordinated activity with the key themes of biodiversity, play and the power of the natural world for the Winnie-the-Pooh centenary in 2026. As the home of Winnie-the-Pooh, Ashdown Forest holds a pivotal part in drawing together the organisations who have crafted and developed the stories.
6. Bird nesting has been at high levels in 2022 with a large count of Nightjars and other species increasingly well surveyed.
7. The SAMMS Lead Warden is starting on 05 December.

The Chair thanked the CEO for his update.

43/22 To receive the minutes of the Programme Committee meeting of 03 October 2022

The minutes had been circulated and assessed by the Board for accuracy

The minutes were duly received and were approved in accordance with Standing Order 2.6

44/22 To receive the minutes of the Finance and Regulatory Committee meeting of 31 October 2022

The minutes had been circulated and assessed by the Board for accuracy

The Committee Chair summarised the main points of the budget and highlighted some of the challenges and risks faced in the coming year. He advised the Board that the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) is based on projected income from car park payments as outlined in the Business Case.

44.01/22 To approve the budget 2023/2024

The budget was proposed by Mrs Tidy and seconded by Mr de Mestre and the adoption of the budget was carried unanimously.

44.02/22 To agree the Forest Rate 2023/2024

The Business Manager explained the proposed increase in the Forest Rate using the formula adopted by the Board in 2017 of CPI +1% or 5%, whichever is greater. The CPI for September 2022 is 8.8 (+1%) so 9.8% is greater. **The Forest Rate was proposed by Mr Goldie-Scot and seconded by Cllr Pragnell and the Board approved the increase of 9.8% unanimously.**

42.03/22 To agree fees and charges for 2023/2024

The Business Manager recommended the proposed increase to fees and charges of 5% which was in line with the Consumer Price Index for Recreation and Culture for September 2023 at 5.3.

The Fees & Charges for 2023/2024 were proposed by Ms Ffion Thomas and seconded by Ms Maudslay.

42.04/22 To note the proposal to store fete equipment on Fairwarp Village Green

	<p>The Business Manager recommended the proposal supported by the Finance and Regulatory Committee for the Fairwarp Fete and Village Hall Committee to temporarily place a shipping container within the woodland on the village green. The Business Manager explained the proposal was similar to that at Fords Green, although Fairwarp Green was a SSSI, so Natural England consent would be needed prior to engagement with other agencies. The proposal was unanimously carried by the Board.</p> <p>42.05/22 Pension Provision – Verbal update The CEO explained ESCC were due to give an indication of the cost to CoAF to exit the Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS) for new entrants. Information is expected in the coming weeks. ACTION: JA</p>	JA
45/22	To receive the Risk Register	
	<p>The CEO presented a revised risk framework explaining a more robust approach was needed to manage and mitigate emerging, residual and inherent risks. The new framework was welcomed subject to minor adjustment. The Board requested a meeting be organised to review the framework prior to implementation, after which the register would sit with the Finance and Regulatory Committee. ACTION: KD</p>	KD
46/22	To appoint an Internal Auditor	
	<p>The Finance Officer proposed Richard Place Dobson (RPD) be appointed to undertake the internal Audit for 22/23. As RPD have undertaken the audit for several years, it was proposed the Finance Officer will seek alternative quotes to ensure effective corporate governance. PKF Littlejohn undertake the External Audit. ACTION: CB</p>	CB
34/22	The Ashdown Forest Foundation (TAFF) – Verbal update (Standing Item)	
	<p>The Vice Chair highlighted the recent work of the charity and the success of the Four Seasons event recently held at the Ashdown Park Hotel, which had sold out. The evening was a tremendous success and generated in the region of £5k. The Icon Strings performed Vivaldi’s Four Seasons whilst Craig Payne and James Adler curated images from Mr Payne’s book. Thanks were given to Katie Derham who hosted the evening free of charge. 50% of all profits from the book will go to the charity.</p> <p>The Vice Chair reported that initial discussions were underway for a programme of events to commemorate the Winnie-the-Pooh centenary in 2026 and TAFF were a key stakeholder in these discussions.</p> <p>The charity has been nominated as the official charity partner for the Ashdown Park Hotel.</p> <p><i>*Post Meeting amendment requested by Mr Mawdsley: There was a discussion on the interaction between the Board of Conservators and The Ashdown Forest Foundation.</i></p>	
37/22	Any urgent Item of which the Clerk has noticed in order to pass to the elected Chair	
	<p>1) White House Barn The CEO explained there is an agreement in place between the Conservators and Batcheller Monkhouse to complete, negotiate and agree the main principles on the Heads of Terms for the Osbornes, and, subject to the nature of occupation, such agreement would fall under the provisions of the Agricultural Tenancies Act 1995. ACTION: JA</p>	JA
	There being no further business, the meeting closed at 15:15.	

Chair _____

13 March 2023

Clerk _____