

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE BOARD OF CONSERVATORS OF ASHDOWN FOREST
HELD AT THE ASHDOWN FOREST CENTRE, WYCH CROSS, FOREST ROW ON
29th NOVEMBER 1993

Present: Mr. L.J. Gillham (In the Chair), Mr. D.C. Cumming,
Mrs S.F. Whitley, Mrs E.M. Gabriel, Mrs S. Stokes,
Air Marshal Sir Frederick Sowrey, Messrs. D.H.O. Allen, J.M. Dunn,
D.L. Hall, O.E.B. Hughes, R.I.F. Parsons, A.N. White

The Chairman welcomed members of the public present at the meeting.

1. Apologies for absence

Apologies had been received from Mr. D. Bellotti, Mr. L. Hardy,
Mr. G. Griffiths and Mr. D. Tutt.

2. To approve the Minutes of the Meeting held on 4th October 1993

The Minutes, which had been circulated, were approved and signed by the
Chairman as a correct and accurate record subject to the following amendment:-

Page 3, Paragraph 8 - 'the Conservators should have a firmer policy' should
read 'the Conservators should be firm on policy and flexible on application'

3. Matters arising

The Chairman said that most of the matters arising from the Minutes would be
covered by the following presentation of the Committee Minutes.

The Chairman informed the Board that since the last meeting the Nutley Pumping
Station had suffered a pump failure. The National River Authority had visited
the site and an officer from Wealden District Council was investigating the
ensuing stream pollution.

The Superintendent informed the Board that a reply had been received from the
Countryside Commission as a result of the Conservators' application for grant
aid for eight Interpretive Boards. The proposal was to erect the boards
in the major car parks on the Forest. The Countryside Commission confirmed
that they supported the Conservators' proposal and suggested consulting the
Commission's advisory service - The Centre for Environmental Interpretation
(CEI). Sarah Barlow, Senior Countryside Officer had prepared a brief for the
CEI and this had been agreed and forwarded. The Superintendent commented that
it was prudent to accept the Countryside Commission's suggestion.

4. To receive the Minutes of the Conservation Committee Meeting held on
11th October 1993

The Minutes, which had been circulated, were presented by Mrs Whitley.

The Board agreed the Committee's recommendation to sell an area of mature
birch to Kent Woodware for turnery poles.

The Board agreed the Committee's recommendation to apply for a Woodland
Management Grant from the Forestry Authority for four areas of woodland on the
Forest.

The Chairman informed the Board that he had been invited to an Extraordinary
Meeting of Maresfield Parish Council on Wednesday, 24th November to discuss

further the Conservators' proposals to re-introduce grazing on the Forest. He said the result had been an amicable and productive meeting. The Council's main concerns were:

- 1) whether grazing the heathland would achieve the desired effect - (despite the success of the grazing experiment at Millbrook)
- 2) stocking the grazing area - (seven graziers had agreed in principle to put stock into the area)
- 3) complications arising unless all the graziers agree to manage their stock in the same way - (it was intended to set up a Grazier's Committee)

The Chairman said that although Maresfield Parish Council remained sceptical, they had agreed not to oppose the Conservators' application to the Secretary of State for the Environment.

The Superintendent said he had a meeting with a representative from the Open Spaces Society and agreement had been verbally reached that the fence lines be moved to the roadsides for both phases, leaving the properties at Fairwarp within the fence lines. A letter of confirmation was awaited from the Open Spaces Society regarding the position of the fence lines relative to the car parks on the B2026.

Superintendent's Note: The Open Spaces Society wish to see the fence line along the roadside with cattle grids into the car parks. Those visitors not wishing to go into the grazing area could use the car parks opposite.

The Chairman said subject to the Board's approval, the next stage involved a press release in the local papers. English Nature had agreed to provide information leaflets for local distribution. The time scale was subject to agreement from the necessary bodies, but with a view to advertising possibly at the end of February 1994; the advertisement has to appear for three consecutive weeks. The plans would be available for examination at Wealden District Council. The Chairman stressed that the minor roads across the Forest would only be fenced if the County Council was unable to instigate traffic calming measures.

The Chairman then asked the Board for a show of hands for all those in favour of applying to the Secretary of State for consent to erect fences on Ashdown Forest to enable the Conservators to re-introduce safe grazing on 1,360 acres.

The Board unanimously agreed.

Sir Frederick Sowrey suggested that in the application a number of points should be stressed. For example referring back to the LUC Report where Crows Nest was given as having a high consistency of heather - perhaps the Conservators should consider grazing this area at a later date. In the Summary- it should be stressed that grazing was part of a triumvirate of burning, cutting and grazing.

The Chairman confirmed that grazing was only part of the management of the Forest's open heathland.

Mrs Whitley moved the adoption of the Minutes. This was agreed.

5. To receive the Minutes of the Roads, Planning & Amenities Committee Meeting held on 25th October 1993

The Minutes, which had been circulated, were presented by Mrs Gabriel.

The Board agreed the Committee's recommendation to agree to a request from The

Highgate Resident's Association to clear an area on the Forest to hold an annual bonfire, subject to a suitable agreement being drawn up by the Superintendent.

The Board agreed the draft response to the Wealden Local Plan.

Mrs Gabriel informed the Board that Planning Application WD/93/2322 involving a large stable complex in a field adjacent to the Forest on land at Harts Farm, Colemans Hatch had been refused. Planning Application WD/93/2441 involving a two storey, eight car garage at Pilgrims Cottage, Mardens Hill had not yet come before the Committee.

The Board agreed to the Committee's recommendation that the British Horse Society Endurance Riding Group move their ride from October to August in 1994. This year's event had been cancelled due to wet weather prior to the event making the Forest vulnerable to damage. The agreement to the change of date for next year was subject to the position being reviewed after the event.

The Board agreed to the Committee's recommendation that the Crowborough Rotary Club hold a mini marathon in the Greenwood Gate area on 23rd April 1994 involving 250 child competitors.

Mr. White commented that there was a 'To be Let' sign at Wych Cross Garage. Mrs Gabriel said that permission had been granted by Wealden District Council for alterations to the existing buildings only.

The Chairman asked Mr. Hall for a report on the County Council Joint Environment and Highways and Transportation Committee Meeting held on 17th November to discuss the Transport and Environment Strategy for the High Weald.

Mr. Hall said that the committees had agreed to bring forward traffic calming proposals for Ashdown Forest roads in the forthcoming year. The following options were discussed:-

- a) A dual carriageway between the County boundary and Little Horsted.
- b) A single carriageway from the County boundary to Uckfield By Pass.
- c) Leaving the A22 as it is.
- d) Major traffic restraint on the A22 and Ashdown Forest.

It was intended to invite interested bodies to a forum to discuss the options. Mr. Hall suggested that if all sides involved were to come together, it would be useful for the Conservators to contribute.

The Chairman enquired if a date had been set. Mrs Stokes replied that neither a date or membership had been agreed.

Mrs Stokes reported that correspondence between the previous County Engineer and the Conservators had not yet come to light.

The Board discussed traffic calming measures for the Forest roads at length.

The Chairman thanked the County Council members of the Joint Environment and Highways and Transportation Committee for their support.

Mrs Gariel moved the adoption of the Minutes. This was agreed.

6. To receive the Minutes of the Finance & General Purposes Committee Meeting held on 8th November 1993

The Minutes, which had been circulated, were presented by Mr. Allen.

The Board agreed the Committee's recommendation to accept the tender from P.W.W. Ice Cream Supplies Limited for a licence to position a total of six vans at any one time on the Forest. The licence would cover the years 1994/95/96.

The Board agreed the Committee's recommendation to increase the Forest Rate for 1994/95 by the R.P.I. as at 1st. November 1993 (1.4%) plus 1% as agreed by the Commoners at their Annual General Meeting in 1992.

Mrs Gabriel queried the Conservation Budget figure in the Revised Estimates for 1993/94 and the Estimates for 1994/95.

The Superintendent explained that at the last audit the auditors had asked for the Countryside Commission Stewardship Scheme and Ashdown Forest Trust grants to be included within the accounts, whereas previously these had been dealt with in a Recoverable & Contra Account.

Mr. Allen explained that the Estimate figures may change due to the recruitment of a new Clerk/Superintendent.

Mr. Allen moved the adoption of the Minutes. This was agreed.

7. Superintendent to report on Sundry Matters

The Superintendent had no further matters on which to report.

8. Any other business

Mrs Gabriel suggested approaching the County Council again with regard to installing grasscrete strips on Forest roads, particularly in Priory Road.

The Superintendent explained that as the road edges became eroded, they were filled in with tarmac by the County Council, thus the roads were gradually widening. A very successful experiment had been carried out using grasscrete by Box Car Park on the Stonehill Road. Three strips had been used, but one would suffice.

Mr. Hughes suggested that Forest Row Parish Council, through Mr. Hall, could ask for this work to be carried out.

Mrs Gabriel agreed to try this course of action, but Mr. Hall considered that road edging would be part of the traffic calming measures and the Conservators' request would not be considered in isolation.

THE BOARD THEN WENT INTO COMMITTEE

See Confidential Minute No.77

THE BOARD THEN CAME OUT OF COMMITTEE

There being no further business the meeting closed

Chairman