

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE BOARD OF CONSERVATORS OF ASHDOWN FOREST HELD AT THE ASHDOWN FOREST CENTRE, WYCH CROSS, FOREST ROW ON 1 APRIL 1996.

Present: Mr D C Cumming (In the Chair), Mrs S Barr,
Mrs S Stokes, Mrs P Wright,
Air Marshal Sir Frederick Sowrey,
Messrs D H O Allen, M Fletcher, L J Gillham,
D L Hall, L Hamilton, R I F Parsons, C W Riley,
A N White.

The Clerk opened the meeting by welcoming Mrs Tebbutt, the only member of the public present.

ITEM 1 Apologies for absence

1.1 Apologies for absence had been received from Mr O E B Hughes, Mr J Heasman and Mrs S Whitley.

ITEM 2 To elect a Chairman and Vice Chairman

2.1.1 The Clerk asked for nominations for Chairman. Sir Frederick Sowrey proposed Mr David Cumming. Mrs Pat Wright seconded the proposal. There being no other nominations, Mr Cumming was elected unanimously as Chairman.

2.1.2 Mr Cumming offered the Board's thanks and appreciation to Mr Gillham for his skilful handling of the Board's affairs during his Chairmanship.

2.2.1 The Chairman asked for nominations for Vice-Chairman. Mr D H O Allen was proposed by Sir Frederick Sowrey and seconded by Mrs Susan Stokes. There being no other nominations, Mr Allen was elected unanimously.

ITEM 3 To approve the Minutes of the Meeting held on 27 November 1995

3.1 The Minutes of the last Meeting, which had been circulated, were approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct and accurate record.

ITEM 4 Matters arising

4.1 New Age Travellers

4.1.1 The Clerk summarised events concerning the New Age Traveller who had camped on St John's Playing Field. Following the written warnings and with the support of the RSPCA and the local Police, the Clerk, Rangers and tractor driver had met with the individual with a view to removing him and his possessions from Forest land. However, a decision to allow him a further 24 hours to mend his cart was taken as the spare part and tools were to hand. The Traveller left the next morning to live in Phie

Forest; the two ponies were seen grazing on the Forest for a few weeks and he then went to Tunbridge Wells.

4.1.2 On 29 March 1996 he and four other travellers set up camp in Ellison's Pond Car Park. They were visited by the Ranger and Police and moved on the next morning.

4.2 Work being carried out by Pipeways

4.2.1 Mr White asked the Clerk if he was satisfied with the reinstatement of the Forest surface after Pipeways had finished laying the new waterpipes. The Clerk replied that he was reasonably confident that the work would be carried out satisfactorily but he was monitoring the situation closely.

4.2.2 Mr Hall informed the Board that the layout of the temporary adjusted junction made between the A22 and the A275 would remain as a permanent junction. Some further work may need to be done to ease congestion caused by traffic turning right from the A22 into the A275.

ITEM 5 To receive the Minutes of the Conservation Committee Meeting held on 12 February 1996

5.1 In the absence of Mrs Whitley, the Chairman presented the Minutes.

5.2 New Age Travellers and their dogs

5.2.1 Mrs Wright asked if dogs kept in Phie Forest Gardens had been worrying sheep. The Clerk replied that a few general complaints had been received about dogs but the RSPCA and the Wealden Dog Warden had not reported any problems linked to sheep worrying.

5.2.2 Sir Frederick Sowrey informed the Board that the major cases of sheep worrying occurred on farm land south east of the Forest. The Police have no proof as to where the dogs come from but the situation was of sufficient seriousness to warrant the NFU offering a reward of £1000.00 for information which would lead to a successful prosecution.

5.3 The Deer Initiative

5.3.1 In response to a question from Mr Hall about the aims of the Deer Initiative, the Clerk explained that it was set up to evolve some sustained management of deer in South East England. Having addressed one of their meetings in December 1995, he felt that the aims and motivation were not clear; he also felt the Deer Initiative had no authority and no powers. He confirmed that deer on Ashdown Forest do not, as yet, present a problem to the Forest.

5.3.2 Mrs Stokes added that she had some experience of the deer problem from her work as a member of the East Sussex Woodland Forum where damage to young trees in plantations by deer

a significant cause for concern.

4 Stewardship Schemes Mr Allen asked for clarification of the criteria for Stewardship Schemes. The Clerk explained that sites had been chosen where a 10 year programme of contractual work would conserve the heathland. The southern part of the Forest had not been included as the Countryside Commission wanted to encourage grazing there.

5.5 Gorse cutting Mr White commented that he felt the impact of the gorse cutting between Smugglers and Waterholes car park was reduced as the cuttings had not been removed. The Clerk explained that the contractor had not met the contract conditions which stated that the gorse should be burnt as it was cut. The cuttings were now to be left until autumn due to the dry conditions.

5.6 There being no other questions, Mr Cumming moved the adoption of the Minutes. This was agreed.

ITEM 6 To receive the Minutes of an Extraordinary Meeting of the Roads, Planning & Amenities Committee held on 17 January 1996 and of the Committee Meeting held on 26 February 1996

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

6.2 Width of Forest tracks

6.2.1 Mr Parsons summarized the situation with regards to the satisfactory negotiations with the Fire Brigade and officers of Wealden District Council over the width of Forest tracks. The Board accepted the Committee's recommendation that the wording of the Second Schedule of the Licence should be altered so that it read "...To make up, metal and maintain a roadway across Ashdown Forest of materials approved by the Conservators not being of concrete and no more than three metres wide ...". The Board also agreed the Committee's recommendation that:

- Only natural materials should be used for track widening.
- Additional Licence preparation fees (currently £50 plus VAT) should be charged where Licences are changed.
- In response to the District Council, the Superintendent should draw attention to the Board's understanding on 'retrospective action'.

6.2.2 Mr Riley asked if the Conservators were obliged to inform all Licensees of the new width requirements. The Chairman explained that it was only necessary to inform Licensees when the Planning Authority was involved. The Clerk said that he had asked the District Planning Authority to advise all applicants living on the Forest as part of the planning process.

6.2.3 Mr Allen commented that he felt the compromise reached was satisfactory.

6.3 Manorial Waste

6.3.1 The Clerk informed the Board that he had recently met with Mrs Rosemary Bridges of County Property Services Department and reviewed in detail each part of Manorial Waste and explained the Board's request to have only those parts which give immediate access on to the Forest. A decision is awaited on how Manorial Waste will be managed; transfer of ownership to the Ashdown Forest Trust or to remain the property of ESCC but managed by the Conservators being the two options.

6.3.2 Sir Frederick Sowrey asked, in view of the Board's policy to acquire all land within the Medieval Pale, if all the Manorial Waste could be adopted. Mr Gillham reminded the Board that it had previously decided not to ask for Manorial Waste in built up areas as there was no benefit to the Forest.

6.4 Review of the flying of powered model aircraft on the Forest
The Clerk was unable to report any progress as his meeting with the Society's Committee was still to come.

6.5 Extra access for emergency vehicles to Ashdown Place The Clerk had written to Mr Crook to inform him of the Committee's decision not to allow the cut back of shrubs and trees on the disused north eastern access to Ashdown Place. However, Mr Crook had ignored the letter and had the work carried out. The Board directed that a barrier should be constructed across the track.

6.6 There being no other questions, Mr Parsons moved the adoption of the Minutes. This was agreed.

ITEM 7 To receive the Minutes of the Finance and General Purposes Committee held on 11 March 1996

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

7.2 Composition of Committees Consequent upon the election of a new Chairman and Vice Chairman, the Board agreed the following composition of Committees:

Conservation: Mrs S Barr, Mrs S Stokes, Mrs S Whitley, Messrs L J Gillham, J S Heasman, A N White.
Co-opted: Mr R Craig, Dr A Tait, Ranger C Marrable and one to be nominated by English Nature.

Roads, Planning & Amenities: Mrs S Barr, Messrs L J Gillham, M A Fletcher, D L Hall, O E B Hughes, R I F Parsons, Sir Frederick Sowrey.
Co-opted: Ranger J Linton

Finance and General Purposes: Mrs P Wright, Sir Frederick Sowrey, Messrs O E B Hughes, R I F Parsons, C W Riley, A N White.

7.3 Activity Centre study The Board felt that this had been an interesting and useful exercise and agreed that figures should

information to be gathered for Education so that a full year's information would be gathered.

4 Special Protected Area status

7.4.1 In response to a question from Mr Hall, it was confirmed that there would be no change in the planning restraints and management of the Forest as a result of SPA status.

7.4.2 Mr Parsons felt that some benefit may be forthcoming from the fact that 15% of Phie Forest Gardens was included in the SSSI.

7.4 There being no further questions, Mr Allen moved the adoption of the Minutes. This was agreed.

ITEM 8 Clerk to report on sundry matters

8.1 Fencing

8.1.1 The Clerk informed the Board that the fencing contract for Phase One had gone out to tender. The aim was to have Phase One completed by the end of May and grazing established by the summer. The time lapse of two years before Phase 2 was to allow time for the County Council to instigate robust traffic calming measures.

8.1.2 Mrs Wright explained the County Council time-table and pointed out that plans for new traffic calming measures would need to be submitted in time for the November 1996 meeting of the Highways and Transport Committee. There was only a short time to put pressure on the ESCC.

8.1.3 The Board agreed Mrs Stokes' suggestion that the tight time-frame should be pointed out to the officers of ESCC and letters should be written to the County Planning officer and to the County Engineer.

8.1.4 The Board agreed Mr White's suggestion that Parliamentary pressure should also be applied and a letter should be sent to Sir Geoffrey Johnson Smith, MP.

8.1.5 Mr Hall confirmed the importance of writing to the relevant authorities as ESCC is now required to show that transport programmes have community support when plans are presented to Central Government with requests for funding.

8.1.6 Mrs Barr was reassured that Ramblers' gates would be clearly visible

8.2 The Board approved the Clerk's actions and intentions.

ITEM 9 Any other business

9.1 Commoner's AGM Sir Frederick Sowrey gave a brief resume of

the Commoner's Annual General Meeting and said that in general Commoners went away satisfied by what the Board was doing on their behalf.

9.2 Kings Standing car park Mr Riley informed the Board that he had received a complaint about the entrance to Kings Standing car park. The Clerk explained the problem with the 'Y' junction and that the steps taken with Staff during the last year to remove one entrance had removed the most dangerous feature. It was felt that visibility from the remaining entrance was adequate but that an answer should be obtained from the County Engineer over Highways Department plans for the site.

9.3 ESCC Courier Service Mrs Wright suggested the Ashdown Forest Centre request to be included on ESCC's Courier Service for ESCC and WDC. Although it may take a little longer, significant savings in postage might be made.

9.4 Mr Hamilton announced that this was his last Board Meeting as he was due to complete his tenure as Chairman of the County Council before the next Board Meeting. He expressed his appreciation of the work done by the Board and felt his knowledge of the Forest had been greatly increased. The Chairman thanked Mr Hamilton on behalf of the Board for his support and regular attendance.

9.2 There being no other business, the meeting closed at 3.50pm.

Chairman _____

June 1996

Clerk _____