

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE BOARD OF CONSERVATORS OF ASHDOWN FOREST HELD AT THE ASHDOWN FOREST CENTRE, WYCH CROSS, FOREST ROW ON 19 JUNE 1995.

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

The Chairman opened the meeting by welcoming the members of the public present.

**ITEM 1 Acknowledgement of new members of the Board and Apologies for absence**

1.1 The Chairman acknowledged the Board members who had recently retired. He asked the Clerk to write to Mrs Elizabeth Gabriel and express the Board's gratitude for her support and expertise during her time as a Conservator. He informed the Board that the Clerk had already written to Mr Laurence Hardy who had announced his retirement a few weeks ago. He then welcomed two new members to the Board, Mrs Susan Barr, who was elected by the Commoners to replace Mr Michael Dunn and Mr Marcus Fletcher who was appointed by Wealden District Council to replace Mrs Elizabeth Gabriel.

1.2 The Chairman acknowledged the death of Mr Len Arnold, who had been a Forest Ranger for many years and expressed the Board's regrets.

1.3 There were no Apologies for absence.

**ITEM 2 To approve the Minutes of the Meeting held on 3 April 1995**

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

**ITEM 3 Matters Arising**

3.1 Traffic Calming The Chairman stated that no further information had been received on the Wych Cross traffic light scheme. However, following recent meetings, there was now closer co-operation between the Board and the County Highways Department.

3.2 There was still no news from the Department of Environment with regards to the fencing application.

**ITEM 4 To receive the Minutes of the Conservation Committee held on 1 May 1995**

4.1 The Minutes, which had been circulated, were presented by Mr L J Gillham.

4.2.1 Policy on roadside scrub trees on heathland. In discussion on this item there was broad agreement on the need for a proactive public relations stance on the lines adopted with the

information sheets to Parish Magazines, which had been well received.

4.2.2 Mr Cumming observed that, following the Chairman's briefing of those residents of Chelwood Gate concerned about the clearance on the A275, feedback suggested most were not converted and still felt the clearance did not make a significant contribution to wildlife and was not sympathetic to the environment. He concluded that the Board needed to retain public support.

4.2.3 Mrs Whitley felt there was a need for more thought before significant clearance was undertaken and stressed the need to let people know what work was going to happen and when.

4.2.4 Sir Frederick Sowery reminded those present it was entirely due to the heathland rather than the woodland that the Forest held the environmental designations, such as SSSI and SPA, and if the heathland was not maintained these would be lost.

4.2.5 Mr White was concerned that if followed through the policy on roadside scrub clearance would open up Wrens Warren too much and there was a need to be selective in clearance around Hollies Car Park.

4.2.6 Mrs Stokes added that it would be helpful to have information on heathland conservation included on the Interpretive Panels being considered.

4.2.7 The Clerk reminded the Board that it had signed up to the Countryside Commission Heathland Management Schemes which required the them to carry out specified work in agreed compartments each year and that there was little flexibility to vary what was in effect a contract.

4.2.8 The Chairman of the Board concluded the discussion by saying it must be realised that conserving heathland meant clearing scrub and the proprietorial feel that some had for 'their wood' needed to be overcome by pointing out the value of the heathland and a long term programme of education.

4.2.9 The Board agreed the Committee's recommendation to adopt the following policy:

- In maintaining the 60%/40% balance of heathland/woodland 'buffer' areas should not, as a rule, be left between the heath and the roads.

- Where clearance of existing strips of trees or scrub beside roads will open up the heathland this should be done.

4.3 Orienteering The Clerk stated that he had informed the South Eastern Orienteering Association of the Committee's decision to restrict the proposed March 1996 National event to the St John's area. After discussion with the event organisers, it was agreed that the meeting could take place on 31 December 1995 provided that the maximum number of competitors using the Forest did not exceed 500.

4.4 Weather recording equipment With regards to the weather recording equipment, Sir Frederick Sowery recommended that contact be made with the Meteorological Office to see if it would

be interested in receiving and paying for the information gathered at the Centre.

4.5 Mr Gillham moved the adoption of the Minutes. This was agreed.

**ITEM 5 To receive the Minutes of the Roads, Planning & Amenities Committee held on 22 May 1995**

5.1 The Minutes, which had been circulated, were presented by Mr R I F Parsons.

5.2 The Board agreed the Committee's recommendation that the Royal Ashdown Forest Golf Club's proposals for storage, extension to the practice tees and enlargement of the car parking area, be accepted subject to confirmation from the Club that these proposals represent the totality of their plans.

5.3 The Board agreed the Committee's recommendation not to replace the money box element of vandalised cairns but instead to place a plaque on each to the effect that people wishing to give donations should do so to the Friends of Ashdown Forest.

5.4 The Board agreed the Committee's recommendation that a Summer Riding School permit be issued to the Ashdown Forest Riding Centre on a trial basis subject to their conditions being met.

5.5 Closure of north entrance to Kings Standing Car Park The Board agreed the Committee's recommendation to close the north exit to the car park on the advice of the Highways Department and the Sussex Police Accident Prevention Officer. This would be a temporary measure pending the future realignment of the road junction.

5.6.1 Traffic calming The Clerk stated that he had asked the Highways Department to brief the Board following the analysis of comments obtained after the Traffic Calming Exhibitions. It is proposed that the briefing should take place at the September Board Meeting.

5.6.2 Mr Fletcher asked for clarification of the term "self enforcing". The Chairman listed the possibilities and explained that none was included in the proposals at present. Sir Frederick Sowery stated that the ultimate criteria was the safety of the general public, stock and wild animals and therefore measures must be self enforcing. Mr Allen suggested that when grazing is restarted, notices should be placed at the entrance to the Forest informing motorists.

5.6.3 The Board reiterated their view that the C3 is an ideal road on which to conduct trials of calming measures if the traffic calming scheme is to be both successful and cost-effective. Mrs Whitley suggested that other ESCC Board Members lobby the Highways Department with a view to promoting a trial scheme.

5.6.4 Mr Hall explained that the County Council Highways Committee regard gateways and roundels as initial measures; further measures will depend on their effectiveness.

5.7.1 Manorial Waste In response to a question, the Clerk reported that, to his knowledge, the outstanding Manorial Waste involved nine parcels of land.

5.8 Mr Parsons moved the adoption of the Minutes. This was agreed.

**ITEM 6 To receive the Minutes of the Finance & General Purposes Committee held on 5 June 1995**

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

6.2 The Board agreed the Committee's recommendation for the composition of sub-committees on the current Staff List 3/95. The Clerk drew the Board's attention to the vacancy on the F&GP Committee and confirmed that the person appointed by ESCC to replace Mr Hardy will sit on this Committee.

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

**ITEM 7 The Clerk to report on Sundry Matters**

7.1 Mrs Ann Dunn's thanks were expressed to the Board. A six foot beech tree in memory of her husband, Michael Dunn, had been planted in the grounds of the Information Centre in a position that would allow the tree plenty of room for growth in the future.

7.2.1 Encroachment Photographs were passed round of a substantial bridge, a fence and a gateway which had been constructed on the north west boundary of the Forest.

7.2.2 Following legal advice from the County Secretary's office and a site meeting with the landowner, a written agreement had been obtained from the landowner to abide by conditions set by the Clerk.

7.2.3 In response to a question, the Clerk explained that the bridge was allowed to remain because:

- a. A smaller bridge had been there for many years before.
- b. There had been a prior unwritten agreement many years before over the location of the boundary fence.

The boundary has now been confirmed as the stream.

**ITEM 8 Any other business**

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

Chairman \_\_\_\_\_

September 1995

Clerk \_\_\_\_\_