

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE BOARD OF CONSERVATORS OF ASHDOWN
FOREST HELD AT THE DUDDLESWELL RADIO STATION
ON MONDAY, 24 MARCH 1997

Present: Mr D C Cumming (in the Chair), Mrs S Barr,
Mrs S Stokes, Mrs S Whitley, Mrs P Wright,
Air Marshall Sir Frederick Sowrey,
Messrs D H O Allen, M A Fletcher, L J Gillham,
D Norcross, O E B Hughes, R I F Parsons,
C W Riley, A N White.

The Chairman welcomed the members of the public present.

ITEM 1 Apologies for absence

1.1 Apologies had been received from Mr D L Hall and Mr T
Randell.

**ITEM 2 To approve the Minutes of the Meeting held on 25
November 1996**

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

ITEM 3 Matters Arising

3.1.1 Landfill Tax Mrs Stokes reported that the
environmental trust, which is proposed to be set up with the
revenue obtained from the landfill tax, is not yet in existence.
The Customs and Excise have still to settle complex issues but
new regulations are expected soon. Developments are awaited from
the Department of the Environment.

3.1.2 Fly-tipping The Clerk briefed the Board on the current
situation. 17 incidents of fly-tipping had occurred to date and
there is one prosecution pending. It is estimated that the cost
to the Conservators is approximately £1000 in man hours. One
load had been removed by contractors at a cost of £55.

ITEM 4 Report of the Commoners' AGM

4.1 Mr Allen, who chaired the Commoners' AGM, gave the Board a
brief resume of the meeting. All five Conservators who are
Commoners were present and 126 people attended, a 50% increase
on last year.

4.2 Dr H D V Prendergast was elected to serve four years on the
Board from 1 April 1997.

4.3 Sir Frederick Sowrey spoke on the increase in the Forest
Rate for the next year. He expressed the appreciation of the
Board for the Commoners' support, both financial and practical
to the Forest. The new rates were unanimously approved.

4.4 Mr Cumming, as Chairman of the Board of Conservators,

briefed the Commoners on the current traffic calming and fencing situation. Some concern was expressed over the possible increase in the number of signs around the Forest. Mr Cumming explained that speed limit signs would be restricted to the new Forest gates; repeater signs would be confined to painted road roundels.

4.5 With the help of slides, the Forest Superintendent outlined the various management schemes undertaken by the Conservators. He explained the current plans for grazing, heathland and woodland management and bracken control, and gave a brief explanation of the significance of the international and national environmental designations awarded to the Forest. Finally he described the projects which had been undertaken during the last year: the interpretive panels, the Vachery board walk and the replacement of the Four Counties Dial; and the perennial problems of fire and fly-tipping.

4.6 After the Commoners had had an opportunity to question the Commoner Conservators and the Forest Superintendent, Inspector Robin Smith from East Grinstead Police Station gave an informative talk on the problems of theft from cars parked in Forest Car Parks and possible solutions. He asked for local vigilance, commenting that most criminals came from outside the area.

ITEM 5 To receive the Minutes of the Conservation Committee Meeting held on 3 February 1997

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

5.2 Veteran Trees The Board welcomed the new initiative on Veteran Trees and looked forward to supporting this interesting project.

5.3 Woodlarks Mrs Whitley reported that similar work to encourage Woodlark nesting on heathland is being carried out on Chailey Common.

5.4 Stewardship Schemes The Clerk briefed the Board on the third Stewardship Scheme which had been signed the previous week. This was for 192 acres at Millbrook.

5.5 Grazing The Board concurred with the Clerk's intention to include a letter with the Forest Rate demand asking Commoners to contact him if they were interested in grazing in the extended fenced area.

5.6 Forest Signs The East Sussex County Council were intending to fund high grade signs at the Forest gates so that motorists would be aware of the special nature of the area they were about to enter.

5.7 Mrs Wright asked why not all offers of volunteer help were accepted. The Clerk explained that volunteers required supervision and were limited in the tasks they could be expected

to undertake. He currently had as many as could be safely monitored at present and he agreed to write to any volunteer whose services he was unable to accept at present.

5.8 Sir Frederick Sowrey suggested that when the Management Plan was reviewed next year, the opportunity would arise to identify priorities. This would allow a more efficient use of manpower.

5.9 There being no further questions, Mrs Whitley moved the adoption of the Minutes. This was agreed.

ITEM 6 To receive the Minutes of the Roads, Planning & Amenities Committee Meeting held on 24 February 1997

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

6.2 Police Training Facility at Kingstanding The Board accepted the Committee's recommendation that the Licence to use the sewage treatment plant at Kingstanding should be extended for a period not exceeding five years and that this should be subject to the following caveats:

i The Police should confirm in writing that any option they choose after five years would be within the curtilage of the radio station.

ii That at the end of the licence period the site is to be decommissioned and reinstated as Forest at the user's expense.

iii That all stages of the site refurbishment process should be subject to receiving the necessary clearances from the appropriate authorities, including the Environment Authority.

iv That as much screening as possible is retained around the site.

6.3.1 The general problem of cars parking on the Forest The Board agreed the Committee's recommendation that their policy on cars parking on the Forest should be restated and, where appropriate, Parish Councils should be informed of their policy, namely:

Extract from the BRIEF ON DEVELOPMENT OF THE FOREST AMENITIES OVER THE NEXT 5-10 YEARS (page 24 Section 4 Car Parks) endorsed by the Board at their meeting on 29 July 1991

... The policy over the next ten years should be to:

- 1 maintain the present car parks
- 2 improve the entrances onto public roads
- 3 only increase capacity when considered necessary and then by increasing the size of car parks and not the number.

6.3.2 It was agreed that the subject would be reconsidered at the time of the Management Plan review.

6.4 Pooh Car Park Mr Parsons expressed the thanks of Hartfield Parish Council for the Committee's consideration of their problem with parking and Pooh Bridge. They were grateful for the Committee's recommendations.

6.5 Manorial Waste The Board acknowledged the transfer of 18 parcels of Manorial Waste to the Ashdown Forest Trust and the management of this land to be carried out by the Conservators. Mrs Wright advised the Board that the Trust can expect to be offered other land owned by the East Sussex County Council as the latter identifies land no longer required for road improvement schemes.

6.6 Traffic Calming The Board were in general agreement that the recently introduced speed roundels were being effective amongst the local population, but those living off the Forest were still speeding. Mr Cumming informed the Board that the Highways Department and the Police intend to run a check on traffic calming in three months time. The location of the new Forest gates had been chosen for safety reasons rather than to mark the exact Forest boundary. Those some distance from the start of the Forest had been placed so that drivers had an opportunity to turn off Forest roads if they wished.

6.7 Millennium Review of the Forest The Board agreed the Committee's recommendation to support a written review of achievement of the management of the Forest to mark the Millennium. Mrs Stokes asked Sir Frederick Sowrey if he would consider writing such a review. He agreed to consider the matter.

6.8 Phie Forest Concern was expressed that occupants of Phie Forest were gaining access to the Forest by driving through the fence at the back of Phie Forest. The Clerk was aware of the situation and advised that a possible solution would be to dig a big ditch all round the perimeter with a JCB. The number of reported incidents has fallen recently. Mr White said he believed the Open Spaces Society had reported that ditching on common land was illegal. He undertook to give the article to the Clerk.

6.9.1 Bye Laws Mr Fletcher queried the effective use of the Bye Laws with particular reference to parking on the Forest in the vicinity of the Ashdown Park Hotel. He welcomed the suggestion that wheel clamping might prove a possible deterrent and asked if the Bye Law fines could be reviewed. The Board agreed not to pursue revision of the Bye Laws as legislation enacted since 1974 would reduce their scope, but they felt the current practice of asking the County Secretary to seek an injunction against repeat offenders to be adequate. The Clerk agreed to investigate wheel clamping.

6.9.2 Royal Ashdown Golf Club Mr Fletcher expressed concern

over the Royal Ashdown Golf Club's policy to limit membership. He believed this might be a breach of the Ashdown Forest Act 1974. He asked the Clerk to ascertain the Club's policy by correspondence and the reply to be sent to the County Secretary for his comments.

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

ITEM 7 To receive the Minutes of the Finance & General Purposes Committee Meeting held on 10 March 1997

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

7.2.1 The Board agreed the Committee's recommendation that in future they would clear Board and Committee dates for the year ahead at their November Meeting. The Board approved the list of dates given below for their meetings in 1997/98:

BOARD MEETINGS

1997 24 MARCH, 23 JUNE, 22 SEPTEMBER, 24 NOVEMBER
1998 23 MARCH

CONSERVATION COMMITTEE

1997 3 FEBRUARY, 28 APRIL, 7 JULY, 6 OCTOBER,
1998 26 JANUARY

ROADS, PLANNING & AMENITIES COMMITTEE

1997 24 FEBRUARY, 19 MAY, 28 JULY, 20 OCTOBER
1998 16 FEBRUARY

FINANCE & GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE

1997 10 MARCH, 2 JUNE, 1 SEPTEMBER, 3 NOVEMBER
1998 2 MARCH

7.2.2 The Clerk confirmed that a quorum could be raised from elected Commoners and appointees from Wealden District Council for the meetings to be held after the local elections and before the new County Council had determined on which Committees and outside bodies Councillors would sit.

7.3.1 Grants The Board expressed its appreciation of all the grants it had received during the year, in particular the generosity of the Society of Friends of Ashdown Forest was acknowledged.

7.3.2 The Clerk briefed the Board on the donations given by the Highfield Trust and Berkeley Homes which had been used to purchase a new computer to be used in the office for the computerisation of the Forest accounts. The Board asked that a letter of thanks be sent to the donors.

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

ITEM 8 Clerk to report on sundry matters

8.1 The Clerk informed the Board that five new information panels had been placed in the Anderida Barn. He gave a brief description of each one.

8.2 The Clerk advised the Board that a Ranger's van had needed expensive repairs following the recovery of an elderly lady's car stranded in the Newbridge splash.

8.3 The Clerk informed the Board that the new tractor which had been purchased by the Friends would be delivered after Easter.

ITEM 9 Any Other Business

9.1 Mr Norcross sought the Board's opinion on Pooh Bridge and its impact on visitors. He acknowledged that it was not part of the Board's remit to care for the land surrounding the Bridge. Mrs Stokes said that ESCC Environment Committee were considering all possibilities. Sir Frederick Sowrey advised that the "Walks" leaflets were produced so that visitors would be encouraged to explore other areas of the Forest.

9.2 The Board expressed its appreciation for the informative guided tour of the Police facilities at Kingstanding and it was agreed that the Police should be contacted again for an article for the Ashdown Forest News.

9.3 It was anticipated that when the speed limit signs were placed at the new Forest gates, there would need to be a rationalization of derestriction signs and conflicting speed limit signs.

9.4 Mr White informed the Board that the Endurance Ride, planned for 8 August 1997, had had to be cancelled.

9.5 Mrs Barr expressed her concern over the condition of the ride behind Fairwarp Church. The Clerk confirmed that the owner of Woodcock Cottage was responsible for the repairs.

9.6 There being no other business, the public withdrew before the start of the Confidential session at 4.30pm.

Chairman _____

23 June 1997

Clerk _____

CONFIDENTIAL MINUTE NO 87 - MEETING OF MONDAY 24 MARCH 1997

ITEM 1 To approve Confidential Minute No 86 from the Meeting on 25 November 1996

1.1 The Minutes, which had been circulated, were presented by the Chirman. The Minutes were then approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct and accurate record.

ITEM 2 Any Other Business

2.1 There being no other business, the Chairman thanked the members of the Board for their attendance and closed the meeting at 4.35pm.

Chairman _____ 23 June 1997

Clerk _____