

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE BOARD OF CONSERVATORS OF ASHDOWN FOREST HELD AT THE ASHDOWN FOREST CENTRE, WYCH CROSS, FOREST ROW ON 28 NOVEMBER 1994.

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

The Chairman opened the meeting by welcoming Mrs Rosalind Marriott as the new Personal Assistant to the Forest Superintendent. He also welcomed members of the general public present.

ITEM 1 Apologies for absence

Apologies had been received from Mr D L Hall and Mr L C Hardy.

ITEM 2 To approve the Minutes of the Meeting held on 19 September 1994

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

2.2 There being no confidential items on the Agenda, Confidential Minute No 80, which had been circulated, was approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct and accurate record.

ITEM 3 Matters arising

3.1 Item 8, paragraph 3 - Recycling Point in St John's Car Park. Mr Parsons reported that Wealden District Council had agreed to find an alternative site for the recycling point.

ITEM 4 To receive the Minutes of the Conservation Committee Meeting held on 10th October 1994

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

4.2 Mrs Gabriel commented on the good work carried out by the BTCV on the pond at Priory Road which is much improved.

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

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ITEM 5 To receive the Minutes of the Roads, Planning and Amenities Committee Meeting held on 24 October 1994

5.1 The Minutes, which had been circulated, were presented by Mrs E M Gabriel. She pointed out at Item 3 - Withyham Bridleway, the Board were being asked to approve the reinstatement as outlined and also the closure of the existing path; and at Item 6 - Ashdown Forest Riding Centre, that this should be reviewed after one year.

5.2.1 Traffic Calming - The Chairman, having attended the Highways, Transport and Environment Forum on 25 October, briefed the Board that his impression was the County Council favoured a limited approach to traffic calming measures, preferring gateways and a 40 mph speed-limit. The effect of these measures would be monitored to see if the minimum was adequate. He had pressed for the introduction of physical methods such as road narrowing and would be happy to see this included in some form of experiment on the Stonehill Road. The initial reaction from the officers present at the Forum was that road narrowing would not work and the Chairman felt that they were in favour of traffic calming measures such as concrete bollards and pinch points. The Chairman expressed his opinion that minimal measures would not be enough.

5.2.2 In discussion, it was suggested that the Board might consider initiating the construction of bunds although the legal position was far from clear. The white-lining of road-sides was considered but it was generally felt that this measure would not have the desired effect.

5.2.3 The Forest Superintendent stated that after the Forum meeting he had written to the Highways Department confirming the Board's views and that he will be attending the next Forum meeting on 7 December 1994. The Chairman concluded by reiterating the need to keep up the pressure.

5.3 The Board approved Committee's recommendation to reinstate the RUPP 11a off School Lane at St John's Bridleway and the subsequent closure of the existing path.

5.4 The Board agreed the following events in 1995:

12 August 1995 - The British Horse Society Endurance Ride
17 September 1995 - The Action Research Charity Ride

5.5 Mrs Gabriel moved the adoption of the Minutes. This was agreed.

ITEM 6 To Receive the Minutes of the Finances and General Purposes Committee Meeting held on 7 November 1994

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

6.2 The Board agreed the Committee's recommendation to increase the Forest Rate for 1995/96 by the RPI as at 1 November 1994 (2.2%) plus 1%, in line with their policy.

6.3 In discussion of the Estimates, Mr Allen commented on the need to reflect the true cost of running the Forest and that a possible change in method of accounting was required although moves in this direction should be carefully thought through. It was pointed out by the Chairman that increases in the Estimates for Forest Maintenance reflected the continuing costs of heathland management. The Board agreed the Revised Estimates for 1994/95 and the Estimates for 1995/96

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

ITEM 7 To consider two proposals from the Highways Department for improving safety at Wych Cross crossroads

7.1 Having previously circulated plans for the two proposals - a roundabout or traffic lights, the Clerk briefed the Board on both. He emphasised that the plan for traffic lights envisaged only a two phase system, allowing for forward flow only; traffic wishing to turn right against this flow would get no filter.

7.2 In discussion, concern was expressed over the A22/A275 junction and the problem of traffic backing up from traffic lights. The slip road from the A22 to the C2 was seen as an encouragement to use the C2, and was contrary to policy already agreed for traffic calming. The Clerk was asked to remind the Highways Department that whichever proposal was chosen the crossroads was well used, particularly in summer, as a pedestrian and horse crossing point.

7.3 The Board voted on three options:

- i) in favour of the roundabout;
- ii) in favour of traffic lights;
- iii) in favour of traffic lights without a slip-road.

The majority of the Board were in favour of traffic lights. The majority of the Board were in favour of no slip-road.

7.4 The Clerk undertook to report the Board's views to the Highways Department.

ITEM 8 The Clerk to report on Sundry Matters

8.1 Bracken scrapes

The Clerk reported that bracken scrapes had been successfully carried out over the last few years. Recently, one and a half acres had been cleared by Wakehurst with the agreement of English Nature, next to the A275 opposite Chelwood Gate car park. Heather seed will be spread in the near future.

8.2 Chestnut Coppice

The Clerk reported that Turners have completed clearing the degenerate compartment of chestnut coppice which will be replanted during December.

8.3 Christmas Trees

Christmas Trees will be cut by the Conservation Group on 4 December 1994 and will be available for sale from 6 December 1994.

8.4 Christmas Opening Hours

The Clerk reported that the Office will be closed from 24 December 1994 until 3 January 1995. The Information Barn will be open at weekends and bank holidays, but closed Christmas Day and Boxing Day.

8.5 Riding States

The Clerk reported that in order to preserve the fabric of the Forest, the "Riding State" had been dropped to "3" for ten days in November.

8.6 Erosion

The Clerk reported that severe erosion at Old Lodge Bottom had necessitated removal of the Terram on the ride down to the Garden of Eden. A pipe has been laid underneath the ride further north to throw off some of the water.

ITEM 9 Any Other Business

9.1 Orienteering Events

9.1.1 The Clerk briefed the Board on two requests for large scale orienteering events to take place on the Forest; one in February 1995 and one in March 1996.

9.1.2 The Board considered all aspects of the two requests and felt that as the numbers involved might exceed a thousand competitors each, neither was in the best interests of the Forest and they withheld their agreement. After further discussion, the Board agreed their policy on future orienteering events should be:

- i) a maximum of 500 competitors
- ii) being held during the autumn to minimise damage to the Forest plants and wildlife

9.1.3 The Board will look more favourably at events where the majority of the event is held on private land and all parking and the main concentrations are kept off the Forest.

9.1.4 Notwithstanding the above, the Board agreed that the Forest Superintendent should maintain his veto at all times.

9.2 Pippingford Lay-by

9.2.1 The Clerk reported that a trader had been given permission by the Highways Department to operate in the above lay-by.

9.2.2 The Board were concerned that a precedent should not be set and it was agreed that the Clerk should pursue the possibility of leasing the lay-by from the County Council on the same basis as for the Millbrook Car Parks..

9.2.3 The Board agreed they might be prepared to consider the Pippingford Lay-by as part of an exchange of land which would be necessary if the Wych Cross road safety improvements go ahead.

9.3 Royal Ashdown Golf Club

The Clerk reported that he had received a request to place a bench by the 15th Tee in memory of one of the long standing Cantalupe members. The Board confirmed their policy of no more benches on the Forest and turned down the request.

9.4 Superintendent's Car

The Superintendent briefed the Board that his existing car was purchased in 1986 and needs replacing. He had looked at two options, a new Subaru Estate at £13650, or a second hand 1991 model at £8000. The Subaru had a good reputation for reliability and the Superintendent stated that he would be happy to settle for the second hand car and run it for about four years. The saving would allow more money for a better replacement Estate Worker's vehicle due before April. The Board agreed the purchase of the second hand Subaru.

There being no further business, the Meeting closed at 4.25 pm.

Chairman _____

April 1995