

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE BOARD OF CONSERVATORS OF ASHDOWN FOREST HELD AT THE ASHDOWN FOREST CENTRE, WYCH CROSS, FOREST ROW ON 27 NOVEMBER 1995.

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

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

ITEM 1 Apologies for Absence

1.1 Apologies for absence were received from Mrs S Barr.

1.2 The Chairman informed the Board that Mr M Fletcher had expressed his concern that his apology for absence and the explanation that his car had broken down en route to the previous Board Meeting had not been brought to the Board's attention, despite messages being left at the office.

ITEM 2 To approve the Minutes of the Meeting held on 18 September 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 Proposals for Ashdown Forest

3.1.1 The Clerk informed the Board that he had attended the meeting of the High Weald Transport Forum on 23 November 1995. The main object of the meeting was:

- i) to discuss the draft report of suggested amendments to traffic calming methods
- ii) to discuss the impact of restricting HGV traffic on Forest roads to 7.5 tonnes.

3.1.2 Crowborough Chamber of Commerce's chief concerns were the impact restrictions may have on local businesses, and the proposed removal of signposting to Crowborough from the C3 junction with the A22 in Nutley. It supported the speed limits and open gates.

3.1.3 Although Crowborough Chamber of Commerce had expressed a wish that the whole programme should slip six months to allow further consultation, it was pointed out to the meeting that

members had had 18 months to keep their respective organisations briefed and the timetable should be adhered to. This was accepted.

3.1.4 Prior to the High Weald Transport Forum meeting, the Clerk had, with the County Highways Officers and Ranger Linton, visited three quarters of the gate locations and had been able to make several constructive suggestions.

3.1.5 Mr Parsons commented on the positive public relations effect of Mr Hall's letter to the local press.

3.1.6 The proposals and amendments for traffic calming measures will be presented to the County Highways Committee in January.

3.2 South East Water Pipeline from Wych Cross to East Grinstead.

3.2.1 The Clerk informed the Board that work on the Pipeline will start on 11 December 1995.

ITEM 4 To receive the Minutes of the Conservation Committee Meeting held on 9 October 1995

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

4.2 Access to Cripps Manor The Clerk briefed the Board on the outcome of a meeting with Mr David Evatt and his father attended by the Chairman on 31 October 1995. The Clerk had pointed out to them the abuse of the Byelaws that had taken place and the importance of identifying the perpetrator; both Mr David Evatt and his father had denied knowledge of the unauthorised work. The Chairman then informed them that if the perpetrator was positively identified, the Board would consider action through the County Secretary and a Court Injunction rather than action through the Byelaws. The Board agreed that a letter should be sent to all residents in the area asking them for their help in identifying those responsible.

4.3 Forestry Authority's Deer Initiative A short discussion concerning the possible influence of the British Deer Society on the Forestry Authority's Deer Initiative took place.

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

ITEM 5 To receive the Minutes of the Roads, Planning & Amenities Committee Meeting held on 23 October 1995

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

5.2 The request of Highgate Residents' Association for more car parking spaces on the Highgate Road The Board agreed the Committee's recommendation to maintain the status quo and did not

agree the request from the Highgate Residents' Association.

5.3 Alternate access across the Forest to Hindleap Farm House

5.3.1 The Clerk handed to the Board copies of past correspondence that had come to his attention written in 1989 and a copy of a recent letter from Mr Jennings to Mr Hamilton. A discussion followed.

5.3.2 The Board considered the additional information brought to their attention and the Chairman pointed out that the recommendation to grant an enlargement of the rights mentioned by Mr Hookey in his letter of 5 October 1989 had not been taken up and that in the face of increased pressure on the Forest, the Board's line had hardened since 1989. The Board agreed the Committee's recommendation that their existing policy should be maintained and only one access roadway across the Forest to Hindleap Farm complex should be permitted.

5.4 Application from Millbrook Farm to increase the width of the access track to provide adequate access for the Fire Service The Board agreed the Committee's recommendation and did not agree the request from Mr Reid.

5.5 Interpretive Panels In response from a question from Mrs Wright, the Chairman explained that the Board's responsibility to fund the future four Interpretive Panels had been part of the agreement when the financial package for the Education Barn had been put together.

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

ITEM 6 To receive the Minutes of the Finance and General Purposes Committee Meeting held on 6 November 1995

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

6.2 Current insurance cover The Board expressed its appreciation for the work done in the compilation of an accurate inventory and acknowledged its importance and value. The Clerk confirmed that the increase in insurance premium was directly due to the accuracy of the inventory and that he was corresponding with Zurich International with regards to the possible reduction of the premium by increasing the excess paid.

6.3 1996/97 Forest Rate increase

6.3.1 The Clerk circulated a revised table of Forest Rate increases for 1996/97 as the RPI had dropped since 1 November 1995 from 3.9% to 3.2% by 27 November 1995.

6.3.2 In order to establish a set date for the revision of the Forest Rate the Board agreed that future Rate increases should be calculated using the RPI in existence on 1 November

each year. This date will be drawn to the attention of the Commoners at their next Annual General Meeting on 1 March 1996.

6.3.3 The Board were asked if they wished to agree the revised figures. After a short discussion, the Board agreed to an increase in the forest Rate for 1996/97 by the RPI as at 27 November 1995 (3.2%) plus 1%, in line with the Conservators' Policy. This will lead to a slight reduction in income but will show the Board to be fair in determining increases.

ITEM 7 The Clerk to report on Sundry Matters

7.1 New Age Travellers and Phie Forest Gardens

7.1.1 The Clerk briefed the Board on the history of the land known as Phie Forest Gardens and summarised the current situation with regards to the New Age Travellers and a recent Court ruling against Wealden District Council which makes it difficult for the Council to remove the Travellers from the site.

7.1.2 Although Phie Forest Gardens is not part of Ashdown Forest, the Travellers have persistently abused the Byelaws by taking wood from the Forest without a permit. Local residents have been informed by Wealden District Council of the current situation.

7.1.3 The Clerk briefed the Board about a more serious breach of the Byelaws: the act of an individual who has been encamped on St John's Playing Field with two horses and a broken cart since 5 November and despite visits on three separate occasions and being asked to leave the Forest, remains to date. Following advice from the Police, a written notice was served on the individual on 24 November pointing out the Byelaws he has broken and giving him a further five days to mend his cart and remove himself, his animals and his possessions from the Forest. It is proposed that should he not be gone by 29 November, further advice will be sought from the Police and RSPCA with a view to his removal.

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

ITEM 8 Any Other Business

8.1 There being no other business, the meeting closed at 3.30pm.

Chairman _____

April 1996

Clerk _____