

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE BOARD OF CONSERVATORS OF ASHDOWN
FOREST HELD AT THE ASHDOWN FOREST CENTRE, WYCH CROSS, FOREST
ROW ON 25 NOVEMBER 1996

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

ITEM 1 To note the appointment of Mr T Randell as a
Conservator of the Forest and to receive any apologies for
absence

1.1 The Chairman welcomed the members of the public present. He then informed the Board that Mr Heaseman had resigned as a Conservator and Mr T Randell had been appointed in his place. Unfortunately Mr Randell was unable to attend the meeting. Apologies were also received from Mrs P Wright, Mr M Fletcher and Mr D Norcross.

ITEM 2 To approve the Minutes of the Meeting held on 23rd
September 1996

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

ITEM 3 Matters Arising

3.1 There were no matters arising.

ITEM 4 To receive the Minutes of the Conservation Committee
Meeting held on 7th October 1996

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

4.2 Bracken Control

4.2.1 The Clerk informed the Board that bracken mowing on some of the Stewardship Scheme sites was coming to the end of the five year programme and although the bracken had been considerably weakened, further treatment would be necessary to eradicate it. Experience in the New Forest had shown that Asulox was extremely effective as a fern specific herbicide.

4.2.2 The Board agreed the Committee's recommendation that the Board's policy on use of herbicides on the Forest should be amended to permit the use of Asulox against bracken, either as a spray or as a 'weedwipe' on sites with the prior agreement of the Conservation Committee.

4.3 There being no 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 21st October 1996

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

5.2 Pooh Car Park

5.2.1 Mr Parsons informed the Board that various options were being looked at by Hartfield Parish Council including the possible use of private land as an alternative to Pooh Car Park.

5.2.2 The Board accepted the Committee's recommendation that they should not entertain any extension to the existing car park.

5.3 Request for a Forest seat

5.3.1 The Board also accepted the Committee's recommendation that an exception be made to the Board's policy and a seat be erected close to the eastern side of Hollies Car Park in memory of former Ranger Chris Weaver.

5.3.2 The Board also accepted the Committee's recommendation that where memorial seats are replaced and the original plaque still exists, this should be mounted on a board and kept at the Centre.

5.4 Kings Standing Radio Station sewage treatment plant The Clerk confirmed that the new owners of the Radio Station had adequate space within the curtilage of the property to establish new sewage treatment facilities.

5.5 Endurance Ride 1997 Mr White informed the Board that for various reasons the date for the 1997 Endurance Ride would now need to be on 9 August 1997 and not 16 August. This was agreed.

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

ITEM 6 To receive the Minutes of the Finance & General Purposes Committee Meeting held on 4th November 1996

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

6.2 Financial Contribution from E S C C Mr Riley drew the Board's attention to a subsequent letter received by the Clerk from the Head of Paid Services at the County Council indicating the difficulties in the County Council's financial position and forecasting that the County Council will have to make cuts of between three and five per cent in 1997/98 and between five and ten per cent in 1998/99. It was not known what impact this would have on the County Council's contribution to the Conservators'

budget.

6.3 Forest Rate for 1997/98 The Board agreed the Committee's recommendation to increase the Forest Rate for 1997/98 by the RPI at 1st November (2.1%) plus 1%, in line with the Conservators' policy.

6.4 Revised Estimates for 1996/97 and Estimates for 1997/98 The Board agreed the revised Estimates for 1996/97 and the Estimates for 1997/98.

6.5 Cost of waste disposal and fly-tipping

6.5.1 Mr Riley summarised the concern felt over the implications of the new Landfill Tax for the Forest and the cost of disposal of fly-tipped waste material.

6.5.2 The Clerk informed the Board that there had been six separate incidents of fly-tipping on the Forest since 1st October. He had contacted the County Secretary's office with a view to ascertaining the County Council's position as landowner. He had been advised that the Conservators, as managers of the Forest should i) organise the removal of the fly-tipping ii) keep a record of all incidents iii) in due course and if necessary, make a bid for additional funding from the County Council.

6.5.3 Mr Hall informed the Board that the Environmental Agency was monitoring the situation and had provided a telephone number for the public to report incidents. Whilst the Board felt that to draw the public's attention to the specific difficulties and vulnerability of Ashdown Forest would be unwise, it welcomed Mr Hall's suggestion that he should send a letter to the press in an attempt to raise public awareness across the whole of the County and publicise the telephone number.

6.5.4 Mrs Stokes informed the Board that on a national level it had been proposed that money collected from the landfill tax could be used to create an Environmental Trust and suggested that funds from this trust might be used to benefit the Forest.

6.5.5 Sir Frederick Sowrey advised that any tyre marks seen at the site of fly-tipping should be photographed as these could prove decisive evidence.

6.5.6 It was agreed that the increased costs would have to be absorbed by the budget and the whole issue kept under review with the Board being consulted before any approach was made to the County Council.

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

ITEM 7 Clerk to report on sundry matters

7.1 Four Counties Dial The Clerk informed the Board that the replacement Dial, donated by the Friends, was now in place.

7.2 Interpretive Panels The Clerk had arranged for the panels to be on display for the Board's viewing. He informed the Board that the first plinth was already under construction and that they would all be in place by the end of the year.

7.3 Theft from cars parked in Forest car parks The Clerk informed the Board that there had recently been a heavy increase in the number of incidents. The Police were carrying out snap checks but with little success. The warning signs in the car parks were sometimes ignored with distressing results for the owners. Crime prevention and detection was a police responsibility and the Clerk agreed to contact them to obtain further advice. It was agreed that car park attendants were not a viable option.

ITEM 8 Any Other Business

8.1 Filming on the Forest Mr Riley asked under what circumstances filming was allowed on the Forest. The Clerk replied that film companies required a licence if they wished to film on the Forest, the cost of which depended on the length of the filming session and the nature of the programme; commercial ventures were charged more than those of an educational theme or which were made to the Forest's benefit.

8.2 Contractors working on the Forest Mr White asked if mechanical diggers worked on the Forest in all weathers. He expressed his concern at the damage done to the fire breaks by the vehicles working on the bracken scrape. The Clerk replied that contractors vehicles worked as required and they were expected to make good any damage done to tracks when the work was completed.

8.3 There being no other business, the public withdrew before the start of the Confidential session at 3.45pm.

Chairman _____

24 March 1997

Clerk _____