

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE BOARD OF CONSERVATORS OF
ASHDOWN FOREST HELD AT THE ASHDOWN FOREST CENTRE, WYCH
CROSS ON MONDAY 24 NOVEMBER 1997 AT 2.30 pm.**

Present: Mr D C Cumming (in the Chair), Air Marshall Sir Frederick Sowrey,
Mrs D M Bagshawe, Mrs S Stokes, Messrs D H O Allen, L J Gillham,
D L Hall, R I F Parsons, H D V Prendergast, A G Reid, R M Thornely-Taylor,
A N White.

The Chairman welcomed the members of the public present.

ITEM 1 Apologies for absence

1.1 Apologies had been received from Miss M McPherson and Mr D Norcross.

ITEM 2 To approve the Minutes of the Meeting held on 22 September 1997

2.1 The Minutes of the last Meeting, which had previously been circulated, were presented by the Chairman. The Minutes were approved and signed as an 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 6 October 1997

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

4.2 Submission of a possible Heritage Lottery grant for heathland restoration The Clerk reported that he had had no feedback to date concerning the application.

4.3 Deer Management Policy Sir Frederick Sowrey informed the Board that he had been lobbied on a number of occasions by members of the Deer Society over the Board's Deer Management Policy. The Clerk informed the Board that the Rangers continued to monitor the health of the wild deer herd when attending to carcasses after road accidents and were satisfied that the herd was in good health. There had been a notable lack of damage by deer in the Hazel coppice but as herbivores, they contributed to the grazing of the heathland. The Board agreed to continue with their current policy of not managing the deer.

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

ITEM 5 To receive the Minutes of the Roads, Planning & Amenities Committee Meeting held on 20 October 1997

5.1 The Minutes, which had been previously circulated, were presented by Sir Frederick Sowrey.

5.2 Action Research Sponsored Ride The Board agreed the Committee's recommendation that the Ride should take place on 20 September 1998.

5.3 Traffic Calming

5.3.1 Mr Reid informed the Board of the results of a survey done by ESCC Highways Department at the Duddleswell Crossroads. Over a 16 hour period there had been 200 lorries, most had been 7.5 tonnes and below. He added that the Highways Officers were currently recommending a restriction of 7.5 tonnes on all minor Forest roads with the exception of the C3 and B2026. The Highways Subcommittee would be asked to consider if four axle vehicles should be allowed on these minor roads. He felt the Board had two options: to lobby the Subcommittee before their meeting on 9 December or to make representations when the matter went to public consultation.

5.3.2 The Clerk informed the Board that the Chairman of the County Council and the Director of the Transport and Environment Department were meeting with him on 8 December to discuss enforcement of the speed limit. It was agreed that the weight limit issue should be raised and the Clerk should enquire if the Secretary of State for Transport was aware of the enforcement issue.

5.3.3 Mrs Bagshawe queried the need for a weight ban on the minor Forest roads.

5.3.4 The Chairman summarised the history of the traffic calming issues for the benefit of the new members of the Board. It was agreed that the proposals in 5.3.1, if implemented on the C3 and B2026, would be the worst possible solution for graziers and would make it difficult for the Conservators to carry out their duties as described in the Ashdown Forest Act 1974.

5.3.5 It was agreed that the Board should press for the road roundels to be accepted.

5.4 There being no further questions, Sir Frederick Sowrey moved the adoption of the Minutes. This was agreed.

ITEM 6 To receive the Minutes of the Finance & General Purposes Committee Meeting held on 3 November 1997

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

6.2 Revised Estimates

6.2.1 Mrs Bagshawe stressed the likelihood of the ESCC contribution being cut by a minimum of 3.5%.

6.2.2 The Board agreed the Revised Estimates for 1997/98 and the Estimates for 1998/99.

6.3 Forest Rate for 1998/99 The Board agreed the increase in the Forest Rate by 4.6% being the RPI plus 1%.

6.4 Dates for Board and Committee Meetings in 1998/99 The Clerk informed the Board that two County Councillors were unable to make nine of the proposed dates. In discussion, Members underlined the value to the Board of the “clout” carried by appointed Councillors. Notwithstanding the efforts of those present, the Board had never comprised of so few serving Councillors and it was disappointing if those appointed were then unable to meet the Board and Committee dates. The Board approved the dates for 1998/99.

6.5 Maresfield Parish Council The Chairman informed the Board that he and the Clerk had attended the recent Maresfield Parish Council Meeting and had answered their queries on the reintroduction of grazing and traffic calming. The Parish Councillors had welcomed the additional information.

6.6 The Audit of the Conservators’ Accounts Mr Reid commented that it was difficult to ascertain the amount spent on conservation from the figures shown in the accounts. Sir Frederick Sowrey briefed the new members of the Board on the exercise carried out in 1995/96 with activity sheets. It was agreed that a copy of the summary should be given to Mr Prendergast and Mr Reid.

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

ITEM 7 Authorisation of the Clerk to sign for, and on behalf of, the Board of Conservators The Clerk informed the Board that MAFF had recently queried his authorisation to sign Stewardship Agreements on behalf of the Board. The Board agreed that the Clerk was empowered to sign any documents relating to the management of the Forest for, and on behalf of, the Board of Conservators.

ITEM 8 Clerk to report on sundry matters

8.1 Update of the Phase II Fencing Project

8.1.1 As requested by the Finance & General Purposes Committee, the Clerk summarised the details of the Fencing Project. He covered the time frame, the number of potential graziers and the reasons for selecting the chosen area to be fenced and grazed.

8.1.2 The Clerk confirmed that the Ashdown Forest Panel had agreed to contribute £18,600 towards the cost of the fencing and MAFF had agreed £14,248.

8.1.3 The Clerk informed the Board that the Sussex Police Authority had agreed to allow the Forest cattle grids to be stored at the Kings Standing Training Centre during the Christmas period. The cattle grids on the C3 would probably be installed by ESCC in April or May 1998.

ITEM 9 Any other business

9.1 Mr Prendergast asked if Ashdown Forest was included in English Nature's £18 million heathland project bid. The Clerk stated that he had submitted a bid for part of the heathland on the Forest as one element of a combined Sussex bid to English Nature. He had not yet heard the outcome.

9.2 Mr Prendergast asked if the meetings of the Riding Committee were minuted. The Clerk explained that the meetings were not minuted as discussions on work were actioned and matters for the Board's Committees were put on the respective Agendas such as the increase in riding permit fees for the Finance Committee.

9.3 Mr Reid reported that he had had several requests for mountain bike paths to be constructed on the Forest. The Clerk informed the Board that the Ashdown Forest Panel had recently considered potential exchange land along the A22 but the County Highways Department had decided to keep the land as it may be needed for a cycle track. The Board supported the idea of cycle tracks on the roads but not on Forest land because of the Bye-laws.

There being no further questions, the Chairman closed the meeting. The public withdrew prior to the Confidential Session.

Chairman_____ 23 March 1998

Clerk_____