

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE BOARD OF CONSERVATORS OF ASHDOWN FOREST HELD AT THE ASHDOWN FOREST CENTRE, WYCH CROSS, FOREST ROW ON 18 SEPTEMBER 1995.

Present: Mr L J Gillham (In the Chair), Mr D C Cumming, Mrs S Barr, Mrs S F Whitley, Mrs S Stokes, Air Marshal Sir Frederick Sowrey, Messrs D H O Allen, D L Hall, J S Heasman, 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 Acknowledgement of new members of the Board and Apologies for absence**

1.1 The Chairman welcomed Mrs Pat Wright who had recently been appointed to the Board by the East Sussex County Council. The Board members expressed their pleasure at her return.

1.2 The Chairman acknowledged the death of Mrs Charity Maudslay who had been a Conservator, Friend of the Forest and despite her frailty, had maintained an active interest in the Forest until her death. Her family and Friends had made a generous donation to the Forest and had asked that it be used for educational purposes. The Chairman expressed the Board's appreciation for the gift and informed the Board that a weather station had been purchased.

1.3 Apologies were received from Mrs Pat Wright. Mr Marcus Fletcher was unable to attend the meeting as his car broke down en-route. His apologies were received by the Chairman during the meeting.

**ITEM 2 A brief by the Highways Department on the current position with their Traffic calming Proposals for Ashdown Forest.**

2.1 Mr Roger New summarised the proposals for Traffic Calming in Forest Row, Nutley and the Forest. Urban style techniques aimed at general public safety are proposed for the villages. Different techniques are proposed for the Forest where the aims are to integrate the demands of travellers and the environment.

2.2 Following the public consultation exercise in Nutley, Forest Row, Crowborough, the Ashdown Forest Centre and the mobile exhibitions in the Forest Car Parks and Crowborough in June, the Highways Department have been looking at the proposals in more detail. The issues are varied and complex and it is hoped to present any results and further proposals to the December cycle of committee meetings or sooner to a specially arranged meeting of a joint committee.

2.3 The public response had been very supportive of the proposals; 93% were in favour in principle. There was a good understanding of the problems; volume/speed of traffic seen as the most significant followed closely by animal fatalities.

2.4 Of those who responded, 60% were resident in the area, 10% were visitors. 52% came across the exhibition through enjoyment of the Forest. There was no significant difference between levels of support.

2.5 91% favoured a 40 mph speed limit across the Forest and 80% approved of cattle grids.

2.6 More time is required to resolve the issues around the built up part of Crowborough Road, Nutley where there is a need to combine the requirements of the Forest with the wishes of the urban section.

2.7 The low response from the business sector was disappointing. ESCC intend to target this sector in the near future in order to further examine issues concerning HGVs with a view to a possible HGV ban on Forest roads and greater promotion of the "route box" around the Forest. Some communities had expressed their concern that traffic would be re-routed through their villages, increasing problems for them.

2.8 Mr New concluded by stating that the special nature of Ashdown Forest meant that the Highways Department were considering measures not usually contemplated.

2.9 An application for funding the proposals (£400,000) had been made to the Department of Transport. A precedent had been set with the measures taken in the New Forest by Hampshire County Council. The results of the bid will be known in December.

2.10 Mrs Stokes expressed concern over use of the term "lorry ban" - the proposal was for a restriction of 7.5 tonnes except for access.

2.11 Mr Parsons stated that there had been an outright "no" towards the proposals from the business community. Mr New expected opinions in the business community to be neutral after initial antipathy. Past experience had shown that there would be no significant problems for the business community other than a time penalty through using existing alternative routes.

2.11 Sir Frederick Sowrey enquired about the success of self-enforcement. Mr New replied that a consistent and constant advertising campaign would be necessary for some time. Physical restrictions had had to be removed in the New Forest due to fatalities. A possible solution would be to build false bends into straight stretches of road. Rumble strips were not seen as a possibility.

2.12 Mrs Whitley asked if a stronger response had been expected from the business community. Further enquiries would reveal if

the lack of response was a result of acceptance or ignorance of the proposals.

2.13 Mr Riley noted that Mr New made no reference to the downgrading of the A22. Mr New replied that the Department of Transport had strongly indicated they would not support the downgrading of the A22 as a primary route.

2.14 The Chairman enquired about the timetable for implementation of proposals. Mr New replied that if the bid was successful, it would take three years to implement, if unsuccessful the proposals would be dependent on budget decisions.

**ITEM 3 To approve the Minutes of the Meeting held on 19 June 1995 and Matters Arising**

3.1 The Minutes of the last Meeting, which had been circulated, were approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct and accurate record. Any Matters Arising were covered by the agenda.

**ITEM 4 To receive the Minutes of the Conservation Committee held on 10 July 1995**

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

4.2 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 held on 24 July 1995 and the Minutes of an Extraordinary Committee meeting held on 7 August 1995.**

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

**5.2 Planning Applications**

a) Dallingridge Farm: a decision has been deferred by Wealden District Council as there has been some disquiet about the proposal.

b) Paynes Hill: the Board agreed the Committee's recommendation in principle that the request for a new access across the Forest be granted provided that over half the existing track area and most of the tarmac would be reinstated as Forest. The Clerk reported that the owner's planning application had been turned down.

**5.3 Staff Rest Room and Storage and facilities at the Centre**  
The Board agreed the Committee's recommendation that the tool store should be converted into a staff rest room.

**5.4 South East Water pipeline projects on the Forest** The Clerk informed the Board that he had had notification from South East Water that the booster pump would be placed below ground. Sir Frederick Sowrey asked the Clerk to enquire if the whole unit

could be placed below ground.

5.5 Fairwarp Village Car Park Mr White confirmed that the Car Park had been resurfaced. Two layers of fine chippings were used because of the heat during this summer.

5.5 Mr Parsons moved the adoption of the Minutes. This was agreed.

#### 5.6 Extraordinary Meeting

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

5.6.2 Interpretive Panels and Waymarking The Clerk informed the Board that he had had a further conversation with Mr Graham Kerr of the Countryside Commission in an attempt to clarify the situation regarding interpretive panels and the marking of Forest walks. They had reached an agreement, which would be confirmed by letter, for discreet signposting to be placed at the beginning of walks where they leave the car parks. The Countryside Commission would fund 33% - 40% of the cost of the Interpretive Panels. The scheme would be reviewed after one year to discover if the public found the walks difficult to follow.

5.7 Mr Parsons moved the adoption of the Minutes. This was agreed.

#### ITEM 6 To receive the Minutes of the Finance & General Purposes Committee held on 4 September 1995

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

6.2 Audited Account Mr Allen drew the Board's attention to the audited accounts which showed that the Conservators of Ashdown Forest are solvent. The Board agreed that the differences in estimates and actual expenses were clearly explained in the notes. The Board agreed the Committee's recommendation and accepted the Audited Accounts for 1994/95.

6.3 V A T Two inspectors from HMCE had visited the office to examine the VAT records. They were unclear themselves over the eligibility of the Conservators to claim back VAT on all purchases. The Clerk is waiting for a ruling from HMCE.

6.4 Visitor Survey The Board agreed the Committee's recommendation that a Visitor Survey be conducted on the Forest in the late Spring 1996. It is intended to seek help for carrying out the survey from volunteers.

6.5 Weather Station The Clerk reported that the weather station was in place. Although the readings are not frequent or accurate enough for the Meteorological Office, it is intended to display the figures obtained in the Information Barn for the interest of visitors. Mr Allen thought the information would be of interest

to researchers of biological data on the Forest.

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

**ITEM 7 The Clerk to report on sundry matters**

7.1 South East Water Pipeline from Wych Cross to East Grinstead  
The Clerk described the location of a proposed pipeline to be installed between Wych Cross and East Grinstead. A further site meeting is to take place on 6 October 1995 to examine identified difficulties along the route.

7.2 A second pipe from the reservoir towards Sharpthorne is also planned. The Clerk has suggested to South East Water that it should share the same trench as far as possible.

7.3 Completion date objective is May 1996 but a more realistic expectation is end of 1996.

**ITEM 8 Any other business**

8.1 Mrs Barr expressed her appreciation for the work done on rides between Misbourne Farm and Dodds Bottom.

8.2 Mr Allen reported on the success of the Conservators' party for the staff and thanked all those who had helped in the organisation. The finances were as follows:

Income	£252.00
Expenses	£267.30
Deficit	£15.30 - covered by profits held in kitty

8.3 There being no other business, the meeting closed at 4.30pm.

Chairman \_\_\_\_\_

November 1995

Clerk \_\_\_\_\_