

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE BOARD OF CONSERVATORS OF
ASHDOWN FOREST HELD AT THE ASHDOWN FOREST CENTRE, WYCH
CROSS ON MONDAY 22 SEPTEMBER 1997**

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

The Chairman welcomed the members of the public present. He informed the Board of the recent deaths of Mr Bill Hulme and Mr Peter Reader. He acknowledged the support both gentlemen had given the Forest, as Volunteer Rangers and as very active members of the Society of Friends of Ashdown Forest. Mr Allen was attending the funeral of Mr Bill Hulme on behalf of the Board and was therefore unable to attend the Board Meeting.

ITEM 1 To note changes in the composition of the Board since the last meeting

1.1 The Chairman welcomed Miss Mary Mcpherson and informed the Board that Mr Bodiam had resigned as a Conservator.

ITEM 2 Apologies for absence

2.1 Apologies had been received from Mr Parsons.

ITEM 3 To approve the Minutes of the Meeting held on 23 June 1997

3.1 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 4 Matters Arising

4.1 There were no matters arising.

ITEM 5 To receive the Minutes of the Conservation Committee Meeting held on 7 July 1997

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

5.2 Bracken spraying Mr Thornely-Taylor sought advice on the possibility of air-spraying bracken with a specific herbicide. Mr Gillham advised that bracken on the Forest occurred in small areas and the presence of the public made air-spraying a problem. The Clerk advised that the Army had had some success with air spraying from a helicopter but the public are excluded from the training area. Repeated mowing over the last five years had weakened the bracken such that it could now be controlled with Asulox. A company in Heathfield were applying Asulox with a weed-wipe else where and its success was being monitored.

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

ITEM 6 To receive the Minutes of the Roads, Planning & Amenities Committee Meeting held on 28 July 1997

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

6.2 Traffic Calming The Clerk informed the Board that he had received the sketched plans for the cattle grids on the C3. As their successful installation was a priority, he had refrained from pursuing action on the Forest Gates but would do so in due course. Mr Norcross offered to arrange an informal meeting with the head of the Highways Department.

6.3 Fencing of the enlarged grazing area

6.3.1 The Clerk informed the Board that he had had no response to his letter to date from landowners with properties either in or adjacent to the grazing area. Mr Thornely-Taylor advised that he had had two representations; one requesting riding gates to be set well back from the roads, the other expressing concern that large vehicles should have sufficient room to straighten their wheels before crossing the cattle grids. The Clerk assured him that both problems had been anticipated and he offered to arrange a site visit.

6.3.2 Mr Reid asked about the quality of fencing around private property. The Clerk informed him that the quality varied and confirmed that property owners had a “binding obligation” through established custom to “fence against the Common”.

6.3.3 Mr Whetstone sought justification for the expense of fencing a narrow strip of Forest bordering the B2026 and Spring Garden. The Clerk explained that this area had been excluded in the first draft of the fencing application but following objections made by the Open Spaces Society and Maresfield Parish Council during the public consultation period, it had been included and formed part of the Conservators’ application to the Department of the Environment.

6.4 Enforcement of speed limit

6.4.1 Sir Frederick Sowrey expressed concern at a recent letter in a local newspaper which implied the police would not be enforcing the speed limit across the Forest. The Clerk informed the Board that he had spoken to the Traffic Division of Sussex Police who had advised him that a joint enterprise with the Highways Department was planned within the next two weeks. The Police confirmed their recently stated line that traffic calming measures should be self enforcing where possible and that enforcement of the speed limit was more to do with other priorities and scarce resources.

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

ITEM 7 To receive the Minutes of the Finances & General Purposes Committee Meeting held on 1 September 1997

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

7.2 The Accounts

7.2.1 Mr White summarised the new arrangements for the accounts as follows:

- ◆ The accounts will be prepared in May
- ◆ The accounts will be presented to the Board for approval in June
- ◆ The audit should take place in July/August
- ◆ The accounts will be available for public inspection for two weeks before and after audit

7.2.2 Mrs Bagshawe expressed concern that the Board would be signing unaudited accounts. Mr White said that an internal audit would be carried out prior to the accounts being submitted to the Board. The Clerk had anticipated this concern and had spoken to the District Auditor who had informed him that if during the Audit small errors were found, these would be noted, if there were obvious discrepancies or errors the accounts would be sent back to the Board. The exact triggers were not known. As none of the Board had direct access to the bank accounts, with spending policy being a corporate decision, there was no need for individual members of the Board to be insured. The Board's insurance cover provides for a fidelity guarantee.

7.2.3 The Board agreed the Committee's recommendation to accept the Accounts for 1996/97.

7.3 Digitised scanning of working maps and archive material The Clerk informed the Board that the scanning of the Raper Papers, the Awards Maps and the Encroachment Map was in hand. Work was already being done on creating a file of individual assessment maps using the first CD-ROM; the Clerk passed round examples of printouts. The Clerk informed the Board that a second copy of the CD-ROM was kept off site for safety purposes. The Board agreed that a fire-proof storage facility ought to be provided for the original materials.

7.4 Health and Safety at Work Policy The Board agreed the Committee's recommendation that the existing Health and Safety at Work Policy statement should not be changed.

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

ITEM 8 Clerk to report on sundry matters

8.1 Phie Forest Gardens The Clerk informed the Board that he had written to the Department of the Environment in support of WDC against the appeal of Mr Hughes, the land owner.

8.2 Wyck Cross traffic lights scheme The Clerk informed the Board that the scheme would be linked to the 40 mph limit and that the Open Forest Gates within that area would be removed. He had been advised that the purchase of the garage, which had recently come on the market, would present too many problems and so the scheme would go ahead as originally planned.

8.3 Manorial Waste The Clerk informed the Board that the Manorial Waste to be managed by the Conservators had now been given to the Ashdown Forest Trust. It had since been discovered that a section at the end of School Lane, St John's in Crowborough had been sold in 1966 by the Earl and this would be removed from the register. However, the deeds showed that access to the Forest at this point was guaranteed.

ITEM 9 Any other business

9.1 Mr White informed the Board that the Highways Department had recently asked the British Horse Society's advice over the use of "Grasscrete" beside the main cattle grids.

9.2 Mr Prendergast asked if the results of research carried out on the Forest were presented to the Centre. The Clerk replied that copies of university dissertations were accepted but inaccuracies had been found in some of these.

9.3 Mr Thornely-Taylor asked if grazing rights could be assigned. The Clerk informed him that whilst he could see no objection to this, former graziers had rented land that had grazing rights attached to it.

9.4 Mr Reid asked if the Board had a particular project for the Millenium. The Clerk informed him that it had been previously considered and the subject remained open.

9.5 There being no further business, the Chairman thanked the members of the Board and closed the meeting at 3.45pm.

Chairman _____
24 November 1997

Clerk _____