

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE BOARD OF CONSERVATORS OF
ASHDOWN FOREST HELD AT THE ASHDOWN FOREST CENTRE, WYCH
CROSS ON MONDAY 21 SEPTEMBER 1998 AT 2.30 pm.**

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

The Chairman welcomed the members of the public present and advised those who had a particular interest in the issue of fox hunting on Ashdown Forest that, as the Board was still waiting for legal advice, the issue was not an Item on the Agenda.

ITEM 1 Apologies for absence

1.1 Apologies for absence had been received from Miss McPherson and Mr Parsons.

ITEM 2 To approve the Minutes of the Meeting held on 22 June 1998

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

ITEM 3 Matters arising

3.1 Fox hunting on Ashdown Forest

3.1.1 Mr May proposed that hunting be suspended until legal advice had been received. It was pointed out that the Board had already made the decision to wait for Counsel's advice. The delay was due to the Chambers being closed during August but the Clerk informed the Board that he expected a reply by the end of the week.

ITEM 4 To receive the Minutes of the Conservation Committee Meeting held on 6 July 1998

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

4.2 Sheep savaging The Clerk reported that within the past month, 17 sheep had been killed or severely mauled. The Board agreed that this was intolerable and discussed possible steps to identify the dogs and their owners. Sir Frederick Sowrey suggested the Clerk investigate the possibility of an anonymous telephone line with the Police to encourage those with information to come forward. Mr Whetstone suggested that a record be kept of the type of injuries as this may help to identify the number of dogs involved. It was agreed that every opportunity should be taken to remind dog owners that it was their responsibility for controlling their pets on the Forest and failure to do so would lead to prosecution of the owners and probably action against the dogs savaging sheep.

4.3 Western Hemlock

4.3.1 Mr Thornely-Taylor reported that Western Hemlock was considered a weed by the aboriculturalist at Bedgebury Pinetum. He expressed his view that the Forest staff should seek the opinions and advice from a variety of similar organisations. Mr Gillham stated that it was a popular misconception that decisions on Forest matters were taken in isolation. In fact, the staff were constantly liaising with other organisations and recognised experts and it was only due to local public pressure that the Hemlock had been retained. Conservation had the highest priority and decisions were always carefully considered. He reminded the Board that all members were welcome to attend the Conservation Committee meetings and contribute to the proceedings.

4.3.2 Mr Prendergast felt that once the Management Policy document had been rewritten, the Board would have clear guidelines.

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 27 July 1998

5.1 The Minutes, which had been previously circulated, were presented by Mrs Stokes.

5.2 Relocation of a telegraph pole The Clerk informed the Board that he had advised the property owner of the various options, since when he had had no further contact.

5.3 Ditch on Forest land near Twyford The Clerk advised the Board that the ditch had not yet been dug but he pointed out that the Environment Agency would prefer posts as 'dragons teeth' to be placed across the track rather than a ditch. He also mentioned a possible boundary dispute following another encroachment in the vicinity. (Afternote: At a site visit on 22 September with the appropriate authorities, it was noted that the encroachments had been removed.)

5.5 Proposed animal carcass incinerator at Mardens Hill. Mrs Bagshawe advised the Board that a resident on Mardens Hill claimed the technical data in the Environmental Impact Statement was inaccurate. ESCC and WDC had been advised of this. It had also been noted that a planning application for three houses had been refused on grounds of traffic increase. The Clerk informed the Board that he had already sent the Board's objections to the County Planning Authority.

5.6 Request for a fence on Forest land at 'Larkrise' Mrs Bagshawe asked if the Committee had considered allowing a fence closer than the requested 30 metres. The Clerk replied that should there be a change in environmental health legislation, the Board would have the opportunity to review the matter, in the meantime, the Committee had taken the decision not to permit an encroachment.

There being no further questions, Mrs Stokes moved the adoption of the Minutes. This was agreed.

ITEM 6 To receive the Minutes of the Finance & General Purposes Committee Meeting held on 24 August 1998

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

6.2 Consideration of the District Auditor's comments on the Board's Accounts for 1997/98

6.2.1 Concern was expressed that counter-signatures were only required for cheques in excess of the relatively high figure of £10,000. It was explained that this figure was based on practical considerations and approximated to the monthly salary bill.

6.2.2 The Board agreed the Committee's recommendation to endorse the controls proposed and that they be brought into immediate effect.

6.3 Revised job description and Contract for the Clerk and Forest Superintendent.

6.3.1 Concern was expressed that an element for depreciation for the Forest Superintendent's car had not been included in the permitted mileage allowance. It was agreed that the rate should be reviewed at the end of the financial year.

6.3.2 The Chairman stated that he was satisfied that everything needed to be done with regards to employment law had been done.

6.4 Riding Permit fees Mr Prendergast expressed his concern that Riding Permit fees should be commensurate with others in the South East. He had researched the matter and found that this was in fact the case. The Clerk reminded the Board that the Management Policy agreed in 1993 was that the cost of a Permit should be based on the Riding Permit fee at the time, increased annually by the figure for the RPI plus 1%. The income raised contributed towards general Forest maintenance costs.

6.5 Health and Safety at Work Policy Statement The Board agreed the Committee's recommendation not to change their existing Health & Safety at Work Policy statement.

6.6 The distribution of the Board's Minutes It was agreed that Minutes of the Board Meetings should be sent to Crowborough Library until the Superintendent was able to report back on the feasibility of using the Internet when the situation would be reviewed.

6.7 The purchase of the new forage harvester by the Society of Friends of Ashdown Forest The Board expressed its thanks to the Society of Friends of Ashdown Forest for their generous support. The Clerk informed the Board that he had written to the Friends and would have photographs of the forage harvester available to show the Friends at their Annual General Meeting.

6.8 VAT Inspection The Clerk informed the Board that the Inspector had had difficulty in clarifying the status of the Conservators with regards to VAT and had referred to her superiors. He had not yet received the report from the VAT Inspector but he advised that depending on the decision taken, there was a possibility that the Conservators might be presented with a bill for back payment over a three year period.

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

ITEM 7 Clerk to report on sundry matters

7.1 Dates of Board and Committee Meetings The Clerk presented the Board with proposed dates for 1999/2000. He asked Members to inform him by 23 October if any of the dates presented a problem.

7.2 Crowborough Town Council The Clerk informed the Board that he had received a letter from the Town clerk, Mr Harris indicating that the Council would be pleased to meet with the Conservators at the Ashdown Forest Centre on any Tuesday evening in October. The Board agreed 20 October at 7.30 pm; with the Chairman, Committee Chairmen and any other Members of the Board who wished, to attend. Mrs Bagshawe gave her apologies as she has a prior commitment on Tuesday evenings.

7.3 Media coverage The Clerk informed the Board that he had received very positive feedback after the Meridian TV programme about the Forest which had given good coverage of a number of conservation issues. He had also been approached by BBC Southern Counties Radio and had agreed to speak on a monthly basis on the breakfast programme at 7.40 am. He agreed with the producer that this would be an opportunity to raise and explain the Conservators' policy on current Ashdown Forest matters.

ITEM 8 Any other business

Mr Reid raised three points:

8.1 Lorry ban on Forest Roads He reported that the ESCC Highways Committee had agreed a 30 tonne weight limit on the western section of the C3 between Duddleswell and Nutley but no weight restriction on any other Forest roads. The situation is to be reviewed in February and the County Highways Committee would welcome feedback during the next few months.

8.2 Planning application for a Cellnet communications tower at Nutley Telephone Exchange He explained there was concern locally over this Planning application. The Clerk informed the Board that he had already written to the Planning Authority expressing their opposition to the application in similar terms to their views opposing the tower at Pippingford Park.

8.3 Familiarisation of Board Members with Forest matters Following discussion, opportunities for Members of the Board to increase their conservation knowledge of the Forest were identified. The Clerk invited Members to contact him if there was a particular issue they wished to know more about or if they wished to attend the Ranger guided walks.

Mr Thornely-Taylor raised two questions:

8.4 Grazing Committee As the grazing season was coming to an end, the Clerk agreed to arrange the next meeting of the Grazing Committee.

8.5 Remembrance Day Service at Airman's Grave The Clerk confirmed that no vehicles were permitted on the Forest down to the Airman's Grave. It was not good going for wheel chairs but they were permitted.

There being no further business, the public withdrew and the Board went into Confidential Session.

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MINUTES
CONSERVATION COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 6 JULY 1998

Present: Mr L Gillham, Mrs DM Bagshawe, Dr HDV Prendergast
Messrs DHO Allen, DC Cumming, TR May, RM Thornely-Taylor, AN White.
Co-opted: Mr C Durrell, Rangers D King, C Marrable, Dr A Tait.
In attendance for Item 1: Mrs S Stokes, Sir Frederick Sowrey, Mr AG Reid.
Apologies: Miss M McPherson, Mr C Jankiewicz.

ITEM 1 At the request of the Board at their meeting on 22 June to look again at the Western Hemlock site in the woodland at Chelwood Vachery with a view to reviewing the clearance of the trees in the light of local concern.

The Committee, together with other members of the Board, visited the woodland at Chelwood Vachery and looked again at the compartment of Western Hemlock which the Board had previously agreed should be removed in 1997. The Committee Chairman reminded those present that the Board's agreed Management Policy for the woodland since purchase had been one of 'constructive neglect' and that the original proposal to clear the Hemlock would have been at no cost to the Board. He also pointed out that the Woodland Management Scheme, under which permission had been obtained to clear the Hemlock had expired in March 1998.

In discussion there was support for a strategic review of the Board's management policy for the whole of the Vachery. It was agreed that given the limited resources available, it would be necessary as a prerequisite to determine where the Vachery came within the Board's priorities, and with that in mind what the management objectives might be. The Superintendent was asked to prepare a draft management policy document as soon as practicable for the Committee's consideration. It was also agreed that proposals for the Hemlock would be put on hold until such time as a review of policy had been carried out.

Mrs Bagshawe wanted it to be recorded that she did not wish to be a 'rubber stamp'.

The Committee then walked through the western part of the Vachery and looked at other small areas of Western Hemlock.

ITEM 2 To look at areas of heathland clearance work in the vicinity of the Vachery to be undertaken during the autumn/winter.

Having seen sketch plans of the eight heathland sites in the West Chase and Millbrook Stewardship Schemes due to be cleared of scrub this winter, the Committee walked through

and around one of the larger compartments (18.7ha) to the north west of the Vachery. Most of this site had been cleared of scrub five years ago and the object in visiting it was to see the extent of scrub regrowth which would make clearance labour intensive and expensive as there was no saleable wood product to offset contractor's costs. The Superintendent explained that unfortunately this would be the case with all three of the West Chase sites this year totalling 45.8ha.

The Superintendent informed the Committee that the three East Chase heathland Stewardship sites due for clearance or cutting beside the high road in Wrens Warren Valley would be undertaken 'in house' and with Volunteers or BTCV.

ITEM 3 Update on the Grazing.

The Superintendent reported that although stock had been in the Millbrook area since April they had only been out in the newly fenced area for a month because of delays with the cattle grids on the Duddleswell/Nutley section of C3. Work on the County Council fences at the grids was still under way; the design of the post and rail fence with the bypass gates being forward of the cattle grid was such that it is not stock proof and will need stock wire fencing on the inside! The fence between the two grazing areas would be opened up within the week.

In response to a question the Superintendent said it had been agreed with the County Council that the Board would put heather seed on the strip of earth banking between the cattle grid and the gates at the Stonehill site.

He added that there were now approximately 52 cattle/calves and 350 sheep from two graziers on the Forest and he hoped that as others saw the scheme settling down they would come forward with their stock as indicated.

Initial complaints were largely from those surprised at seeing stock on the C3 and lack of warning signs. He said that he had put out eight warning signs along the road which he would probably leave there till the Autumn. Even after a months grazing it was evident that there had been a change in usage patterns, with a number of dog walkers having moved to other areas of the Forest and traffic volume/speeds apparently reducing on the C3. Where there was now comment and telephone calls these were generally from people who said they were enjoying the sight and calming effect of stock back on the Forest.

There had been two incidents of sheep worrying. One through dogs escaping from a property within the grazing area and the other a dog being exercised by a friend of the owner, killing a lamb - this incident had been satisfactorily resolved between the dog's owner and the grazier.

ITEM 4 Any other business.

The Superintendent informed the Committee that a joint RSPB/East Sussex Fire Brigade/Crime Stoppers campaign called **the 'One Spark' campaign** would be being launched on Friday 10 July at 11am at the Centre - and concurrently, a similar campaign at Lyndhurst in the New Forest. Although covering all heathlands in the South East, it is aimed locally at reducing the amount of heathland destroyed by fire in East Sussex. Target for the

campaign is those who do not realise the dangers of their actions playing with fire as well as school children on holiday.

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**MINUTES
ROADS, PLANNING & AMENITIES COMMITTEE MEETING
HELD ON 27 JULY 1998**

Present: Mrs S Stokes, Miss M McPherson, Air Marshal Sir Frederick Sowrey,
Messrs DHO Allen, DC Cumming, LJ Gillham, RIF Parsons,
Dr HDV Prendergast, Ranger J Linton
In attendance: Mr D Hall

ITEM 1 To consider a request to put a fence on the Forest to keep grazing stock at a 'sanitary' distance from the property 'Larkrise'.

Having seen two letters from the owner of Larkrise in which he outlined the hygiene problems faced as a result of his property wall being the boundary with the Forest, the Committee visited the site and looked around the property boundary.

The Superintendent briefed the Committee that at the time of purchase in 1997 the property owner's solicitor was informed of the plan to reintroduce grazing by sheep and cattle during 1998.

He also stated that from enquiries with MAFF and the District Environmental Health Department there did not appear to be any legislation which determined a minimum distance between grazing stock and a dwelling.

The New Forest have no knowledge of similar problems recently and suspect these would have been solved in the past on the basis of a land exchange then permitting the property owner to fence against the common.

The Committee saw that the boundary of the property on three sides was either, a wall, a hedge or a low metal fence which kept stock a short distance from the house itself. It was only on the south east side facing the road where the house wall was actually the boundary with the Forest. The Committee noted the window and door on this side of the building and felt that an anti-fly mesh cover might help to alleviate the fly problem. In discussion it was noted that with this property the public also have a right to walk up to the boundary.

Given that grazing of Commoner's stock has taken place on this part of the Forest for a number of generations - albeit with a break from 1985, the Committee declined to permit a fence to be erected on the Forest around part of this property.

The Committee also asked the Superintendent to get the property owner to remove the garden waste which had been thrown over his hedge onto the Forest.

ITEM 2 To receive a report on the briefing with Crowborough Town Council.

The Superintendent briefed the Committee on the meeting with Crowborough Town Council on 23 June. This had taken the form of an initial illustrated presentation on the Forest and its management by the Superintendent, after which Members of the Town Council were able to put their questions to the Chairman of Board and the Chairmen of the Committees.

When the Town Council had finished their questions, members of the public present, a number of whom were not from Crowborough, were invited by the Mayor to ask questions of the Board. Most questions related to the reintroduction of grazing or fox hunting, rather than to management of the Forest in general terms and its relationship with Crowborough. However, one member of the public did ask the Board to consider allowing the use of Mountain Bikes on the Forest.

The Chairman of the Conservation Committee expanded on the response he gave at the time, which was essentially that at some stage in the future he hoped the Board might look at the possibility of allowing biking in less sensitive parts of the Forest. However, he appreciated that this would depend very much on sufficient resources, which were not available in the short term, to administer and police a similar system to horse riding on the Forest. He added that he would not wish to see the Forest changed to accommodate such a scheme.

In thanking the Town Clerk the next day the Superintendent had said that as there had been no time for discussion of the Council's management ideas, those present from the Board would be happy to meet with the Town Council again at a later date. The substance of this invitation was also passed to the Mayor and the Clerk by Mrs Bagshawe at a subsequent meeting.

ITEM 3 To receive an initial report on the Board's request for legal advice in relation to fox hunting on Ashdown Forest.

In following up the Board's request to obtain legal advice on this matter, the Superintendent reported on progress so far and in particular on a meeting the Chairman of the Board and he had had with the Conservators' solicitor.

The solicitor's advice was that Counsel should be consulted to obtain the necessary clarification on any possible conflict between the Board's policies, the statutory obligations of the Board, the Byelaws and the 1974 Act, as well as any impact the High Court Judgement against Somerset County Council might have on the Board.

The solicitor agreed to submit a short list of QC qualified to advise in this area for the Committee's consideration.

ITEM 4 To consider a Planning Application for an animal carcass incineration plant at Greenfields, Mardens Hill Crowborough.

The Superintendent told the Committee that there had been a knackers yard at this site for 100 years and although it does not lie adjacent to the Forest it is within the Pale and therefore it was right that the Board should have a view on the application. It is understood that against a background of new European legislation the proposal is to refurbish the site and

install modern high tech incinerators to incinerate dead animals from a variety of sources such as vets, farmers etc as well as the waste from carcasses butchered on site. The proposed annual throughput would be in the order of 5250 tonnes with a forecast increase in vehicle movements of about 32 per week. The application specifically states the site will not handle BSE cattle.

It is understood that English Nature are content, from data contained in the Environmental Assessment, that emissions from the 14m high stack will not harm growth on the Forest. It is difficult to assess the visual impact of the chimney from the Forest.

The Committee discussed the issue in detail and concluded that the Superintendent should express the Board's concern on the following aspects of the project:

1. Emissions from the chimney. These might be within acceptable limits so long as the machinery was working properly - there was a requirement for appropriate control and continuous monitoring of the plant.
2. The potential visual impact of the 14m chimney which, given the height of the surrounding cover, might be a landscape feature.
3. The increase in vehicle use of the narrow Forest road.
4. Finally to express concern at the potential for future expansion of the site if planning permission is given.

ITEM 5 To consider a request to relocate a telegraph pole onto the Forest.

The Superintendent briefed the Committee on a current request from BT and a local property owner to resite a telegraph pole on the Forest near Marsh Green. The pole is currently located on private property on the old pale boundary. The alternatives being suggested were to resite it in the ditch, on the narrow strip of Forest between the hedge and the road or on the metre strip beside the road. The Committee felt their previous policy, to encourage BT to put cables underground where possible, should be followed and if this could not be done the matter should be referred back to the Committee.

ITEM 6 Any other business.

Mr Prendergast noted that the ditch agreed by the Committee at an earlier meeting had not yet been dug across the potential track from Mr Evatt's land to the Forest near Twyford. He then sought clarification on the subject of encroachments generally and was told that where any were discovered by Rangers on their annual boundary walking appropriate action was taken.

The Superintendent briefed the Committee that the pavilion at the Forest Row recreation ground had been totally destroyed by fire the previous Sunday - it was thought to be arson.

The site is now fenced off and the Pavilion Committee will probably seek a rebuild in due course. In the meantime they asked for the Board's permission to put a portacabin and a portaloos on the old Bowling Green adjacent to the car park as a temporary changing facility

and ablutions. The portacabin, and in due course the pavilion rebuild, will need planning consent.

Subject to the necessary planning consent being obtained by the Pavilion Committee or the Parish Council, the Committee agreed in principle to permit the positioning of the portacabin and portaloos on the old Bowling Green. They imposed a two year time limit on their permission.

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The Meeting closed at 12.50 and the Committee went into Confidential Session.

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**MINUTES
FINANCE & GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE MEETING
HELD ON 24 AUGUST 1998**

Present: Mr AN White, Air Marshal Sir Frederick Sowrey
Messrs DHO Allen, DC Cumming, DL Hall, RIF Parsons,
AG Reid, FWJ Whetstone

ITEM 1 To consider the District Auditor's comments on the Board's Accounts for 1997/98.

The Committee noted the Accounts for 1997/98 had received an unqualified Certificate from the District Auditor. The Committee were told that the format and content of the accounts as presented for audit had been agreed by the Auditor. They were briefed on a number of small procedural matters and told that during the audit process the attention of the Board had been drawn to the need for further controls in the management of the Board's finances. After discussion the Committee proposed the following measures:

1. The two current accounts maintained up to now to reflect the Forest Management (No1) and the Information Barn (No2) should be amalgamated, as should the respective deposit accounts.
2. All incoming grants or contributions from such as the County Council, District Council or the Ashdown Forest Trust, together with payments from MAFF over £5000 for stewardship work carried out on the Forest, should be credited directly into the Deposit Account. Withdrawal of money from the Deposit Account may then only be authorised to the bank by letter signed by two of the nominated members of the Board of Conservators. The amount to be held at any time in the Instant Access Account would be no more than an average month's expenditure.
3. Cheques on the current account in excess of £10,000 should be counter-signed by one other member of the Board.

4. The Board Members authorised to sign in 2 and 3 above would be from the Chairman, Vice Chairman and Chairman of the Finance Committee. **The Committee recommend the Board endorse the controls proposed and that they be brought into immediate effect.**

ITEM 2 To regularise the position with staff salaries following the review of taxable benefits.

Following the review of benefits and salaries the Committee agreed the additional payments to cover the cost to Rangers of their telephone and van charges.

In discussing the options for the provision of transport for the Superintendent it was agreed that the Board should sell the existing eight year old vehicle to the Superintendent at a price of £2500. Thereafter the Superintendent should claim for business mileage at the rate agreed. This arrangement should be reviewed by the Committee as required.

ITEM 3 To consider earmarking funds to offset the cost of professional services in the current financial year.

The Committee discussed the need to increase funds earmarked in the Board's Estimates for 'Professional Services' to take account of financial advice and legal advice being obtained within the current financial year. The sum will be confirmed in the Revised Estimates and may be up to £7000.

ITEM 4 To agree the revised Riding Permit fees for 1998/99.

The Committee were briefed that the Riding Committee had endorsed proposed permit fees for 1998/99 which were those of the current year increased by 4.7% in line with the Board's policy (being RPI 3.7% plus 1%). The Committee agreed the increase.

The Committee also considered a proposal put forward by a member of the Board to increase income by changing the basis on which the annual riding permit fee was assessed to one based on acreage and available ride length. In agreeing to stick with the current system the Committee recognised that a radical increase in riding permit fees would create one or two significant management problems on the Forest.

ITEM 5 To review the Board's Health & Safety at Work Policy

When the new policy was introduced in 1996 it was agreed that the Board should be reminded of their obligations and review their policy statement on an annual basis.

In respect of jobs outstanding, the Superintendent informed the Committee that during the year a dust extractor had been provided for the woodwork shop and an annual inspection of the compressor set up through the Insurance Company. The shower unit for staff using herbicides would be installed this winter. But given the dilute nature of herbicides used, the existing trap was considered by the Superintendent to be sufficient to take the washings from two knapsack sprays.

In considering the Policy document it was recommended that in the next rewrite the word 'business' on the penultimate line of page 1 should be deleted and the word 'activity' substituted.

The Committee recommend that the Board do not change their existing Health & Safety at Work Policy statement.

ITEM 6 To consider an increase in the annual rent (the Licence fee) payable by properties for access across the Forest.

The Superintendent reminded the Committee that where Licences are required for access over the Forest, water pipes, signs etc a Licence preparation fee of £50 + VAT is charged and the annual rent, which has stood since 1993, is £10. He recommended that from September 1998 where new Licences are issued the annual rent should be increased to £15 but the preparation fee should remain at the current level. The Committee agreed the recommendation.

ITEM 7 To decide on the distribution of Board Minutes.

Following earlier discussions on the possible distribution of Minutes from the Board's Meetings the Superintendent reported that the Library Services were not prepared to pay for copies of the Minutes but would be happy to house them in the Crowborough Library. Picking up on the suggestion made at the last Board Meeting the Superintendent stated that at the Centre they had neither resources nor expertise to consider putting the Minutes on a web site and he was therefore sending a member of the staff on an appropriate course and looking into the possibility of utilising the County Council's web site. The Committee agreed to delay a decision until the Superintendent reported back.

ITEM 8 To agree a retrospective approach to the Society of Friends to purchase a new forage harvester.

The Superintendent reported that the forage harvester, which is heavily used in the summer and autumn to collect and remove cut bracken and heather, had died. It had been acquired second hand two years ago but dated from the early sixties. He said he had approached the Friends who had kindly agreed to fund the purchase of a replacement new machine - the cost being £7825.

ITEM 9 Any other business.

The Chairman showed the Committee the draft contract of employment for the Superintendent together with the revised Job Description, both of which were agreed with a few amendments.

The Superintendent stated that after much delay, partly due to a lack of communication between the vendor and his solicitor, the acquisition of the land at Braberry Hatch was now going ahead and he hoped contracts would be exchanged by mid September.

The Superintendent also informed the Committee that the local Customs & Excise Office were due to carry out a VAT Inspection the following day - the last inspection had been in late 1995.

Mr Parsons mentioned a recent mass trespass of cyclists on Dartmoor following suggestions that areas were to be closed to cyclists after erosion damage, and wondered whether there might be implications for the Forest.

Mr Reid said that the County Council Committee responsible for Highways would probably recommend a 30 ton weight restriction for the C3West at their September meeting.

Sir Frederick Sowrey informed the Committee that he had been in correspondence with Crowborough Town Clerk suggesting how the town might attract more visitors; he had received a reply saying the Council were seeking to increase the number of visitors to the Forest. Sir Frederick said they appeared not to have taken the point that there were already about one and a quarter million visitors a year to the Forest with no apparent effort being made to draw them towards Crowborough.

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