

MINUTES of the Court of Verderers held on Wednesday 15th April 2009 at 9.30 a.m. in the Verderers' Hall & Library, The Queen's House, Lyndhurst.

PRESENT:	Mr O Crosthwaite Eyre	Official Verderer
	Mr J Adams	Elected Verderer & Chairman of the Staff Committee
	Mr J F Kitcher	Elected Verderer
	Mr A Gerrelli	Elected Verderer
	Miss D Macnair	Elected Verderer
	The Hon R Montagu	Forestry Commission Appointed Verderer
	Mr A H Pasmore	Elected Verderer
	Mrs P Thorne	DEFRA Appointed Verderer (joined the meeting after the Open Court)
	Vacant	National Park Appointed Verderer
IN ATTENDANCE:	Miss S Westwood	Clerk to the Verderers
	Mr J R Gerrelli	Head Agister (for the first two items)
APOLOGIES:	Mr P Frost	Natural England Appointed Verderer

IN COMMITTEE in the Library

The Official Verderer formally welcomed the Lord Lieutenant of Hampshire, Mrs Mary Fagan. He added that it is exactly six years since the Lord Lieutenant's last visit to the Court.

2009/4237 RE-APPOINTMENT OF FORESTRY COMMISSION VERDERER DISCHARGE

The Official Verderer was pleased to announce the re-appointment of Mr Ralph Montagu as the Forestry Commission's Appointed Verderer.

2009/4238 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING RESUME

The Minutes of the Court held on Wednesday, 18th March 2009 were approved.

2009/4239 CONDITION OF STOCK RESUME

The Head Agister reported that he is fairly happy with conditions on the Forest at the moment. As usual a few mares which still have last year's foals with them and some young (2/3 year old) ponies are not in perfect condition. A few ponies whose condition is borderline are being watched closely and will be removed if necessary. The weather has been helpful. Mares are beginning to foal and some may need to be taken off the Forest for a few weeks for supplementary feeding.

The Agisters are marking a lot of cattle now. Cattle generally appear to have wintered well and overall condition is very good.

The Head Agister left the meeting.

Mr Adams agreed with the Head Agister's summary of conditions on the Forest. He added that in his opinion a lot of ponies do not look their best but the grass is beginning to grow and in another month most animals will have improved.

One or two commoners have proved to be a little difficult over a few ponies but these problems are being resolved.

It can be difficult when a mare is close to foaling and ideally should be removed. It is not acceptable to chase heavily in-foal mares and in most instances it is best to wait until after the foal is born before catching them.

Mr Adams added that he too is quite happy with the condition of stock now but a few weeks ago he was quite concerned. This has been quite a hard winter - some people have described it as a "proper" winter. Most animals have come through it fairly well but a small percentage have not.

2009/4240 ANNOUNCEMENTS AND DECISIONS RESUME

The announcements and decisions were approved.

2009/4241 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST RESUME

The Elected Verderers, and Mrs Thorne all declared an interest in the Countryside Stewardship Scheme.

Mr Gerrelli declared an interest in campsites.

2009/4242 FINANCIAL STATEMENT RESUME

The Financial Statement for March 2009 was approved.

2009/4243 REPORT ON MARKING FEES RECEIVED AS AT END OF MARCH 2009 RESUME

Ponies	4247	Pigs	14
Cattle	927	Sheep	37
Donkeys	110		
SUB TOTAL	5284	TOTAL ALL ANIMALS	5335

2009/4244 ANIMALS REMOVED IN MARCH DUE TO POOR CONDITION RESUME

Mares with yearlings	9		
Mares	20		
Fillies	45		
		TOTAL CATTLE	1
TOTAL PONIES	74		

2009/4245 BYELAW ENFORCEMENT RESUME

Mr Cooper is in the Magistrates' Court today to explain why he has not paid the compensation to the Verderers ordered by the Court.

Mr Barnes has indicated he will be marking his cattle properly this year.

There will be notes to the Audited Accounts in respect of the outstanding costs due to the Verderers in respect of the successful prosecutions in the year 2008/9.

2009/4246 REVISION OF THE VERDERERS' BYELAWS RESUME

Until yesterday, no progress had been made and the Official Verderer now plans to go to London on 22nd April to finalise the byelaws with the DEFRA lawyers.

2009/4247 FOREST RUN STALLIONS RESUME

All stallions remain off the Forest except the five five year olds which wintered out.

22 stallions are in the grazing at Cadland Manor and the remainder are at home on their owners' holdings. The 20 stallions selected to run out this year will be turned out for June only. At the end of their period on the Forest they will return to Cadland or their owners' holdings for the remainder of the summer. Winter grazing will again be available in Cadland.

A meeting took place with Mr Richard Cuzens at New Park, attended by Mr Adams the Clerk and the Head Agister. At the meeting two issues were discussed, namely deer and fencing. Both matters will be raised with the Deputy Surveyor later.

The Stallion Scheme will be revised in the Spring of 2010.

OPEN COURT – 10.00 a.m. in the Verderers' Hall

IN ATTENDANCE: Mr Mike Seddon, Deputy Surveyor of the New Forest
Mr Mark Street, Area Land Agent (New Forest)

ANNOUNCEMENTS AND DECISIONS BY THE OFFICIAL VERDERER

The Official Verderer welcomed the Lord Lieutenant of Hampshire, Mrs Mary Fagan to the Court.

2009/4248 JACK DONKEYS

In his presentment made at the last Court, Mr Michael Cooper asked us to consider placing a restriction upon the number of jack donkeys that are at large in the Forest at present in order to avoid producing a large number of mules next year. Having considered Mr Cooper's request, we believe that the present situation needs to be monitored carefully to see if there is any cause for concern next year, and we have written to Mr Cooper to this effect.

2009/4249 STUDLEY CASTLE

A presentment was made by Mr Tarnoff on behalf of the New Forest Association at the last Court concerning the damage that has been done to Studley Castle by the Forestry Commission. We raised this matter with the Deputy Surveyor in Committee, and Mr Seddon agreed that this was a serious incident that was caused by a lack of communication. Clearly procedures need to be tightened up, and the Deputy Surveyor has agreed that this will be done.

2009/4250 ELECTION

I would like, once again, to remind everybody that in order to cast your vote at the forthcoming Verderer's elections in November you must complete a registration form. These forms are available here in the Hall, and also in the office. Please take copies of the form home with you today if you can, and pass them on to those you know are eligible so that they can register their right to vote.

2009/4251 FOREST CAMPSITES

Almost exactly one year ago we received an unequivocal assurance from the Deputy Surveyor that the campsites in the Forest would open only on the agreed date, which is the Thursday before the Easter Bank Holiday weekend. Last year the campsites opened earlier than that date without any notice or prior agreement with ourselves, and having received that assurance we were satisfied that this would not happen again.

To our astonishment and considerable dismay the campsites have once again opened early, and we will be seeking a full explanation for this from the Deputy Surveyor in Committee this morning.

2009/4252 FORESTRY COMMISSION APPOINTED VERDERER

I am very pleased to announce the reappointment of the Honourable Ralph Montagu, as the Forestry Commission appointed Verderer for the New Forest. The reappointment takes effect from 1st August for a third and final three-year term.

Ralph has a great knowledge of the New Forest and experience in managing land for wildlife and people. His knowledge is of great value to the Court and it is very good news that he will be part of the Court for another three years.

ANIMAL ACCIDENT REPORT

2009/4253 ACCIDENT REPORT FOR MARCH 2009

The Agisters attended 7 accidents compared with 6 in same period last year.

1 pony and 1 donkey were killed and 1 pony and a cow were injured.

6 accidents occurred during the hours of darkness.

6 involved private cars or light commercials.

1 accident was not reported.

5 accidents involved local motorists.

The total killed and injured in March was 4 compared with 2 for the same period last year.

PRESENTMENTS BY THE DEPUTY SURVEYOR OF THE NEW FOREST

None

PRESENTMENTS

2009/4254 COMMERCIALISATION OF CAMPSITES

Presentment by Mr Michael Eccles on behalf of the New Forest Commoners' Defence Association

Mr Eccles said the CDA is becoming increasingly concerned at the commercial and suburban approach to the campsites run by Forest Holidays. Last year some campsites opened early and despite assurances from the Deputy Surveyor that this was a genuine mistake that would not happen again, it did.

The CDA is concerned that following the problems at Roundhill last year with gas bottles and electric cables presenting a hazard to stock, there is now news that there is to be a mobile shop touring the campsites this summer. This is considered unfair to local businesses who rely on summer trade.

The provision of permanent camping bases for campers who are not able or who choose not to bring their own tents or caravans with them is considered an inappropriate form of camping in a National Park which should not be allowed.

The CDA feels that Forest Holidays is constantly moving the goalposts and the commercialisation of the campsites potentially conflicts with the grazing rights and is unsuitable for camping in the New Forest.

The Verderers were called on to curtail these activities.

2009/4255 SIGNAGE

Presentment by Mr Michael Eccles

Mr Eccles commented that a number of road signs are in a poor state of repair.

2009/4256 VERGE PARKING & OBSTRUCTION OF BARRIERS

Presentment by Mr Michael Eccles

Mr Eccles complained that there is an increase in verge parking which is causing a considerable amount of damage to the grazing. Additionally barriers are constantly blocked making access in an emergency very difficult.

There is also concern that a number of laybys on the A326 have been closed resulting in drivers of slow moving vehicles (such as tractors) having no-where to pull over to allow other vehicles to pass. It is a legal requirement for drivers of such vehicles to avoid long queues building up behind them but if there is now nowhere on the A326 to pull off the carriageway.

2009/4257 LITTER

Presentment by Mr Michael Eccles

Mr Eccles commented that it appears that some members of the public are hanging bags of dog excrement and other rubbish in trees! The practice has been noted at Bolton's Bench.

2009/4258 BEAULIEU ROAD STATION

Presentment by Mr Michael Eccles

On a more positive note, Mr Eccles noted that the reinstatement that has been carried out at Beaulieu Road Station is excellent.

The Official Verderer responded to Mr Eccles' presentments saying that the campsites are on the Agenda for later in the morning when a senior executive for Forest Holidays will be joining the meeting to answer the serious concerns that have been expressed. The Official Verderer went on to say that the Court is aware of the other matters which they are endeavouring to deal with. As respects the signage, rationalisation proposals are underway but will take time.

IN COMMITTEE in the Library

The Official Verderer welcomed Mr Simon Hodgson, Chief Executive, Forest Enterprise England and Mr Richard Palmer of Forest Holidays

CONSIDERATION OF PRESENTMENTS

2009/4259 CAMPSITES DISCHARGE

It was decided that as the Campsite issues are on the Agenda for later in the meeting the matters raised by Mr Eccles would be discussed then.

SUBMISSIONS BY THE FORESTRY COMMISSION

2009/4260 POUNDHILL INCLOSURE – REALIGNMENT OF FENCE DISCHARGE

The Forestry Commission's notice of intention to change fencelines in Poundhill Inclosure in order to facilitate SSSI habitat restoration work on the adjacent Open Forest was rejected. The reason for this is that if the inclosure is of A&O Woodland the New Forest Acts require that it should be for regeneration purposes only. It is unclear if any part of the fenced land comprises a Verderers' Inclosure and the Deputy Surveyor is to investigate this.

There is no authority for Poundhill to be used as a seasonal inclosure and the Court felt the fenceline should be put back to the original inclosure boundary.

The Deputy Surveyor argued that the works are included in the Forest Design Plan which includes provision of deer grazing. However it was pointed out that the Design Plan cannot over-ride the New Forest Acts.

It was finally agreed that the proposals would not be taken forward and the Deputy Surveyor would bring the matter back to the Court after further investigation and consideration of the legal position.

2009/4261 FOREST HOLIDAYS RETAIL VAN RESUME

Forest Holidays proposed to operate a retail van and a paper had been circulated setting out the details. However, the Court disagreed with the Deputy Surveyor's view that Verderers' consent is not required. A discussion ensued during which the Deputy Surveyor and Verderers put forward their views on the legal position.

Eventually the Deputy Surveyor and Mr Palmer said the proposals would be put forward in Open Court in May. In the meantime further consideration will be given to the legal position and the matter will be discussed by the Verderers later in the meeting.

MATTERS ARISING OF CONCERN TO THE FORESTRY COMMISSION

2009/4262 CAMPSITE SURVEY RESUME

The surveys have commenced with the first one being undertaken at Hollands Wood. The Official Verderer thanked Forest Holidays for their donation of £1,000 towards the cost of carrying out the survey.

2009/4263 LINWOOD ROAD DRAGONS TEETH/HAUNCHING DISCHARGE

A site meeting took place attended by Mrs Thorne on behalf of the Court and Mr Street for the Forestry Commission.

It was agreed the tarmac will be cut back by 150mm along the whole stretch of the road with the exception of three or four areas where passing places will be constructed, protected by dragons teeth. Where soil is used on the road edges these too will be protected with dragons teeth where necessary. White lines along the sides of the road will also be added.

The Court was content with the proposals.

2009/4264 FOREST ROAD BURLEY DISCHARGE

A similar scheme to that on the Linwood Road has been agreed. However, at the eastern end, for road safety reasons, there is a proposal to do away with the fork and triangle. Careful engineering will be required in order to maintain good sight lines.

The Highway Authority has commenced the work on Forest Road and has asked that if anyone is unhappy, would they please get in touch as soon as possible.

Again, the Court was content with the proposals.

2009/4265 HALE PURLIEU HAUNCHING/TRAFFIC CALMING RESUME

The Clerk reported that having sent back comments on the Highway Authority's original proposals, she has heard nothing further. It is thought perhaps the Highway Authority is dealing with the other two matters (above) first.

2009/4266 PRE-ERECTED TENTS AND PRE-PREPARED CARAVANS RESUME

A letter received from the Deputy Surveyor was discussed later in the meeting.

The Official Verderer said he believes the New Forest Acts give the Verderers the power to decide on the provision of accommodation. The Deputy Surveyor disagreed, stating that in his view these tents and caravans are included in the consented activity of "camping" and so they don't need consent. The tents are already up with the agreement of the Forestry Commission.

2009/4267 CAMPSITE OPENING TIMES DISCHARGE

Mr Palmer said he is most embarrassed that the sites opened early. He said there are no excuses and it was a genuine mistake. He apologised and said he would be writing to the Official Verderer. Mr Palmer assured the Court it would not happen next year.

2009/4268 NEWLY ERECTED BARRIER AT THE ENTRANCE TO HOLLANDS WOOD CAMPSITE RESUME

A very brightly coloured barrier has been installed at the entrance to Hollands Wood campsite which the Court considered to be totally out of keeping with the Forest environment.

It appears, however, that a barrier of some description pre-dates Forest Holiday's lease although the present one may be a replacement. The Court is of the opinion that it has not given consent for this barrier.

It was agreed that both the Forestry Commission and the Court should undertake some research to establish whether consent was given.

2009/4269 ROUNDHILL CAMPSITE DISCHARGE

Mr Palmer agreed to consult with the Verderers prior to submitting a planning application for the re-configuration of the campsite.

Mr Hodgson and Mr Palmer left the meeting.

2009/4270 JOINT APPROACH TO PUBLIC ACCESS AND FREE-ROAMING STOCK ON THE CROWN LANDS DISCHARGE

This paper has now been seen by the Court's insurers who had no comment to make. It was therefore agreed that the paper should be jointly signed by the Deputy Surveyor and the Official Verderer. A copy will be sent to the Health and Safety Executive.

2009/4271 RAILWAY COMMUNICATION EQUIPMENT RESUME

Mr Pasmore reported that he met with a Network Rail representative and their ecologist to discuss the siting of the four new masts.

The issue of whether Network Rail has permitted development rights has still not been resolved as the proof they have been asked to provide has not been forthcoming.

The four mast sites are as follows:-

1. Pignall Hill – In the inclosure, east of Brockenurst. No objection.
2. Woodfidley – The proposal here is to replace an existing mast with the new one on a site further east. This will be an improvement and therefore there are no objections.
3. Sandhole – This mast will be out in the open and as such is extremely intrusive and will dominate the area. Mr Pasmore suggested it be moved further east towards Ashurst in an attempt

to hide it and Network Rail agreed to give the request consideration and report back. No report has been received.

4. Latchmoor, Brockenhurst – The preferred site from Network Rail's point of view is next to the pound on the south-west side of the track. However, it is suggested it is moved back towards Brockenhurst where it won't be so visible. Apparently, however, masts must not be visible from houses! If the mast is moved as requested it will be acceptable.

Mr Street reported that he has received a communication from a technical person wishing to undertake a site investigation at Pignall and so he believes matters may be progressing.

2009/4272 KINGSTON GREAT COMMON RESUME
July
This matter will be resumed in July.

2009/4273 NETWORK RAIL CLAIM FOR DAMAGE TO GRAZING RESUME
A response was received from Network Rail refusing to take any responsibility or pay the compensation. A further letter has been sent countering the arguments contained in their letter.

2009/4274 NEW FOREST PERAMBULATION AND THE ORDNANCE SURVEY DISCHARGE
A further letter from the OS indicates that they will not change their minds and the perambulation will not be included in future issues of the local map. Apparently the map is primarily designed for recreational purposes and to give information to tourists. The National Park boundary is therefore deemed to be more useful!

SSSI RESTORATION WORKS

2009/4275 WARWICKSLADE/KNIGHTWOOD RESUME
Confusion over what works were agreed has resulted in a considerable problem as respects the proposals for this site.
The Verderers consent to the works is subject to the clearance of a drain but Natural England will not permit that to be done.
The consent is therefore now invalidated creating a dilemma for the Forestry Commission.
A second site meeting will now be required in order to try to sort out the issues.
It seems a breakdown in communication occurred and steps will be taken to ensure there is not a repeat.
The Clerk remarked that in the past, following site meetings, formal proposals were prepared by the Forestry Commission ecologist for approval by the Court and that system seemed to work. On this occasion, the Court approved a report kindly prepared by Mr Pasmore but it seems the report did not concur with the Forestry Commission's understanding of the outcome of the meeting. In future reports

prepared by Verderers representing the Court at site meetings will be copied to the Forestry Commission in advance of a Court where proposals have to be agreed and consent given. Where appropriate, and certainly in respect of any new works, written proposals will be provided by the Forestry Commission for consideration by the Court and consent will be given (or withheld) based on those proposals. Such a system should hopefully prevent further breakdowns of communication.

2009/4276 PEAKED BOTTOM/JACK'S WOOD

DISCHARGE

Mr Pasmore attended site meetings at these two locations and prepared a report. The report has been circulated to all Verderers and the Forestry Commission.

In this case, the works consist of repair to earlier conservation works and the proposals, set out in Mr Pasmore's report are not contentious and concur with the written proposals prepared by Ms Sarah Oakley on behalf of the Forestry Commission. The proposals were therefore approved subject to an undertaking for proper maintenance of the fords and drains mentioned. This was all agreed.

ANY OTHER BUSINESS OF CONCERN TO THE FORESTRY COMMISSION

2009/4277 TRAVELLERS AT SMUGGLERS' ROAD CAR PARK, KNAVES ASH

RESUME
September

The travellers have been in-situ for a month. The Forestry Commission said that it hopes to have moved them in the next 10 days. If not, the travellers will be taken to Court. Mr Street explained it was necessary to block off some entrances to land at Hurn before the travellers were evicted from Smugglers' Road otherwise they would have simply moved onto land at Hurn instead.

A House of Lords decision is expected in August in respect of "Wider Orders". Such Orders, if possible to obtain, can prevent travellers from returning to anywhere in a specific area – such as the New Forest. Ordinarily, Orders only cover specified sites which means travellers simply move down the road to the next car park. It may also be possible to obtain Orders against specified individuals who are known to be particularly troublesome.

The litter that has accumulated behind the traveller site at Smugglers' Road may not originate from their campsite but could be general household waste dumped by other persons.

2009/4278 NEW PARK STALLION GRAZING

RESUME

Mr Adams advised the Deputy Surveyor of the meeting with Mr Cuzens and asked if the Forestry Commission can assist in resolving the deer/fencing problems at New Park.

Approximately 80 deer shared the grazing with the stallions over the past winter. As a result of the continuing presence of such a large number of deer, it is impossible to overwinter more than 10 stallions in New Park. It has been reported that the deer have gained access to the stallions' grazing, because someone has cut the fence. It is believed that those responsible are of the view that the deer should

not be excluded from any part of New Park.

Whilst the integrity of the fence is clearly the responsibility of the Show Society, it cannot afford to repeatedly mend the fence if it continues to be deliberately damaged.

Five mares also found their way into the stallions' grazing from the adjacent inclosure via the damaged fence. The Forestry Commission was asked if it could assist by ensuring that the fencing of the inclosure is stock-proof. The Deputy Surveyor agreed to investigate the condition of the inclosure fencing and to arrange for any ponies that are in the inclosure to be driven out. It will then be the Show Society's responsibility to ensure the fence is secure and adequately maintained if stallions are to continue to graze in New Park.

2009/4279 WOODS CORNER POUND ACCESS RESUME
June

The Rangers and Agisters met at Woods Corner in an attempt to agree a solution to vehicles blocking access to the pound. Some works have been carried out but the public is still parking in front of the barrier. The Deputy Surveyor said he understands a solution to the problem is being sought that will not involve too much modification to the entrance to either the pound or the car parking area. It is not a formal car park and some temporary signage is to be erected asking the public to keep the pound entrance clear.

2009/4280 FORESTRY COMMISSION'S 24 HOUR TELEPHONE ANSWERING DISCHARGE
SYSTEM

Complaints have been received that the operators at the FC's 24 hour call centre are difficult to understand and do not know the Forest. The Deputy Surveyor replied by saying there are bound to be teething problems with a new system and he is hopeful things will settle down in time. Specific issues should be reported to the Office Manager, Ms Linda Cox.

2009/4281 WATER TROUGH AT CANTERTON RESUME

It is understood a suggestion has been made that this trough should be dispensed with. However, a number of local commoners, as well as the Agister for the area, have expressed the wish that it be retained. The Deputy Surveyor said he will investigate.

2009/4282 A326 LAYBY CLOSURES DISCHARGE

Concern was expressed that the closure of the laybys on the A326 has resulted in slow moving vehicles (such as tractors) being unable to pull over to allow faster vehicles to make progress at normal speeds. It is understood that the laybys were closed off in response to highway safety issues but the comment will be passed to the Highway Authority by the Clerk.

The Deputy Surveyor said that some bell mouth entrances in the Forest have been made smaller in an effort to prevent the public parking in them and in so doing blocking access.

2009/4283 TURF HILL RESUME

It was reported that most of the timber stacks have not been removed. The Deputy Surveyor will go back to his staff to ascertain the current position. He apologised, adding that he thought the stacks had gone.

2009/4284 CONFLICT BETWEEN PONIES AND PEOPLE DISCHARGE

In order to try to reduce the instances of conflicts between ponies and the public in the Bolton's Bench area, the Forestry Commission proposes to erect some temporary A3 size signs. They will be mounted on lecturns and will be in place for the summer season only. An example of the signs which warns the public to keep a safe distance from the ponies was shown to the Court and consent requested for signs to be erected at Bolton's Bench, Queens and Parc Pale. An additional Ranger presence will also be provided, particularly at lunchtimes.

The Court approved the erection of the temporary signs.

2009/4285 HOLLANDS WOOD CAMPSITE BARRIER RESUME

The barrier at the entrance to the campsite was felt to be intrusive and out of keeping with the traditional character of the Forest. In addition, Verderers' consent for its erection does not appear to have been obtained.

It seems the barrier pre-dates the establishment of Forest Holidays and the files will be checked to ascertain whether in fact the Verderers' consent was ever requested or given.

The Deputy Surveyor and Mr Street left the meeting.

OTHER MATTERS ARISING FROM MINUTES OF THE LAST COURT AND PREVIOUS COURTS

Forest Run Stallions were dealt with earlier in the meeting.

There were no other matters arising.

VERDERERS' COUNTRYSIDE STEWARDSHIP SCHEME

There was nothing to report at this meeting.

NEW FOREST NATIONAL PARK

2009/4286 WORKING GROUP MEETINGS DISCHARGE

Recreational Horsekeeping – Miss Macnair attended this workshop and she felt it was fairly positive. The meeting felt the New Forest District Council had done a good job of regulating horsekeeping in the Forest and that if the National Park Authority had consulted local people some of the issues which arose from its draft plan might have been avoided. In particular insufficient account had been taken of the commercial implication for the Forest of over-zealous restrictions.

Traffic and Transport Working Group – Mr Montagu represented the Court. He made the point that the tranquil areas are very important and that the Verderers desire to protect them. For this reason, consent would not be given for changes to the cycle routes that may impact on those areas. It is understood this group is unlikely to meet again.

Socio-Economic Policies Workshop – Mrs Thorne reported that members of the group felt the policy is too prescriptive and that mixed businesses should normally be allowed. Commoners and farmers should be allowed to diversify where possible. Medium and large operations should not automatically be ruled out and proposals should not have to further National Park purposes – a neutral effect should be acceptable.

Zoning – Mr Pasmore said he believes this proposal may be abandoned. The proposed zoning policies were controversial and it is important to distinguish between their application to recreation and to town and country planning.

2009/4287 KEY PARTNERS STEERING GROUP RESUME

The Official Verderer said this small group is due to meet again in May. It is likely suggestions and recommendations from the working groups will be included in the discussions.

2009/4288 BOUNDARY MARKERS AND SIGNAGE ADVISORY GROUP DISCHARGE

This group met in early March. Mr Montagu reported that the group is looking at the various types of signage. Mr Pasmore commented that the signs on the B3078 have been rationalised and are much improved.

ITEMS RESUMED FROM EARLIER IN THE MEETING

2009/4289 FOREST HOLIDAYS RETAIL VAN RESUME

It was unanimously agreed that Forest Holidays proposal to operate this mobile shop is a controversial issue and one that needs airing in public. A Press Release will therefore be issued. A copy will be sent to the New Forest Association.

2009/4290 PRE-ERECTED TENTS AND PRE-PREPARED CARAVANS RESUME

The Court agreed that whilst it is content with the concept of a limited number of tents and caravans to operate on a trial basis, the Forestry Commission should have obtained formal consent for the provision of this facility in advance. It was agreed that the Official Verderer should write to the Deputy Surveyor informing him that a formal request should now be made to legitimise the position, preferably at the May Court.

OTHER AGENDA ITEMS

2009/4291 NEW FOREST LOCAL ACTION GROUP (LAG) AND THE NEW FOREST RDPE (LEADER) FUND DISCHARGE

Mrs Thorne produced a paper showing the sort of things for which farmers, foresters, growers, rural businesses and community organisations and commoners can apply for grants under the new scheme. Successful applicants could receive grants from £2,000 to £50,000 but recipients will be required to provide their own "match funding" of between 30% and 60% of the total cost of the project. Grants will be available until 2013.

Decisions about which projects will be funded are made by the New Forest LAG. They are supported in this work by staff from NFDC and the NFNPA.

MATTERS ARISING FROM EXTERNAL COMMITTEES AND WORKING GROUPS

None

STAFF MATTERS (including the Staff Committee)

2009/4292 AGISTERS' MILEAGE RESUME

The calculations so far have proved inconclusive and a further month's worth of data will be collected. It is thought, however, that the current level of reimbursement is about right.

TRAINING

No training is currently being undertaken.

HEALTH AND SAFETY AT WORK

2009/4293 HEALTH & SAFETY REVIEW RESUME

The Head Agister is making good progress on the review of the training sheets and risk assessments.

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

2009/4294 ROAD WIDENING/NARROWING SCHEMES DISCHARGE

In answer to a query as to whether the Verderers receive compensation payments in respect of grazing lost to highway repair and maintenance schemes, it was decided it is not economic to pursue every foot of potentially lost grazing. It was pointed out that in the case of larger scale projects where larger areas of land are lost, compensation is paid or land provided in exchange – usually the latter.

2009/4295 CATTLE ON THE WESTERN COMMONS RESUME

The Clerk was asked to clarify the position concerning some recently turned out cattle which have been seen on Rockford Common and at Linford. It was queried whether the owner has common rights.

2009/4296 FALLEN TREE ON HALE PURLIEU BOUNDARY

RESUME

A tree has fallen over the Newhouse Estate Boundary on Hale Purlieu. It is believed to be the responsibility of the National Trust and it will be asked to arrange for its removal before stock escape from the Forest.

There was no further business and the meeting closed at 1.45 p.m.