



Verderers of the New Forest

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SO43 7NH

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23rd June 2009

Mr Michael Seddon
The Deputy Surveyor of the New Forest
The Queen's House
Lyndhurst
Hampshire
SO43 7NH

Dear Mike

Mobile Retail Van – Verderers' Consent

Further to your presentment made at our May Court, we have now considered in committee your request under Section 1(2) of the New Forest Act 1970 for our agreement to the provision of a mobile retail van.

In making our decision we have taken into account

- the reasons for the provision of the mobile shop contained in your own presentment, and also the comments and information given to us by Richard Palmer of Forest Holidays who attended in Committee;
- the 16 presentments made to us by the public, including several local Parish Councils, the Commoners Defence Association and two by the New Forest Association. Thirteen of the presentments asked the Verderers to reject this proposal. Two of the presentments were made by businesses that have been approached by Forest Holidays in order to possibly include their products in the stock that would be carried by the mobile shop, and both those presentments were in favour of the proposal;
- the various letters that we have received, in particular from the retailers in Ashurst, all of which also ask us to reject this proposal;
- the opinion of the New Forest National Park Authority, as expressed by the Chief Executive both in Committee and in her letter to us of 16th June 2009. We particularly noted that the NPA advise that if our agreement is given then it should be on a trial basis only, during which there should be vigorous monitoring and testing;
- and had regard to the two National Park purposes as required by s.11A(2) National Parks Act 1949.

In the light of the above, and having given careful consideration to your request, we regret to inform you that we decline to give our agreement to this proposal under the specific power granted to the Verderers by Section 1(2) New Forest Act 1970.

Our decision has been reached on the basis of our existing policies. Policy 6.3 states that new development ancillary to recreational uses such as the provision of sales points will not normally be permitted on the commonable lands. Policy 2. states that the Verderers' overall aim is to ensure the maintenance of the unspoilt natural beauty of the forest, and the mitigation of any activities which impinge on its peacefulness and tranquil character. Our overall aims and policies are all directed at achieving our primary objective which is set out in Policy 1.

In coming to this decision, and in applying our policies to this specific request for our consent, we have concluded that

- *whilst the provision of a single mobile shop may not on its own materially conflict with the core aspects of our policies, we believe it is important to examine this proposal in the entire Forest context, and the context of camping activities in particular;*
- *the provision of a mobile shop does nothing to mitigate the ongoing damaging effect that camping on the open forest has in the long term. It is for that reason that our long-term policy aim is to seek to re-locate all camping from the commonable land of the Forest permanently, and the A&O woodlands in particular;*
- *a mobile shop will further impinge on the peace and tranquillity that is offered by the open Forest;*
- *we do not wish to encourage the ongoing interference with the exercise of common rights on the Open forest which results from the existence of the camps. The provision of a retail van would give such encouragement.*

Whilst the majority of the content of most of the presentments made to us by the public was focused on the damaging economic effect that they believe a mobile shop will have on their respective communities, real concern was also expressed about the inappropriateness of the introduction of a mobile shop and its urbanising effect on camping in the open Forest generally. In making our decision we have taken that particular aspect of the presentments into account.

We are also mindful of the fact that the original 1970s consent was intended to provide the simple pleasures of camping in the unique environment of the New Forest. Since then the facilities offered to campers have expanded considerably. We are concerned to keep the level of facilities commensurate with the type of camping that was originally intended. Full-blown commercial camping facilities that might normally be offered on private campsites elsewhere in England should not be allowed to evolve in the very different and ecologically vulnerable sites in the New Forest. The introduction of a mobile shop would be the introduction of just such a facility and is thus inappropriate.

We remain sympathetic to Forest Holiday's ongoing wish to provide its campers with a pleasurable holiday experience when visiting the New Forest sites, as well as managing its business in a viable way. We realise that this decision will therefore be a disappointment for Forest Holidays, however we cannot see how the introduction of this facility in any way helps mitigate the pressures of recreational activities that already exist upon the special qualities of the Forest (as set out in Policy No.1).

Yours sincerely

Oliver Crosthwaite Eyre
Official Verderer