

MINUTES of the Court of Verderers held on Wednesday 17th November 2010 at 9.30 a.m. in the Verderers' Hall & Library, The Queen's House, Lyndhurst.

PRESENT: Mr O Crosthwaite Eyre DL Official Verderer
Mr R Deakin Elected Verderer
Mr A Gerrelli Elected Verderer
Mr J F Kitcher MBE Elected Verderer & Chairman of the Staff Committee
Miss D Macnair MBE Elected Verderer
Mr C Maton National Park Appointed Verderer
The Hon Mr R Montagu Forestry Commission Appointed Verderer
Mr A H Pasmore Elected Verderer
Mrs P Thorne DEFRA Appointed Verderer
Mrs D Westerhoff Natural England Appointed Verderer

IN ATTENDANCE: Miss S Westwood Clerk to the Verderers
Mr J R Gerrelli Head Agister

APOLOGIES: None

IN COMMITTEE in the Library

2010/5190 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING RESUME

The Minutes of the Court held on Wednesday, 20th October 2010 were approved.

2010/5191 MARKING FEES DISCHARGE

After careful consideration of the Court's financial position, taking into account the reduction in the grant from the Forestry Commission which it has now been confirmed will be 25% over the next four years, it was agreed that the marking fees will have to be increased from 1st January 2011.

The Official Verderer therefore PROPOSED the marking fees should be increased by £2.00 per head with the discount for early payment for ponies and donkeys being discontinued. The proposal was SECONDED by Mr Pasmore. The motion was CARRIED unanimously.

Fees with effect from 1st January 2010 will therefore be as follows:-

Ponies, cattle and donkeys on the Forest	£22.00
Ponies and donkeys on the Commons	£11.00
Cattle on the Commons	£2.75
Sheep on the Forest	£7.00
Sheep on the Commons	£3.50
Pigs on the Forest	£4.00
Pigs on the Commons	£2.00

2010/5192 REVIEW OF EXPENDITURE RESUME

In view of the need to increase marking fees it was also agreed it is necessary to review the Court's expenditure. The Staff Committee Verderers, led by Mr Richard Deakin will take on this task and meet as soon as possible.

- 2010/5193 **CONDITION OF STOCK** **RESUME**
- The Head Agister joined the Court** and reported on the condition of stock.
- Most of the ponies are looking well and will go into the winter in good condition. There are not many foals on the Forest but one or two mares who do have foals are already beginning to lose condition and they are being removed. The Head Agister said he is quite happy with conditions on the Forest at the moment.
- 2010/5194 **BYELAW ENFORCEMENT** **DISCHARGE**
- There are currently no known byelaws infringements.
- 2010/5195 **ANNOUNCEMENTS AND DECISIONS** **RESUME**
- The announcements and decisions were approved.
- 2010/5196 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST** **RESUME**
- The Elected Verderers and Mrs Thorne declared an interest in the Higher Level Stewardship Scheme. Later in the meeting, the Official Verderer declared an interest in the Bramshaw Golf Club.
- 2010/5197 **FINANCIAL STATEMENT** **RESUME**
- The Financial Statement for October 2010 was approved.
- It was agreed that the sum of money requested from the Verderers' Grazing Scheme in respect of the Agisters' payroll costs, will be increased by 10% each year. The Official Verderer said he is satisfied that this is totally within the rules of the scheme.
- 2010/5198 **VERDERERS' HONORARIUM** **DISCHARGE**
- The Official Verderer suggested the Elected Verderers should consider whether or not the payment of the honorarium should continue.
- Mr Pasmore commented that 20 years ago the Illingworth Report recommended that the Elected Verderers should receive £1,000 per annum but they are still only receiving £500.
- Mr Pasmore compared the Verderers honorarium with the payments made to Councillors and certain National Park Members. The basic payment received by a County Councillor, for example, is £12,000, an NFDC Councillor receives £5,000 and NPA members who are also County councillors receive £13,700. All these figures exclude mileage and other such expenses which are paid in addition.
- The Verderers are receiving a fraction of the amounts these other appointees are receiving.
- The Official Verderer agreed that the honorarium should be paid and **PROPOSED** that the Elected Verderers should continue to receive their honorarium but that in view of the present financial situation, the amount should be frozen for the next five years. Mrs Pat Thorne,

DEFRA Appointed Verderer, SECONDED the proposal which was CARRIED unanimously in a vote taken by the Appointed Verderers – the Elected Verderers having abstained.

2010/5199 REPORT ON MARKING FEES RECEIVED AS AT END OF OCTOBER 2010 RESUME

Ponies	4818	Pigs	448
Cattle	2232	Sheep	153
Donkeys	119		
SUB TOTAL	7169	TOTAL ALL ANIMALS	7770

2010/5200 ANIMALS REMOVED IN OCTOBER DUE TO POOR CONDITION RESUME

None

Total year to date (June to October) - 557

Total ponies removed November 2009 – May 2010 inclusive - 579

June 2010 to October inclusive – 14 ponies, 3 cattle

ENCROACHMENTS

2010/5201 ENCROACHMENTS – HOME FARM, BARTLEY RESUME

The solicitors acting for the property owner have asked for a plan. This has been provided and it is hoped that it may help to explain the encroachment and resolve the issue.

Failing that, there are two ways forward. Firstly to proceed to Court without further delay, or secondly, to instruct a surveyor to carry out a proper survey in order to produce a map showing clearly what the owner of the property has done wrong.

The Official Verderer estimated that instructing the surveyor will cost in the region of £2,000 including VAT. This will include solicitors fees.

It was agreed a survey should be undertaken as such a document will be helpful if the matter cannot be resolved out of Court.

2010/5202 ENCROACHMENT – CANTERTON LANE RESUME

The Clerk reported that the land-owner has apologised that he has been unable to undertake the necessary work to abate the encroachment due to the equipment he needs to carry out the work having broken down. It is currently being repaired and the work should be carried out within the next few weeks.

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

2010/5203 MARKING FEES

It has been our very firm policy to avoid any increase in the level of marking fees for as long as possible. Indeed for the last sixteen years the fee has remained at the same level for ponies and cattle (with the exception that the early payment discount for cattle was discontinued). It was, however, inevitable that there would come a time when circumstances no longer permitted us to continue with that policy. I am sure that it will come as no surprise that that time has now come.

Last month the Government set out the cuts that need to be made by each of its departments in its Public Spending Review, and Defra is required to cut its budget by 29%, which is somewhat more than most other departments.

We have been braced for this news for some time, and it would have been unrealistic of us not to expect to have to play our part, however small, towards contributing to the national effort to reduce public expenditure. As a statutory body we receive taxpayers' money through an annual grant that is paid directly to us by the Government via the Forestry Commission, which itself forms part of Defra. The Deputy Surveyor has now informed us in writing that our grant will have to be reduced by 25% over the next four-year period. In order to mitigate the blow we have agreed with the Deputy Surveyor that in order to meet this target we will be budgeting for a reduction of our grant by 7% next year, and then 6% per annum for the three years after that.

We are determined that, in order to achieve this, we should not reduce the quality of the important service that we provide to the Forest, and that we should strive to fill the gap created by the reduced grant by increasing our income. Our income, other than the Government grant, comes from the fee that we charge to each practicing commoner to defray the day to day costs of regulating commoning on the open Forest, and it is there that we must first look in order to deal with the funding shortfall. We will also be looking at ways of reducing our expenditure.

We have decided that marking fees must be increased from January 1st next year by £2 per animal, and that the discount for early payment (for ponies and donkeys) will be abolished. The marking fees will be reviewed again in the normal way this time next year. We must say at this stage that it is probable that there will be a further rise in the marking fees in the years ahead.

Having made this difficult decision we have not forgotten that, especially in the current economic climate, the costs of keeping a pony on the Forest still far outstrip the prices that are achieved at auction, and that the viability of commoning is still in negative territory. Obviously any increase in marking fees will not help the situation, and may even make it worse.

As Verderers it remains our priority to do all that we can to encourage and support those who depasture stock in the exercise of common rights, and accordingly it is our intention to match each increase in the marking fee, pound for pound, with an increase in the payment that we make to those who participate in our HLS scheme. We intend to adopt this policy for as long as we are permitted to do so under the rules of our HLS agreement.

Therefore, as from January 1st 2011 the rates will be as follows:

Ponies & Donkeys on the Forest £22.00
Ponies & Donkeys on the Commons £11.00
Cattle on the Forest £22.00
Cattle on the Commons £2.75
Sheep on the Forest £7.00
Sheep on the Commons £3.50
Pigs on the Forest £4.00
Pigs on the Commons £2.00

Please remember that under our new Byelaws the deadline for payment of all marking fees for continuously depastured animals is 31st March.

2010/5204 FORESTRY COMMISSION LAND

Defra has also made it known that it wishes to reform the Forestry Commission's estate, and explore ways of "securing and increasing the wide range of public benefits currently delivered by Government ownership and how they might be achieved at lower cost". What that actually means will become clear when details of the government's proposals are released in the weeks ahead.

Obviously speculation has been rife, not helped by headlines in some national newspapers speaking of large-scale sales of the Forestry Commission's woodlands.

For our part we wish to make it widely known that we believe that the Forest needs and deserves specialist land management, and the Forestry Commission has proved over many decades that it is fully capable of providing this service for the public. The Forest is a fragile national treasure which must be preserved for the future enjoyment of the public, and, in our opinion, there is no need, or benefit to be gained, from transferring its management or ownership to another body. We are heartened by the fact that this Government has pledged itself to be the greenest in history, and there can surely be no better way to prove this than by ensuring that the management of the Crown lands remains safely in the hands of the Forestry Commission.

We understand that there will be a period of consultation once Defra's proposals are revealed, and rest assured we will be taking part in that process fully.

2010/5205 MUSHROOM PICKING

At our last Court Mrs Cadbury made a presentment expressing her deep concern at the high level of commercial mushroom picking that has been taking place in the Forest, fuelled in part by publicity in the media about the bumper fungi crop this autumn.

We raised this matter with the Deputy Surveyor who has the benefit of in depth knowledge of the subject due to the Forestry Commission's recent involvement in litigation on the issue.

The Forestry Commission does not agree with commercial exploitation of the Forest's edible mushrooms, and thus fully supports the English Code for Mushroom Picking, which actively discourages this from taking place. In an ideal world any picking would be tightly controlled as it is in Epping Forest where licences are granted and this is something that the Deputy Surveyor would like to explore, but that is not yet the position here in the Forest.

Accordingly our joint message with the Forestry Commission is that commercial picking is a violation, and we deeply disapprove of this sort of exploitation of the Forest.

2010/5206 HLS

We have received this year's payment for the HLS and we hope to send out all individual payment cheques to arrive in early December.

ANIMAL ACCIDENT REPORT

2010/5207 ACCIDENT REPORT FOR OCTOBER 2010

The Agisters attended 19 accidents compared with 30 for the same period last year.

5 ponies were killed and 4 ponies and 1 cow were injured.

12 accidents occurred during the hours of darkness.

14 involved private cars or light commercials.

3 accidents were not reported.

11 accidents involved local motorists.

The total killed and injured for the year to date is 70 compared with 87 for the same period last year.

PRESENTMENTS BY THE DEPUTY SURVEYOR OF THE NEW FOREST

There were no presentments by the Deputy Surveyor

PRESENTMENTS

2010/5208 PANNAGE

Presentment by Dr Graham Ferris on behalf of the New Forest Commoners Defence Association

'As has been widely recognised, this autumn has seen an enormous acorn crop. Despite the best efforts of a very large number of pigs, there have been more than 20 pony fatalities attributed to acorn poisoning. In many parts of the Forest acorns are still thick on the ground and we urge the Verderers to advise the Forestry Commission that this year a substantial extension of the pannage season would be appropriate'.

2010/5209 FENCING

Presentment by Dr Graham Ferris on behalf of the New Forest Commoners Defence Association

'We would like to express our gratitude to the Agisters for dealing with the increased work load associated with pigs gaining entry to properties adjoining the Open Forest. We would ask both the Verderers and the Forestry Commission to use all possible means to bring home to land owners and managers their responsibility for fencing in a pig proof manner. These land owners and managers should be left in no doubt that the liability is theirs if pigs are able to get through their fences and cause road accidents or damage to property.'

2010/5210 ROAD RESURFACING

Presentment by Dr Graham Ferris on behalf of the New Forest Commoners Defence Association

'The CDA is strongly supportive of the efforts of the Verderers' Office to get the Hampshire County Council's Highways Department to put right a number of errors made during recent road resurfacing in the Forest. These errors relate to the illegal widening of the tarmac surface and inappropriate surface colours.

There are many recent examples, in Minstead, between Pillely and Bull Hill, and in Bartley, to name a few, where the new tarmac surface has been extended. This not only represents a loss of grazing and a creeping encroachment, but is also an encouragement to irresponsible motorists to speed. The contractors should be given precise instructions; tarmac width should be accurately monitored and cut back where necessary.

A further issue is exemplified by the road between the Burley Tea Rooms and Bennetts Lane. Not only has the tarmac been widened, but it is also uniformly smooth and dark black so that ponies do not show up at night and motorists are encouraged to speed. It should be cut back and light coloured chippings rolled in.

It is disturbing that to date the concerns of this Court appear to be ignored by Hampshire County council.'

2010/5211 STALLON SCHEME – LOSS OF BLOODLINES

Presentment by Pippa Rivers, Sea Spirit of the Forest

Ms Rivers gave a very interesting presentment expressing her concern at the loss of bloodlines on the Forest. Ms Rivers' speciality is equine colour genetics and she went onto explain how certain colours, such as the flaxen, silver and pangare genes are linked with genes to produce thicker, more insulative manes and tails. The pangare gene is part of the original Forest gene pool and would have been widespread across the Forest in the early days. There has been a noticeable reduction in the incidents of pangare – that's the 'mealy' animals – on the forest over the past few decades. Miss Rivers went on to explain the significance of other colours and suggested that over the years selective breeding has actually bred *out* a gene associated with cold-weather hardiness because of a dislike of the mealy chestnut colour and a lack of understanding.

Ms Rivers said she is increasingly concerned about the decimation of the Forest gene pool. We are now turning out fewer stallions than ever. As a knock-on effect, the numbers of young breeding mares will be dramatically reduced by comparison with older mares, and they too will be more closely genetically related.

While limited numbers of stallions are running out, Ms Rivers suggested it is more important than ever to eliminate all close relationships in the stallions which means NO siblings, half-siblings, or father/son combinations. For safety, the second level should ideally also be excluded – grandsire/grandson and uncle/nephew combinations. In addition each stallion should be out for a much shorter span. It may we pay, genetically, to have a complete change of all stallions running the Forest every three years. That means not *moving* them, but *taking them off* and putting fresh (not closely related) stallions on.

Ms Rivers believes that if decisive action is not taken now to protect the breadth of the gene pool, in five pony generations' time, it may well be necessary to re-introduce stallions of other breeds into the Forest in order to preserve the Forest pony herd.

2010/5212 DEFRA National Park Governance Consultation
Presentment by Mr Brian Tarnoff, Resident, Ashurst

'As the Verderers may be aware DEFRA are conducting a review of the National Park Governance arrangements which will continue until the 1st February 2011. Part of this review will examine the membership of the National Park Authorities, which in the New Forest National Park is just over a two thirds majority of members elected to parish, district or county councils selected by those councils, the minority remainder being appointees chosen by DEFRA through an open recruitment process. The Verderers benefit from a similar mixture of members elected from their very specific constituency and appointees selected by local and national authorities.

I am concerned that some of the locally elected councillors on the New Forest National Park Authority are pandering to a misguided populism, pushing for either an entirely directly elected authority (an unnecessarily costly exercise), or the abolition of appointed members.

The "National" appointed members are individuals who are selected for their relevant expertise on the issues that may come before the Authority. They are also poised to take a long term apolitical view. Rules preclude their forming any majority on the Authority or any of its sub-committees, and they act in an advisory capacity. In this time of austerity I believe it unwise to dispense with such valuable resources which are freely offered.

As to the call for populism: A couple of years ago, at the New Forest Consultative Panel, a newly elected Parish Councillor raised the following question under "Any Other Business": "There are cows on Canada Common, they are awfully destructive, can anything be done about them?" That a duly elected representative of a Parish in the New Forest could be so ignorant of the workings of the Forest may be by turns amusing or alarming. I can report that I saw the late Colonel Peter Sweet giving that unlucky Parish councillor an educational earful after the close of that meeting. This does suggest that the democratic process, in and of itself, is a limited criteria for local knowledge.

I ask that the Verderers, if giving a collective or individual response to the DEFRA consultation, take into account the value of these expert volunteer appointees, and support continuing the provision for their membership in our New Forest National Park Authority.'

Note: The membership of National Park Authorities was established by the Environment Act 1995. The New Forest National Park Authority has 22 members consisting of: 12 appointed by the county, unitary, district and borough councils with land in the Park, comprising of five members appointed by Hampshire County Council; four from New Forest District Council; two from Wiltshire Council and one from Test Valley Borough Council; 4 selected by the parish councils within the Park; and 6 appointed by the Secretary of State for Environment Food and Rural Affairs through an open recruitment process.

The Official Verderer reminded those present that there is no Court in December. He wished everyone a Happy Christmas and said he looked forward to seeing everyone next year.

IN COMMITTEE in the Library

CONSIDERATION OF PRESENTMENTS

2010/5213 PANNAGE

DISCHARGE

The Court considered the Presentment from the CDA and asked the Deputy Surveyor to extend the pannage season by two weeks. This the Deputy Surveyor was happy to agree, and the pannage season will, therefore, now come to a close on Sunday 5th December 2010.

It was remarked that few commoners seem to be familiar with the best way of managing pigs on the Forest and it was suggested a few helpful comments should be provided in the next newsletter. The Agisters are to provide the Clerk with the necessary information.

2010/5214 FENCING

DISCHARGE

The Court was grateful to the CDA for its presentment.

Mention was made of a recent problem on the A35 at Wilverley. Members of the public have cut or pulled back the wire under the stile in order to let their dogs through onto the Forest. This resulted in pigs being able to escape through the hole.

It was suggested the Highway Authority be asked if it might be possible to construct a lifting wooden dog gate which would allow access by dogs but not pigs. The Clerk will take this up with the Highway Authority.

2010/5215 ROAD RESURFACING

DISCHARGE

The Clerk said that she has contacted the Highway Authority on numerous occasions about the problem of resurfacing resulting in a widening of the tarmac. On each occasion she has been promised that the issue will be addressed. The excess tarmac on Forest Road at Burley and the road at Hale still has still not been removed and the CDA's presentment follows further recent examples of this ongoing problem.

It was suggested the Official Verderer should write to the County Council to see if he has more success in persuading the Highway Authority to deal with this problem. The Clerk will provide photographic evidence of some of the worst examples of widening.

The suggestion that tarmac used in the Forest should be of a lighter colour will also be mentioned to HHW again. However, last time, it was claimed the road surface will become lighter over time. Further white lining will also be requested as it is felt it definitely helps reduce road accidents involving commoners' stock.

2010/5216 STALLION SCHEME – LOSS OF BLOODLINES RESUME

The Stallion Sub-Committee will meet on Wednesday, 24th November to discuss a proposal for addressing the loss of bloodlines from the Forest run herd. Agister Robert Maton will be invited to join the meeting as he has a great interest in the subject and it is felt his in-depth knowledge of the breeding lines in the pony herd will be most helpful when trying to address the problem.

NEW SUBMISSIONS AND OTHER MATTERS RAISED BY THE FORESTRY COMMISSION

2010/5217 NEW WATER AND ELECTRICITY SUPPLY TO BROOMY LODGE AND HOLLY HATCH DISCHARGE

The proposal as set out by the Forestry Commission for a new water and electric supply to these properties was welcomed by the Court; the present power supply being provided by a noisy, polluting generator.

The works to connect the supplies were therefore approved, subject to the usual conditions regarding reinstatement, safe working conditions, compensation for loss of grazing etc.

2010/5218 SIGNAGE FOR HONEY LANE DISCHARGE

Miss Macnair said there are problems in Honey Lane and Castle Lane, partly because some vehicle SATNAV systems are apparently programmed to send vehicles along these most unsuitable lanes.

Mr Street said the Forestry Commission maintains a policy of no additional signage. The Court concurred with this position. However, it was agreed that in this case, if it is evident that there is a justifiable need and real benefit, a single sign at the Burley Street end of the lane will be acceptable.

2010/5219 WATER MAIN RENEWAL – NOMANSLAND DISCHARGE

The proposals for the renewal of the main were approved on the condition that there are no vertical markers and all meter/stopcock covers are black in colour. The consent is also subject to the three usual conditions.

MATTERS ARISING OF CONCERN TO THE FORESTRY COMMISSION

2010/5220 CYCLE ROUTE AT CULVERLEY GREEN DISCHARGE

The Commoners Defence Association and the New Forest Association have raised no objections to the proposal to formalise the cycle path across Culverley Green and therefore the Court approved the proposal as set out in the Deputy Surveyor's letter to the Official Verderer dated 14th October 2010.

2010/5221 BURLEY OUTER RAILS / WOOLFIELD HILL COTTAGE DISCHARGE

The Court considered the Forestry Commission's proposal for resolving the issue of this as follows:

The Forestry Commission's interpretation of the position is that whilst the evidence suggests that land which previously formed part of the Statutory Inclosures was sold in the 1970's, the expiration of almost 40 years of time since the event restricts the liability in law.

The Commission is prepared to offer the following discretionary package in mitigation of this error:

- a. Compensation for loss of access to 'grazing':

Current compensation for Verderers Inclosures is £11/acre.

Total Area of Statutory Inclosure Sold = 0.75 ac @ £11 in perpetuity (grazing not replaced)

= 0.75 x £11 x 33.3333 (YP @ 3% in perpetuity)

= £274.99 to be included in 2010/11 compensation.

- b. Investigate opportunities when a formal land exchange is next proposed to include an extra 0.75 ac of land being subject to rights of common.

In response the Court told the Forestry commission that it does not wish to establish a precedent and it does not agree that the Limitations Act 1980 is applicable. However, it is happy to accept the Forestry Commission's solution on this occasion.

A copy of the letter from the Land Agent to the Clerk with its attachments will be filed with the other legal documents (land exchanges etc) held in the Verderers' Office.

2010/5222 BRAMSHAW GOLF CLUB MANAGEMENT PLAN RESUME

The Official Verderer declared an interest.

A survey of what is on the course already, such as signs, condition of tees etc., has been carried out and copies have been provided for the Court.

The Management Plan takes forward the future operation of the course. The Deputy Surveyor asked the Court to consider the survey and management plan which will form part of the terms and conditions of a new licence. A lot of effort has been put into the document. Mr Street will check that the comments provided earlier by the Court have been taken into account.

SSSI RESTORATION WORKS

2010/5223 CAMEL GREEN, QUEEN'S MEADOW AND DRIVER'S NURSERY RESUME

A site meeting has yet to be arranged.

2010/5224 LATCHMORE BROOK RESTORATION RESUME

A further site meeting is to be arranged.

OTHER BUSINESS OF CONCERN TO THE FORESTRY COMMISSION

2010/5225 COURT DATES DISCHARGE

Dates for 2011 were agreed. They follow the usual pattern with the Court meeting on the third Wednesday of the month; December being a committee only.

2010/5226 LONGBEECH CAMPSITE DISCHARGE

The ladder-board at the campsite is felt to say rather more than is strictly necessary, plus the bottom plank is a very bright green which looks rather out of keeping with the rest of the sign. The Court asked if the sign could comply with the more traditional design that is used in the Forest.

In reply, the Deputy Surveyor said that Forest Holidays is in the process of reviewing its signage. He said he will check to make sure new signs are in line with the agreed corporate design. In reply to the comment about the bottom board, he agreed that it is a rather bright in colour. However, he added that only the signs on the campsite thresholds are of this design. On the site itself they are all plain wood with white writing.

2010/5227 NFA CAMPSITE SURVEY RESUME
April 2011

Forest Holidays will check the survey in March when the campsite managers return.

2010/5228 LIMWOOD HOTEL ILLUMINATED SIGN DISCHARGE

Mr Street confirmed the lights have now been removed.

2010/5229 REQUEST FOR DRAINAGE OF TRACK AT LONGDOWN DISCHARGE

In response to an enquiry about the progress of this work, the Deputy Surveyor advised that it is on the list of works to be carried out and it will be done as soon as resources permit.

The Deputy Surveyor and Mr Street left the meeting.

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

2010/5230 A36 FENCE RESUME

The Official Verderer confirmed that a contact at the Highways Agency has now been identified and a letter will be sent as soon as possible. The Deputy Surveyor has agreed that the Forestry Commission will offer its support in principle.

VERDERERS' HIGHER LEVEL STEWARDSHIP SCHEME (HLS)

2010/5231 UPDATE RESUME

The Official Verderer reported there have been no further meetings since the last Court. The board papers have been circulated.

NEW FOREST NATIONAL PARK

2010/5232 REVIEW OF NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITIES GOVERNANCE RESUME

A review is of all the NPA's is being undertaken by Defra. It seems possible that a bespoke Authority for the Forest may now be possible. A response to the consultation is required by February and the Official Verderer will look at the papers.

OTHER AGENDA ITEMS

2010/5233 COMMONERS HOUSING SCHEME DISCHARGE

A review of the scheme is currently underway. The first 'scoping' meeting took place on 2nd November.

2010/5234 APPOINTMENT OF OFFICIAL VERDERER RESUME

January
2011

The Official Verderer advised the court that the post of Official Verderer will be advertised in early January with a view to carrying out interviews in February.

It is hoped that the successful candidate will be able to shadow the current Official Verderer for a month before taking over. This is a Crown Appointment, and is handled by the Office of the Commissioner for Parliamentary Appointments.

A press release will be issued by the Court as soon as the advertisement appears.

MATTERS ARISING FROM EXTERNAL COMMITTEES AND WORKING GROUPS

2010/5235 LAG DISCHARGE

A number of commoners have benefited from funding through the LAG.

2010/5236 RECREATION MANAGEMENT STEERING GROUP DISCHARGE

It has been suggested that nothing should be done to increase visitor numbers until a baseline of the impact of the present level of tourism in the Forest has been obtained. This is reportedly supported by the Chair of the Access Group and the NFA.

Alison Barnes, CE NPA, is talking to Bournemouth University with a view to a survey being carried out.

STAFF MATTERS (including the Staff Committee)

2010/5237 ASSISTANT TO THE CLERK DISCHARGE

The Official Verderer said he is pleased to announce that Miss Angela Taylor has been offered a permanent position and she has accepted.

TRAINING

2010/5238 THE ATLAS PROJECT

RESUME

Training has been arranged for the 2nd and 3rd December

HEALTH AND SAFETY AT WORK

RESUME

2010/5239 EMPLOYER'S AND PUBLIC LIABILITY INSURANCE

RESUME

The Clerk reported that she and the Head Agister met with a representative from the Court's insurers to discuss the health and safety policy and procedures. The systems in place to assure the health and safety of employees and the public are considered to be excellent. The only issue is that of lone workers in respect of the Agisters. The Clerk and the Head Agister will be considering a helpful paper provided by the insurance company and a procedure will be put in place.

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

2010/5240 ADVERTISING BOARDS ON THE FENCED ROADS

RESUME

This problem has still not been resolved and despite many attempts to get it removed, the land rover advertising the Waterloo Arms is still in the layby on the A337. The brown and white sign advertising the establishment has, however, gone. It was suggested the establishment prefers its land rover to the sign. The Clerk will refer back to the Highway Authority.

There was no further business and the meeting closed at 12.45 p.m.