

MINUTES of the Court of Verderers held on Wednesday 18th October 2006 at 9.30 a.m. in the Library, The Queen's House, Lyndhurst.

PRESENT:	Mr O Crosthwaite Eyre	Official Verderer
	Mr P Frost	Countryside Agency Appointed Verderer
	Mr A Gerrelli	Elected Verderer
	Mr J F Kitcher	Elected Verderer
	Miss D Macnair	Elected Verderer
	Mr A H Pasmore	Elected Verderer
	Mrs P Thorne	DEFRA Appointed Verderer
IN ATTENDANCE:	Miss S Westwood	Clerk to the Verderers
	Mr J R Gerrelli	Head Agister (first two items only)
APOLOGIES:	Mr J Adams	Elected Verderer & Chairman of the Staff Committee
	Cllr Mrs K Heron	Hampshire County Council Appointed Verderer
	The Hon R Montagu	Forestry Commission Appointed Verderer

IN COMMITTEE

The Head Agister was present for the first two items.

2006/2557 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING DISCHARGE

The Minutes of the Court held on Wednesday, 20th September 2006 were approved.

2006/2558 CONDITION OF STOCK RESUME

The Head Agister said that at the last meeting he expressed some concern at the condition of stock. Since then it has rained and the grass is growing well. Some ponies are looking better and are improving. It is hoped the mares will continue to put on condition before the onset of winter. Ponies which come in on the drift whose condition is unsatisfactory are being removed. The two mares reported last month by Mr Pasmore were caught and removed promptly.

Mr Pasmore asked if commoners are removing foals to which the Head Agister replied that most are but some have been branded and turned back out. There were a lot of foals at the September sale and quite a number are entered for October.

There is a heavy acorn crop this year and unfortunately there have already been approximately half a dozen pony deaths which the Agisters believe can be attributed to acorn poisoning.

Mr Kitcher remarked that ponies may continue to suffer from acorn poisoning until around February because of toxins building up in the liver.

Mr Gerrelli enquired as to whether there are any more pigs this year. The Head Agister replied that he doesn't think so as pigs have been expensive to purchase.

2006/2559 WELFARE OF STOCK - STRANGLES DISCHARGE

There are still a few ponies showing symptoms of strangles including a foal running at Bramshaw Telegraph and a yearling at Eyeworth.

2006/2560 INCIDENT ON WILVERLEY DRIFT DISCHARGE

The Head Agister reported that a foal was hit by a car during the Wilverley Drift. The foal was with its dam, being driven slowly by a single rider. The ponies ran in the direction of the road junction close to Wilverley Inclosure and the rider in pursuit of them indicated to approaching traffic to stop. One driver refused to stop and drove straight into the foal. When questioned, he claimed he did not see the man on a large white horse asking him to stop. The foal ran on with its dam and on reaching the pound was carefully examined. It was found to be uninjured.

The Head Agister left the Meeting.

2006/2561 ANNOUNCEMENTS AND DECISIONS RESUME

The Court approved the Announcements and Decisions.

2006/2562 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST RESUME

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

Mr Gerrelli declared an interest in any items concerning Campsites.

The Official Verderer declared an interest in matters concerning Forest golf courses.

2006/2563 FINANCIAL STATEMENT RESUME

The Financial Statement for July & August were approved.

2006/2564 REPORT ON MARKING FEES RECEIVED RESUME

The following Marking Fees have been received:

Ponies	4188	Pigs	255
Cattle	2551	Sheep	40
Donkeys	110		
Total	6849		

2006/2565 ANIMALS REMOVED FROM THE FOREST DUE TO POOR CONDITION RESUME

5 mares and 9 foals
1 filly
2 cattle

Total 17

2006/2566 BYELAW ENFORCEMENT RESUME

The date of the hearing in the Southampton Magistrates' Court of one commoner who is declining to pay his marking fees is still awaited.

The Official Verderer felt the commoner who has refused to catch his cattle to have them properly marked should not, on balance, be prosecuted this year. However, a letter has been written to him warning that such leniency will not be shown if there is a further occurrence next year.

Information is awaited from DEFRA in respect of a further commoner who is declining to pay marking fees.

A claim that marking fees do not have to be paid on pigs turned out onto National Trust commons is totally refuted by the Court. The commoner who has turned out pigs without paying for them will be prosecuted if marking fees are not received promptly.

Sheep turned out on the commons have been paid for.

2006/2567 LEGAL COSTS / VERDERERS' ELECTION DISCHARGE

If an objection to the Election is made to the Under Sheriff concerning Section 16 of the New Forest Act 1877, it may be necessary to seek urgent legal advice from Counsel.

It was confirmed that the Court will support any candidate who is challenged in this connection. Mr Gerrelli said the matter was raised at a recent Commoners' Defence Meeting and he felt the Elected Verderers will have the full support of the CDA.

The Official Verderer said he has discussed the procedure in such circumstances with the Under Sheriff who confirms that any hearing will be in public and probably held in the Verderers' Court. It would be a full hearing with candidates and their Counsel in attendance. Any person who objects would be required to attend and present their case to the High Sheriff.

2006/2568 VERDERERS' VETERINARY SURGEON RESUME

Mr Kitcher said he understands Mr Ellis is not retiring but may be leaving his current practice. The Clerk said she will speak to him.

2006/2569 PROTECTION OF SSSI'S DISCHARGE

Mr Frost said he hopes the New Forest Association will carry out a survey of the Forest campsites. He also remarked that amongst other legislation, the Crow Act provides protection for SSSI's. He added that the new wardens need to make sure tents and caravans are moved around in order to prevent damage to the grazing. This matter was discussed again after the Open Court.

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

IN ATTENDANCE: Mr Will Parke, Area Land Agent (New Forest)

APOLOGY: Mr Mike Seddon, Deputy Surveyor of the New Forest

ANNOUNCEMENTS AND DECISIONS BY THE OFFICIAL VERDERER

2006/2570 COUNTRYSIDE STEWARDSHIP SCHEME

The third year of the scheme has now ended and applications for the fourth year will be sent out shortly. The scheme continues to be very well supported and membership has continued to rise.

Earlier this year we decided that, in order to discourage commoners from increasing their stock, if the numbers of animals on the Forest during 2006 exceeded 7000, then payments would be reduced by 25% for anyone turning out more stock than in 2004. This attempt to reduce the number of stock to below 7000 appears to have been successful. However our sub-committee will meet next week in order to analyse the numbers of animals that are currently out on the Forest before formally deciding whether or not to implement a 25% reduction on any of the payments.

In the meantime Colin Draper, who continues to run the scheme so efficiently on our behalf, has lodged our claim with DEFRA for funds, and we are hopeful that we can issue cheques to all participants well in time for Christmas.

2006/2571 ACCOUNTS

The 2005/2006 accounts have now been formally approved and signed, however the Auditors are unable to countersign them until one retrospective payment has been received from a debtor. We hope they will very shortly be available for viewing on our website and inspection in the office.

2006/2572 ELECTIONS

As a result of our campaign to encourage more commoners to participate in Verderers' Elections I am happy to report that the number of names on the electoral register has increased by some 14% to 854. Let us hope that the increase will translate in to a greater turnout on election day which is Friday, 24th November. By way of reminder, the closing date for the nomination of candidates for election is November 6th.

ANIMAL ACCIDENT REPORT

2006/2573 ACCIDENT REPORTS FOR SEPTEMBER 2006

The Agisters attended 21 accidents in September which compares with 18 for the same period last year.

9 ponies and 2 cattle were injured. 3 ponies, 1 heifer and a donkey were injured.

9 accidents occurred during the hours of darkness and 16 involved private cars or light commercials.

5 accidents were not reported and 11 involved local motorists.

The total killed and injured for the year to date is 97 compared with 77 for the same period last year.

PRESENTMENTS BY THE DEPUTY SURVEYOR OF THE NEW FOREST

None

PRESENTMENTS

2006/2574 **OUTLINE STREAM RESTORATION PROPOSALS TO THE WEST OF NEW PARK**
Presentation by Mr Mike Cooper on behalf of the New Forest Commoners' Defence Association

With reference to the above proposals, our association have some reservations relating to the area between Warwickslade cutting and Brinken Wood Lawn. We seek further time to allow a number of our committee to make a more thorough evaluation of the work to be carried out, and therefore respectfully request that you defer any decision making until this has been achieved.

2006/2575 **KINGS COPSE ROAD, BLACKWELL COMMON – ROAD ENCROACHMENT**
Presentation by Mr Mike Cooper on behalf of the New Forest Commoners' Defence Association

The above road immediately borders Forest on one side and private dwellings on the other. It is an un-adopted road and we believe, therefore, not maintained at public expense. Over a period of time, scalpings and waste tarmacadam has been added to this gravel based road, which has over the years caused considerable widening of the original track. Now, further tarmacadam has been laid in patches to fill potholes, but this in some areas has been extended out onto the Forest verges. It is felt that if this is allowed to continue, serious loss of grazing will result, and vehicle speed will inevitably increase as a consequence of a much wider carriageway. We would ask that this matter be given some attention by yourselves and the Forestry Commission.

2006/2576 **STREAM RESTORATION**
Presentation by Mr Bob Cooper, Minstead Manor Commoner

Mr Cooper said he hoped the Court will take into account "indemnities and the duty to restore" if the scheme proves faulty and causes damage to the Forest.

2006/2577 **ENCROACHMENTS ON MINSTEAD MANOR WASTE**
Presentation by Mr Bob Cooper, Minstead Manor Commoner

Mr Cooper asked again for a sign showing the location of the Car Park at Acres Down to be erected. He said people ignore the car park and park all over the verges.

Mr Cooper then repeated his complaint about the Nature Study Centre at Minstead saying that Hampshire County Council should know better than to take grazing for the parking of cars belonging to its staff.

2006/2578 HOLLANDS WOOD & ROUNDHILL CAMPSITE PROPOSALS
Presentment by Mr Bob Cooper, Minstead Manor Commoner

Mr Cooper asked whether there have been any further developments on the Forestry Commission's proposals.

In reply, the Official Verderer said that the formal planning application has been submitted to the National Park Authority. The matter will not be brought back to the Court until the planning application has been decided. The Official Verderer went on to say that the Verderers have made their decision under the New Forest Acts.

Mr Cooper said he thought it was more usual for planning applications to be made after the consents are in place.

IN COMMITTEE in The Library

Mr Simon Weymouth, Forestry Commission Ecologist, joined the meeting.

The Official Verderer explained Mr Weymouth was attending the meeting to assist in answering questions on stream restoration as he has been in charge of the project from its inception.

CONSIDERATION OF PRESENTMENTS

2006/2579 STREAM RESTORATION

RESUME

A discussion took place concerning the CDA's request for the Court to delay making a decision on the proposals.

Mr Weymouth said he has had a preliminary meeting with Mr Brian Ingram, Chairman of the CDA, who requested more time to consider the proposals. Mr Weymouth said he felt a further month is perfectly reasonable.

Mr Parke remarked that the Forestry Commission is at this stage, simply seeking the Verderers' support in principle to the proposals. He recognised the detail has yet to be agreed.

The Official Verderer said that in view of the considerable cost which would be incurred by the Forestry Commission in working up the proposals, he felt it would be prudent to wait. He added that the Court needs to hear what the CDA has to say.

Mr Frost said he felt the Court could give its approval in principle because a lot of things get sorted out during site meetings and the Court has not received any objections. He said the restoration of the New Forest SSSI is obligatory and the legislation must be respected.

It was commented that there appears to have been a sea change in opinion this year with ponies in the wetter areas of the Forest doing well. The changing climate, thought to be the result of global warming means there is a lot of work to be done.

The Official Verderer felt that is why it is so important to make the right decisions and considered that if the CDA has asked for a further month, the Court should wait.

2006/2581 AVON WATER DEBRIS DAM DISCHARGE

Work has been carried out to remove non-native invasive tree species in an area which is very wet and difficult to work in. As a result, a lot of cut material has been left behind and the work has not been completed. Mr Weymouth said it will not be possible to extract any more wood because of the ground conditions and he expects it to be burned instead.

Four or five dams, plus the large one by the road bridge have been removed and the FC will go back as necessary and keep removing dams that build up. Mr Pasmore said he counted 16 trees which had been felled across the river. He said that they are not a problem at the moment but when they rot and fall in the water they will be. Mr Weymouth said it is the FC's intention to remove them.

2006/2582 MARKWAY RIVER DISCHARGE

Miss Macnair remarked that there are some very large logs back in the stream. Mr Weymouth agreed the area needs tidying up and again the wood will be burned.

2006/2583 MILKHAM INCLOSURE DISCHARGE

Mr Pasmore reported that the two fords that have been constructed using rejects are dangerous to horses. The material is too large and the fords need to be improved. The eastern-most culvert has been smashed and left and needs clearing up. He added Pitts Wood ford is good and he suggested the others should be constructed in a similar way.

Mr Weymouth responded by saying the FC was given to understand that the rejects used would be suitable but that he will look at the fords and sort out the problem. He added that the Pitts Wood ford is in fact temporary as it requires planning permission but he hoped it would be acceptable when a permanent ford is constructed next year.

Mrs Thorne echoed Mr Pasmore's concerns. She said the rejects are far too large and the ford is not wide enough. Horses trying to avoid treading on the large stones may well fall off the edge.

It was agreed that Mrs Thorne and the Forestry Commission should get together to design something that works.

2006/2584 SILVERSANDS BRIDGE DISCHARGE

Miss Macnair commented that similar large rejects have been used to repair a hole in the track leading to Silversands Bridge. Again, the repair is unsuitable for horses and she asked for further work to be carried out to resolve the problem. Mr Weymouth said he will inspect the problem.

Mr Weymouth left the meeting after the Official Verderer had thanked him for his assistance.

CONSIDERATION OF PRESENTMENTS (CONTINUED)

2006/2585 KINGS COPSE ROAD & VERGE EROSION

RESUME
December

Mr Parke explained that Kings Copse Road is not a public highway. Access is permitted by licence from the Forestry Commission. He added he will see what can be done to narrow the road. Mr Pasmore expressed concern that the road has had tarmac laid. Mr Parke explained that two-thirds of the road is tarmac and pointed out that that is the narrowest part of the road. The problems of widening have occurred further along where drivers have driven onto the verges to try to avoid the potholes, resulting in a tendency for the road to gradually widen. Mr Parke will provide his written thoughts about how best to tackle the problem for the December Court.

Mr Frost said he thought a survey of roadside verges was going to be carried out some time ago. Mr Parke replied that he thought it was laybys which were under scrutiny. Mr Frost then referred to problems in the vicinity of the Royal Oak at Fritham where a lot of damage has occurred to the verges. Because the Forest is an SSSI and there is a duty to protect it, he thought a plan of action was going to be produced.

Mr Parke said that where there is noticeable erosion, the Forestry Commission is working with the Council to repair the damage. He added that perhaps there was some confusion because it was intended to deal with the specific problems at Fritham. The matter has not progressed because Mr Parke was waiting to hear whether the Royal Oak could resolve the verge parking problems by obtaining planning permission for a car park on its own land. People are reluctant to use the Forestry Commission car park down the road for security reasons. The Forestry Commission is keen to ensure that ad-hoc measures are avoided.

2006/2586 STREAM RESTORATION AND ENCROACHMENTS ON MINSTEAD MANOR WASTE

Mr Cooper's comments were noted.

SUBMISSIONS BY THE FORESTRY COMMISSION

2006/2587 A35 LITTLE WOOTTON BOX GATES

DISCHARGE

Hampshire Highways has requested consent to install box gates on either side of the A35 at the Wootton/Holmsley Aerodrome horse crossing to improve safety and prevent further incursions onto the road by commoners' stock. The Court approved the proposals.

MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES OF PREVIOUS COURTS OF CONCERN TO THE FORESTRY COMMISSION AND ANY OTHER BUSINESS OF CONCERN TO THE FORESTRY COMMISSION

2006/2588 FORESTRY COMMISSION CAMPSITES – LAYING OF GRAVEL DISCHARGE

Mr Parke confirmed that the Deputy Surveyor had visited Ashurst campsite. He contacted Forest Holidays to express concern at the laying of gravel and the other general detritus and rubbish that was regrettably left on the site at the end of the season.

A new external door appears to have been fitted to one of the buildings that is currently subject to refurbishment. Forest Holidays has been told this sort of work cannot be carried out without consent and a response is awaited. Prior to the commencement of the new season, the new campsite wardens will receive training from the Rangers and other relevant people in order that they are fully conversant with the rules. Season ticket holders will be made to move round to avoid erosion and ensure damage is not caused to grazing. It was confirmed that persons being housed by the DSS are not permitted to live on the site.

Mr Frost remained concerned that there is more gravel on the site than was originally agreed. He asked to look at the plans of the campsites, including the old plans, to see what changes may have taken place. Mr Parke agreed to provide the plans and it was agreed that if significant alterations have taken place without consent, the matter will be brought back to the Court.

2006/2589 BROCKENHURST COLLEGE ADVENTURE COURSES DISCHARGE

The Official Verderer said he understands no-one was interested in the courses which were held after dark. The Forestry Commission is meeting with the College and in future agreements similar to those issued to Avon Tyrrell will be drawn up.

2006/2590 FENCE AT EAST BOLDRE RESUME

This matter is still ongoing. Although the Parish Council says it has carried out repairs the fence is still unsatisfactory in places. Nothing appears to have been done along the boundary with the road. Mr Parke said he will approach the Parish Council again.

2006/2591 DRIFTS AND CLOSURE OF CAR PARKS DISCHARGE

Mr Parke reported that Helen Wood (Forestry Commission Communications Manager) met with the Head Agister and agreed procedures for managing car parks on drift days. The Forestry Commission will continue to provide Volunteer Rangers to help manage the public.

Experimental signs are being erected as appropriate to see which wording works best. Mr Kitcher said he saw a number of Rangers on the Wilverley Drift on Sunday and the Official Verderer said the Forestry Commission's help is much appreciated.

2006/2592 MEETING AT BALMER LAWN RESUME

The meeting arranged by Brockenhurst Parish Council to consider problems at Balmer Lawn (River) is to be held on October 24th at 2.30 p.m. Mr Frost said he will go along if he can and Mr Kitcher said he will definitely attend.

ANY OTHER BUSINESS INVOLVING THE FORESTRY COMMISSION

2006/2593 HATCHET MOOR CAR PARK – INFORMATION POST DISCHARGE

Mr Frost produced a photograph of the newly erected information post. The post has been put right in the middle of the view across the Pond. He questioned whether it was really necessary as there are already several other signs in that car park and he felt its siting is extremely insensitive. Mr Parke promised to pass Mr Frost's comments to the appropriate person.

2006/2594 HOLLY POLLARDING DISCHARGE

Mrs Thorne asked if the Forestry Commission has a policy on pollarding holly. Mr Frost suggested Mrs Thorne look at the SAC management plan. Mr Parke said he is sure there is a policy and that there are various reasons for pollarding. It was commented that it doesn't work on old trees.

2006/2595 BRACKEN HARVESTING DISCHARGE

Mr Gerrelli asked whether the large heaps of harvested bracken left on the Forest at Bull Hill could be put in a more appropriate place – such as the gravel pits – if it is intended that they will be left on the Forest for an extended period. In the past they have been left for so long that the grass has been killed off. Mr Pasmore said that at the recent OFAC meeting, he got the impression that they would be moved.

Mr Kitcher asked if there are any restrictions on when bracken is cut. He remarked that if it is cut earlier, before it turns brown, the plants are often actually killed off. At the moment bracken is spreading everywhere and whilst there is obviously there is a conservation interest in keeping some bracken, it is considered to be getting out of hand.

2006/2596 RUBBISH ON THE FOREST DISCHARGE

Mr Gerrelli expressed concern at the quantity of rubbish that can be seen on the Forest. This is in stark contrast to Dartmoor which is extremely clean and tidy. It was suggested this is something the National Park should be made aware of.

2006/2597 SALE OF FORESTRY COMMISSION PROPERTIES RESUME

Mr Parke reported that the Minister has approved the sale of the properties at Holmsley, conditional on the construction of two affordable cottages suitable for occupation by commoners. At present it has not been decided whether the two cottages will be detached or semi-detached.

2006/2598 VACANT FORESTRY COMMISSION COTTAGE DISCHARGE

Mr Parke informed the Court that White Cottage West at Burley Fields will shortly become vacant and will be available to rent by a commoner. At present the adjacent land is not available.

Mr Parke left the meeting.

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

2006/2599 MICRO-CHIPPING OF HORSES RESUME

The Clerk reported that the Rural Development Agency has extended an invitation for Mr Paul Newman of DEFRA to visit Dartmoor to discuss the implications of the proposals to compulsorily micro-chip foals.

Mr Newman has accepted the invitation and since the meeting it has been confirmed that the visit will take place on Tuesday, 7th November. The venue is Brimpts Farm, Dartmoor. The Clerk will provide the details to Miss Macnair, Mr Gerrelli, Mr Kitcher and Mrs Thorne who all expressed an interest in attending.

2006/2600 LEADER + APPLICATION RESUME
December

The Clerk explained that it is proposed the Leader + application will now include the following:-

The construction of two replacement pounds at Dur Hill and Ipley plus an additional scale one pound at a location to be agreed;

Gates to be fitted to four stock underpasses to assist with catching stock and for use in conjunction with the animal disease control contingency plan (e.g. Foot and Mouth Disease);

Two chainsaws will be purchased plus one drill attachment for use by the Agisters in maintaining the pounds;

The purchase of a hand-held portable radio system to aid communication between Agisters on the drifts.

Animal rescue equipment – strops and specially made strop guides for all five Agisters.

The total cost is expected to be in the region of £9,900.

The Clerk explained that labour can be used to offset the 50% funding which has to be provided by the Court and she pointed out that in effect the last Leader + Project, just completed, resulted in the Court only having to pay 24% in cash of the total cost.

2006/2601 STALLION SCHEME FUNDING RESUME

The Clerk will write to the RSPCA and ILPH to see if either organisation is able to help with funding the stallion scheme.

2006/2602 STALLION SCHEME – THE FUTURE RESUME

The present three year scheme comes to an end next year. The Commoners' Defence Association is contacting all known stallion owners to invite them to attend a meeting which will probably be held in November. The Official Verderer emphasised it is important that there is no delay in discussing how the scheme should continue. He suggested the Verderers' stallion sub-committee should decide what meetings are necessary and who should attend. Miss Macnair commented that mare owners have an interest as concern was expressed by some commoners about the extended time that the stallions were turned out and where as some areas have not had a stallion for some years. Mr Kitcher promised to chase up the CDA.

Because of a lack of funding, it is quite possible that grazing only will be available next winter. This is obviously regrettable but it was suggested that provision of winter grazing is of greater importance to most stallion owners than a cash payment. The Clerk said she will look at what funds are available and do some costings.

2006/2603 HERITAGE LOTTERY FUND RESUME

Concern was expressed that the content of the bid has been decided without reference to the Verderers. However, it was explained that what has been finally agreed may be no more than an initial application to fund the preparation of the detailed proposals.

Mr Pasmore said he still feels the Court has been sidelined. The CDA has been involved. The Clerk was asked to write to ask why the Court has not been invited to have an active involvement. A copy of the letter will go to Mr Montagu.

2006/2604 SIGNAGE RESUME
December

The National Park Authority is looking at signing for the National Park. Mr Montagu spoke to Ms Lindsay Cornish and a signage advisory meeting has been arranged for 30th November to which he is invited. It is thought it might turn into a Signage Advisory Group.

2006/2605 TUBERCULOSIS RESUME

Mrs Thorne will speak to her contact at DEFRA again strongly suggesting that some guidelines be drawn up as to what would happen if TB was found in cattle on the Forest. It would be most helpful to know whether restrictions might be placed on all Forest cattle, only those belonging to the herd involved, or the area in which they ran.

The Clerk said she had received a report that a cow in Romsey has been diagnosed with TB with a further two suspected. Final confirmation is awaited from the laboratory tests.

COUNTRYSIDE STEWARDSHIP SCHEME

2006/2606 VERDERERS' CSS SUB-COMMITTEE MEETING RESUME

The sub-committee is due to meet on Friday 20th October. The Official Verderer said he thought it unlikely that it would be necessary to implement the 25% reduction in payments as the numbers of animals on the Forest appears to have stabilised. It will, however, be made plain to commoners that such a penalty can and will be applied if numbers increase.

NATIONAL PARK

2006/2607 NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY CORPORATE PLAN RESUME

Mr Pasmore drafted a response to the plan particularly concerning recreation where the Court has some concerns. The Court approved the draft which will be forwarded by the Official Verderer to Ms Lindsay Cornish with a covering letter.

2006/2608 NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY KEY PARTNERS STEERING GROUP RESUME

The Official Verderer said this group was set up in response to the Minister's directive to involve the Forestry Commission and Verderers in its Management Plan. The first meeting was held yesterday and terms of reference agreed. A copy of a document entitled "Suggested content and working structure for the draft plan" will be provided to all Verderers. It has been agreed by the Group that sustaining commoning will become a "Key Principal" for the Management Plan.

The next meeting of the Group is scheduled for November.

2006/2609 STATUTORY BODY LIAISON GROUP RESUME

The Official Verderer who has attended these meetings to date said he will consider whether the Court should attend this Group as well as the Key Partners Steering Group on a meeting by meeting basis to avoid unnecessary duplication.

2006/2610 EQUESTRIANISM DISCHARGE

Mr Frost reported that there is to be a study on the effects of recreational horse keeping. A seminar is to be held on 30th November and attendance will be by invitation. Mr Pasmore questioned why horse riders, in his opinion a small minority group of users, are always singled out when there are other recreational activities having a much greater impact on the Forest.

2006/2611 HOLLANDS WOOD & ROUNDHILL CAMPSITE PROPOSALS DISCHARGE

As a competent authority under the Habitats Directive, the National Park Authority is carrying out its own Appropriate Assessment. The Official Verderer suggested the Commoners' Defence Association should get its thoughts on paper and submitted as soon as possible. It was suggested the CDA should liaise with the New Forest Association in this respect.

OTHER AGENDA ITEMS

2006/2612 ANNUAL EAR TAGGING OF CATTLE DISCHARGE

It has been suggested that the present system of ear-tagging cattle annually should be discontinued and the matter was discussed at length. It was finally agreed that for one year, as a trial, annual (Verderers') tags will not be required. The Agisters will, however, still have to inspect all cattle before they are turned out to ensure the welfare standard is maintained. Cattle will continue to be tail-marked and a note made of their Ministry ear-tag number. Marking fees will be due in the normal way and all cattle must either be freeze-branded or ear tagged so as to show the owner's brand.

Problems have been experienced with the "brand tags" because the writing tends to wear off in a matter of weeks even when an indelible pen is used. Mr Pasmore said that brand tags with the brand printed on them are available from Wessex-Agri Products in Ringwood. He undertook to obtain a quotation for the cost of the tags.

All the information will be included in the next newsletter.

MATTERS ARISING FROM EXTERNAL COMMITTEES AND WORKING GROUPS

2006/2613 OPEN FOREST ADVISORY COMMITTEE DISCHARGE

Mr Pasmore reported that a discussion took place at OFAC regarding animal accidents and verge cutting. There seemed to be a lack of communication which led to Forestry Commission staff being unsure where verge cutting is most needed to try to reduce animal accidents. The Clerk confirmed that the accident map completed by the Agisters and held in the Verderers' office very clearly indicates where the black-spots for animal accidents are located. This should provide clear information for the Forestry Commission to plan its verge cutting activities.

2006/2614 MEMORY MAP DISCHARGE

As an aside to the conversation concerning verge cutting, Mr Pasmore explained that he has discovered a very good piece of "mapping" software, available for under £100.00. The Court agreed the office should purchase the software which could be useful for a number of jobs.

2006/2615 HAMPSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL MINERALS & WASTE MEETING DISCHARGE

Mrs Thorne attended a meeting in Ringwood during which two points were raised. The first was the loss of back-up land in the Avon Valley as a result of mineral extraction and a poor record of land being reinstated for grazing and the second concerned lorries using Open Forest roads.

Mrs Thorne will provide the Clerk with the e-mail address to which to send objections to minerals and waste proposals.

STAFF MATTERS (including the Staff Committee)

2006/2616 SALARY REVIEW

DISCHARGE

The Court agreed an across the board salary increase of 2.9% for all staff with effect from 1st October 2006. This increase is in line with that awarded by the Agricultural Wages Board.

TRAINING

There was nothing to report.

HEALTH AND SAFETY AT WORK

Nothing to report.

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

2006/2617 AGISTER'S LAND ROVERS

DISCHARGE

An Agister's Land Rover was spotted at a Show in Warwickshire and it was questioned whether the vehicles should be used for journeys of that length. It was felt, however, that as the Agisters have been told they may use their Land Rovers for private use it would be unfair to impose restrictions unless the privilege is abused. A note of the mileage covered by each vehicle is provided to the office on a monthly basis.

2006/2618 PIGS

DISCHARGE

The Clerk advised that there have been no major issues concerning pigs, despite a recent media report that someone was "savaged by a wild pig" and other reports of people being "attacked by pigs". The pig responsible for the more serious incident was removed when the office became aware of the details of what had happened. The horse rider involved has still not reported the incident to the office preferring instead to go to the media. The remaining incidents are considered to have occurred because the public generally has a poor understanding of the natural behaviour patterns of livestock and as a result a few people have found themselves in rather closer proximity to Forest pigs than they might have wished.

2006/2619 WORLD HERITAGE SITE

DISCHARGE

The New Forest is included in a tentative list of potential World Heritage Sites and the National Park Authority has asked for views as to whether the Forest should remain on the list of potential sites. Application for designation is understood to cost in the region of £250,000. Given the likelihood that such designation will result in even greater visitor pressure, and the costs involved, the Verderers felt they could not support such an application. The Official Verderer will write to the National Park Authority accordingly.

2006/2620 APPLICATION FOR CREDIT CARD DISCHARGE

The Official Verderer explained that it is becoming more and more convenient to purchase software and other items using a credit card. Better prices and far quicker delivery can be obtained using this method of payment. In order to take advantage of cheaper prices and quick delivery, the Clerk has, on frequent occasions recently, used her own personal credit card. This was felt to be rather unfair and it was agreed a card should be obtained on the Verderers' Account. Use of the card will be confined to the Clerk with a credit limit in the region of £1,000.

2006/2621 NEW FOREST ASSOCIATION REPORT – RESTORING LOST LANDSCAPES DISCHARGE

Mr Frost said the report is due for publication very shortly. It concerns the Forest Design Plan.

2006/2622 LETTER OF COMPLAINT RE WELFARE OF PONIES DISCHARGE

Mrs Thorne said that her DEFRA contact, Mr Ian Jones, has received a letter from a woman complaining about animal accidents in the Forest and ponies being sold for meat through the Beaulieu Road Sales.

Mrs Thorne will reply explaining that as much as possible is being done to reduce animal accidents and also that the meat trade is virtually non-existent at the moment.

2006/2623 VERDERERS' ELECTION – INFORMATION FOR CANDIDATES DISCHARGE

The Clerk advised that nomination papers are available from the Under Sheriff's office, the address of which will be provided to anyone who is interested.

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 12.40 p.m.