



Verderers of the New Forest

THE QUEEN'S HOUSE
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All Verderers
Advisory Group Members

5 November 2009

MINUTES OF THE VERDERERS' CSS SUB COMMITTEE MEETING HELD IN THE LIBRARY IN THE QUEEN'S HOUSE ON 5 NOVEMBER 2009

Present:

Mr O Crosthwaite Eyre	- Official Verderer - Chairman
Mr J Adams	- Elected Verderer
Mr A Gerrelli	- Elected Verderer
Mrs P Thorne	- Defra Verderer
Mr C Draper	- Scheme Manager – Secretary

Apologies:

Mr A Pasmore	- Elected Verderer
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Item (a)	Discussion and Decisions (b)	Action (c)
1. Update by Scheme Manager	<p>1.1. The following update on the Scheme was provided for members:</p> <p>a. Payment. Payment has now been received from the RPA for 2008/9 – a month earlier than usual. It is intended that payments will be sent out to members by the end of the month.</p> <p>b. Membership. A total of 446 commoners, including 31 new members, joined the Scheme this year. The introduction of the 25% option, under which members were invited to reduce the number of animals they turned out by up to 25% and still receive payment on their full entitlement, has met with some success. Of the 336 members who were eligible for this option and who returned application forms, a total of 101 turned out 497 less animals than in 2004; 149 members turned out exactly the same number; and 86 turned out 508 more than in 2004 – thereby cancelling out the reduction of those who turned out less. But, without the reduction, the total on the Marking Fee Register would have been very nearly up to 8,000: the actual figure is 7,473, little changed from last year. <i>Note. Although this is higher than the 7,000 limit, members were pleased that the 25% option had contributed successfully to preventing a further</i></p>	

	<i>increase.</i>	
<p>2. Grazing Agreements Between The Verderers And Owners Of Adjacent Commons/Common Land</p>	<p>2. 1. Members were briefed on the progress on establishing grazing agreements with HLS agreement holders on adjacent commons – as follows:</p> <p>a. Background. Natural England has entered into HLS agreements with a number of owners of adjacent commons. A condition of these agreements is that the owners should enter into separate grazing agreements with the Verderers. That is because grazing is an important element of their agreements and the Verderers are responsible for regulating this. There are a number of issues to be resolved around over/under grazing concerns on some of the commons, although the grazing agreements are made on the basis that these remain the responsibility of the owners. This is a particular problem on some of the National Trust commons. However, while the Verderers’ CSS continues to pay National Trust commoners without helping to address these problems, the National Trust argues that their hands are partially tied with regard to finding a solution. There is also a funding issue: the Verderers’ CSS only covers the Crown land of the New Forest although, for obvious reasons, membership is extended to all those exercising common rights on the Forest regardless of whether they are claimed on the Crown Lands or the adjacent commons. So effectively, the CSS is currently paying members for grazing the commons for which the owners are receiving funding. It therefore follows that there is an argument for the grazing element of those HLS agreements to be paid into the Verderers’ CSS fund for continued payment of those commoners. More importantly, the establishment of separate HLS agreements could potentially lead to different levels of payment to commoners depending on whether they are claiming rights on the commons or the Crown lands – which would be divisive. Avoiding this will depend on close liaison and co-operation between agreement holders. The National Trust has indicated that they support the need for this and wish to work with the Verderers to ensure the best outcome for both Schemes. The current situation is as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National Trust – Plaitford, Penn, Halfmoon, Furzley, Cadnam, Hale, Ibsley, and Hightown commons amounting to 1285.82 ha - £35,650 per annum – <i>Discussion is continuing over liability for grazing payments to the Verderers for this year, based on area/hectorage. However the importance of liaison and maintaining a standard level of payment for grazing stock across the Forest is recognised and the issue of payments is expected to be resolved as part of a coordinated strategy that will also address over/undergrazing issues on the National Trust commons.</i> • Hampshire County Council - Rockford, Ibsley, Gorley and Hyde commons amounting to 120.6 ha - £3,376 per annum – <i>Agreement signed - invoice to be sent out this</i> 	

	<p><i>month</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wellow Parish Council – Wellow Common – £2,527 per annum – <i>Agreement signed - invoice to be sent out this month</i> • Waterslade Farm – part of Rockford Common amounting to 15.65 ha - £438 per annum – <i>Agreement signed - invoice to be sent out this month</i> <p>2.2. The importance of a consistent system of payments to commoners, across the whole of the Forest, was agreed, as was the need for a formal dialogue between the Verderers and other HLS agreement holders to achieve this. The indication that the National Trust is apparently willing to cover the cost of any payments made to their commoners, as agreed by the owners of other New Forest commons, was welcomed and it was hoped that this would be confirmed for future years. It was agreed that the subject should be raised at the Advisory Group meeting on 10 November (<i>Afternote: In fact the National Trust has not agreed to cover this cost. The matter will be discussed further at the Advisory Group and further details will be provided in due course</i>).</p>	Scheme Manager
<p>3. HLS Agreement</p>	<p>3.1. Members welcomed the appointment of Ian Stone as co-ordinator for the HLS application and noted that a number of them had already been invited to the various meetings which Ian is arranging to identify the work needed to meet the Scheme objectives. A sum of around £760,000 is ring-fenced for ‘commoning’, which is supported by outline costings. This will be incorporated in the application and will not require further consideration during the application process.</p>	
<p>4. Payment Levels for 2008/9</p>	<p>4.1. It was agreed that payment rates to Scheme Members should be maintained at the same level as last year, although there was also agreement that these should be reviewed in future years to take account of the increasing costs faced by commoners.</p>	
<p>5. Payments to Stallion Owners</p>	<p>5.1. Following the decision to limit the number of stallions that were turned out this year, it was agreed that payments for stallions should be limited to those that were actually depastured.</p>	
<p>6. Contribution Towards the Cost of the Land Management Team</p>	<p>6.1. A request for a grant towards the cost of the ‘Land Management Team’ was discussed. This was agreed, subject to confirmation of the level of support which the team would provide for practising commoners. It was agreed that the Scheme Manager should request written confirmation of this. If supported by the necessary confirmation, a grant of £10,000 would be made as a ‘one-off’ payment. Future annual grants, if requested, would be subject to review based on the level of support actually provided by the team.</p>	Scheme Manager

7. Stallion Scheme	7.1. It was agreed that the Scheme should continue to make up any shortfall in funding for the Stallion Scheme. The Scheme Manager will liaise with the Clerk to the Verderers over this.	Scheme Manager
8. Reflective Collars	8.1. Members were briefed on the availability of reflective collars. A further 1,000 were purchased at the start of the drift season to bolster existing stocks. Take up of these has been excellent, but a number are still available and it was thought that they would be sufficient for several months. It was agreed that a further sum of £7,000 should be provided for the purchase of a further 1,000 collars when existing stocks run low.	Scheme Manager
9. Stock Trailers	9.1. Members considered a proposal that the suggested purchase of stock trailers for the Agisters, which is part of the Verderers' HLS bid, should be brought forward ahead of the HLS, to take advantage of the current reduced rate of VAT. There was general support for the future purchase of stock trailers, but it was agreed that any decision on this should await the outcome of the HLS bid and the provision of HLS funding.	
10. Contraceptive Trial for Forest Ponies	10.1. Pat Thorne briefed members on a possible trial for a contraceptive vaccine for ponies. There is a possibility of running a small scale trial in the Spring, involving some 20 – 25 mares. Successful vaccination involves injecting mares twice – with 3 weeks between injections. It is thought that the vaccine will cost somewhere in the region of £25.00 per pony. There are also likely to be other costs including the cost of a licence for the vaccine. Planning will depend on decisions on the Stallion Scheme; in particular, the number and location of any stallions turned out. Members agreed in principle to provide financial support for the trial, subject to further detail.	Pat Thorne

C F R DRAPER