



Verderers of the New Forest

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Official Verderer
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All Verderers
Advisory Group Members

16 May 2007

MINUTES OF THE VERDERERS' CSS SUB COMMITTEE MEETING HELD IN THE SCHEME MANAGER'S OFFICE ON 20 APRIL 2007

Present:

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

Item (a)	Discussion and Decisions (b)	Action (c)
1. Introduction	<p>1. The Official Verderer thanked members for attending and explained that the purpose of the meeting was to consider the proposals put forward by the Advisory Group at their meeting in March. He reminded them of the role of the Sub Committee and its relationship with the Advisory Group. The Advisory Group is responsible for monitoring the performance of the Scheme, for making proposals for improvements and, as its name suggests, for offering advice, but it is the function of the Sub Committee to evaluate and make recommendations to the Verderers' Court whose ultimate responsibility it is to make any decisions on the management and direction of the Scheme.</p> <p>2. The Scheme Manager explained that payments from DEFRA have increased as the percentage of animals entered in the Scheme has gone up. As a result, there is now an annual surplus. This will be further increased when payment is received for the additional land which has been brought into the Scheme as a result of the opening up of more than 2,000 hectares of former inclosures. Altogether, at present rates of expenditure, it is anticipated that the Scheme will have an annual surplus in excess of £80,000. The purpose of the meeting is to consider how best to use this money.</p>	

<p>2. Young Commoners Scheme</p>	<p>1. The meeting considered a range of options for providing additional support to young commoners. In many cases, commoners have increased the number of animals in the Scheme by entering them in the names of other family members, and this makes it difficult to identify those for whom a ‘Young Commoners Scheme’ is intended. The meeting noted that the Scheme already allows retiring commoners to pass on their entitlement to other family members and a number of commoners have benefitted from this. The following additional options were discussed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creation of a reserve of entitlement as commoners retire. This option depends on the balance between the number of animals removed as commoners retire, or cease to turn animals out on the Forest, and the number depastured by new commoners. If the number depastured by new commoners exceeds the number removed, then there is no surplus for a reserve. In 2006, 250 more animals were turned out by new commoners than were removed. So this option is not considered practical at present. • Provision of a more generous limit for young commoners. Again, this option is only practical if the number of animals which are turned out is sufficiently below the maximum limit of 7,000 allowed by the Scheme. At present, numbers are too close to that total. • Provision of enhanced payments for young commoners. The problem in identifying those who should benefit from such a scheme was seen as a major stumbling block, there were also concerns that this would be divisive and difficult to manage fairly. Before a decision is made on this, it was agreed that the Scheme Manager should investigate the IACs model, as suggested by the Advisory Group and report back to the Committee. 	<p>Scheme Manager</p>
<p>3. Capital Expenditure on Providing Access to/Purchase of Additional Land</p>	<p>1. The recent purchase by the National Trust of Foxbury and land at Hale Purlieu has demonstrated the possibility of acquiring additional grazing – despite the spiralling cost of land. It was recognised that the purchase of any significant area/s would be unlikely to be possible without additional financial support, but there are a number of other organisations which might be expected to contribute should an opportunity arise. This would provide a long term benefit of the Scheme. The Committee agreed that any unspent money should be set aside for this. The Scheme Manager will seek to identify suitable areas for further consideration. At the end of the current agreement with DEFRA, any remaining money, not used for this purpose will be returned to the main fund and could be used to extend the term of the Scheme.</p>	<p>Scheme Manager</p>

<p>4. Payments to Commoners</p>	<p>1. When the Scheme was introduced, payments were set at £60.00 for ponies, cattle and donkeys, and £25.00 for pigs. This was determined simply by the amount of money available and was described as the minimum amount, in the expectation that it would increase as more money was received from DEFRA. It was unfortunate that payments were reduced to £56.00 last year because the number of animals entered in the Scheme rose above the ceiling of 5,000 which the Scheme is allowed to support, and payments were therefore reduced proportionally.</p> <p>2. The Committee agreed that restoring payments to the original level should be a priority, with a target of increasing actual payments to £65.00. A decision on this will be made after the Scheme Manager has reported back on Item 2. This will still leave a substantial sum for a scheme for young commoners, and/or to be set aside each year towards the possible acquisition of, or provision of access to, additional land.</p>	
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C F R DRAPER
Scheme Manager (Secretary)