



Verderers of the New Forest

THE QUEEN'S HOUSE
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Official Verderer
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All Verderers
Advisory Group Members

27 October 2008

MINUTES OF THE VERDERERS' CSS SUB COMMITTEE MEETING HELD IN THE SCHEME MANAGER'S OFFICE ON 21 OCTOBER 2008

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)
1. Introduction	The Official Verderer thanked members for attending.
2. Minutes of the Last Meeting	The Minutes of the last meeting were approved.
3. Scheme Update	<p>The Scheme Manager provided a brief update on the Scheme as follows:</p> <p><i>The Scheme has just passed its mid point and is now in its sixth year. In the year just ended, membership rose to a new high of 428 commoners – compared with a total of 384 last year. That included 47 new commoners who had turned out previously for 2 years and were eligible for membership for the first time this year – entering 184 animals. The number of animals entered in the Scheme has now risen to just over 5,400 – compared with just over 5,300 last year.</i></p> <p><i>Animal numbers on the Forest remained below the ceiling of 7,000 during the Scheme year, although the number recorded on the Marking Fee Register has risen this month to 7,151. Of course, that takes no account of the 700 plus animals which were recorded as being removed during the early part of the year, or the many others removed by owners which were not recorded – including seasonally depastured cattle. So, overall, the total number of animals has not been a particular cause for concern and, with the new measures which have just come into force for the new Scheme year, it is hoped that the number of animals will be maintained for 2009 below the 7,000 ceiling.</i></p>

	<p><i>Our claim was submitted to the RPA by return of post (recorded delivery) on 30 June. Payment is expected as usual in November/early December.</i></p> <p><i>Because of the increase in the number of stock in the Scheme – over and above the 5,000 on which payments are permitted, payments this year, subject to agreement at this meeting, will be reduced to £55 (Note. This was subsequently agreed). In addition, the £15 premium which was introduced last year, will continue to be paid. Subject to minor corrections, the total Scheme payment this year will be in the region of £370,000.</i></p> <p><i>Earlier this year, I wrote to all the original Scheme members, to explain the new arrangements that will allow them to reduce the number of animals they turn out by up to 25% and still claim their full, original entitlement. I invited anyone who was uncertain of the implications of this, to contact me - and a small number subsequently rang to seek further clarification. Indications from the Agisters are that this has been favourably received, and they expect a number of members to take advantage of this option. As in previous years, I shall wait until I have paid members, before sending out new application forms. My intention is to send out application forms as early as possible in the New Year. These will indicate individual entitlements and the number of animals to which members can reduce without any loss of payment.</i></p>
4. Statement of Account	The Statement of Account prepared by the Auditors was approved.
5. Appeal – Commoner Excluded on Welfare Grounds	The Committee reviewed its decision, taken at the last meeting, to exclude a commoner from the Scheme for 12 months on welfare grounds. The earlier decision was upheld on the basis that the commoner concerned had not taken sufficiently prompt or adequate action to care for a cow which subsequently collapsed on the Forest and had to be destroyed by an Agister.
6. Application of ‘New Member’ Rules to a Member Who is Limited to Entering 2 Pigs in the Stewardship Scheme	A decision was sought on whether a member who, because of his commoning history during the ‘baseline’ year (2004) is limited to entering 2 pigs in the Scheme, should be allowed to enter additional animals up to the limits set for ‘new commoners’. The Committee decided that his limit should remain unchanged, as his situation is no different to that of other members who are limited to claiming on a smaller number of animals than they would wish – particularly those limited to only one pony.
7. Update on Inclusion of Former Inclosures	<p>The Committee was updated on the inclusion of former inclosures in the Scheme Area. An RLE 1 form, supported by maps of each of the inclosures was submitted earlier in the year. That has now been processed. An e-mail from Natural England, dated 13 October, confirmed that the additional area of 2,230.34 hectares has been added to the agreement, backdated to 2006/7 and that payment for 2006/7 could be made ‘within the next couple of weeks’ – as follows:</p> <p>LH1 = 853.82 ha x £28 = £20,782.32 P1 = 1373.52 ha x £22 = £25,292.67 Total = £46,074.98</p> <p>(Note. LH1 [Lowland Grassland and Heathland Mosaic]; P1 [Grazed Woodland (Riverine, Bog and Grazed Woodland)] – payment rates for both categories of grazing, as for original agreement area)</p>

<p>8. Inclusion of Adjacent Commons</p>	<p>The Committee considered a proposal from Natural England for the Verderers to enter into separate ‘grazing’ agreements with the owners of adjacent commons. These would be incorporated into the terms of HLS agreements which are currently being negotiated between the owners and Natural England. While the Committee is content to enter into such agreements for commons that are in good condition, there was no support for entering into agreements where there are existing problems – particularly issues associated with overgrazing on some of the Northern commons which are subject to enforcement action by Natural England. The view is that these problems are the responsibility of the owners and must be resolved by them – it would be inappropriate for the Verderers to accept responsibility under the terms of these proposed agreements. The subject will be discussed further at the Advisory Group meeting in November.</p> <p>(Further to this discussion, it was agreed that the Advisory Group should be asked to investigate a replacement for the Verderers’ Countryside Stewardship Scheme when the 10 year agreement comes to an end in 2013. This will be included on the agenda for the next meeting of the Advisory Group on 4 November.)</p>
<p>9. Funding Support for Agisters’ Payroll</p>	<p>The Committee considered a proposal to make an annual grant of £40,000, while funding permits, towards the ever increasing cost of the Agisters’ payroll. This is needed to avoid a budget deficiency. It was argued that such a payment would recognise the contribution made by the Agisters to the management of the stock which is entered in the Scheme, and benefit the commoners by avoiding the necessity for an increase in Marking Fees. Mr Adams opposed the measure as he felt that it could have long term implications for funding through the Forestry Commission. He argued that it would be more appropriate to increase Marking Fees – and increase Scheme payments commensurately. That would avoid a situation where the Forestry Commission might tend to view Scheme money as a convenient alternative source of funding.</p> <p>These concerns were acknowledged, but the Chairman expressed confidence in the current funding arrangements, despite the shortfall. The proposal was accepted on a majority vote.</p>
<p>10. Funding Support For the Forest Friendly Farming Adviser’s Post</p>	<p>The Committee reviewed its decision to provide up to £10,000 a year in support of the Forest Friendly Farming Adviser’s post. This is in light of the decision by the incumbent, Ian Stone, to reduce his commitment to 2 days a week. John Durnell, the Head of Conservation (West Hampshire) has confirmed that the other 3 days a week will be ‘backfilled’ by Rhys Morgan. The Committee considered that Ian Stone’s reduced commitment of 2 days a week would adequately cover the needs of the Scheme. It was therefore decided to reduce the level of payment proportionally, to £4,000.</p>
<p>11. Support to Young Commoners</p>	<p>The Committee noted a funding proposal from the Young Commoners’ Association towards the cost of a laptop computer and projector, as well as administrative costs and educational materials. The grant of £1,000, which was provisionally agreed at the last meeting, was confirmed.</p>
<p>12. Freedom of Information Request</p>	<p>The Scheme Manager briefed the Committee on the most recent request for information from Mr Rudd. In particular, his request for ‘full details of all payments made under the Verderers’ Stewardship Scheme for the past three years, to include the name of the recipient, the recipient’s holding number, the</p>

	amount of stock claimed for and the total sum paid'. This was dealt with under the Environmental Information Regulations. The information has been withheld under regulation 13(a)(i).
13. Date of Next Meeting	TBD

C F R DRAPER
Scheme Manager