

MINUTES of the Court of Verderers held on Wednesday 16th February 2011 at 9.30 a.m. in the Verderers' Hall and the Library, the Queen's House, Lyndhurst.

PRESENT:	Mr O Crosthwaite Eyre DL	Official Verderer
	Mr R Deakin	Elected Verderer
	Mr A Gerrelli	Elected Verderer
	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:	Mr J F Kitcher MBE	Elected Verderer & Chairman of the Staff Committee

IN COMMITTEE in the Library

2011/5326 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING RESUME

The Minutes of the Court held on Wednesday, 19th January 2010 were approved.

2011/5327 CONDITION OF STOCK RESUME

The Head Agister said that overall he is pleased with the condition of stock at the present time. Whilst some animals are being removed, the situation is an improvement on last year. This may be due in part to far fewer foals being left on the Forest. As usual it is mostly older mares, mares with foals and younger animals; 2 and 3 year olds, which are losing condition. It appears that ponies in some areas are losing condition faster than in other parts of the Forest, but this may be because the commoners in those areas have kept more young ponies.

Quite a lot of cattle are being marked and commoners are combining marking with TB testing which is now an annual requirement. The Agisters inspect the cattle closely and will not mark anything that gives cause for concern.

The Head Agister then left the meeting.

Mr Deakin commented that it is important to remember that we are still in the middle of winter. April and May are often the months when Forest stock goes back in condition.

2011/5328 ANNOUNCEMENTS AND DECISIONS RESUME

After some discussion the announcements were approved.

2011/5329 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST RESUME

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

Mr Deakin declared an interest in matters connected with the Beaulieu

Road Sale Yard as he is a director and the treasurer of the New Forest Livestock Society.

The Official Verderer declared an interest in matters concerning golf clubs.

Mr Gerrelli declared an interest in matters concerning campsites.

2011/5330 FINANCIAL STATEMENT RESUME

The Financial Statement for January 2011 was approved.

2011/5331 REPORT ON MARKING FEES RECEIVED IN JANUARY 2011 RESUME

Ponies	428	Pigs	0
Cattle	8	Sheep	0
Donkeys	0		
SUB TOTAL	436	TOTAL ALL ANIMALS	436

2011/5332 ANIMALS REMOVED IN JANUARY DUE TO POOR CONDITION RESUME

18 mares	5 geldings
70 fillies	2 cattle
1 colt	2 donkeys

TOTAL - 98

Total in January 2010 - 166

2011/5333 BYELAW ENFORCEMENT DISCHARGE

There are currently no reported byelaws infringements.

ENCROACHMENTS

2011/5334 ENCROACHMENTS – HOME FARM, BARTLEY RESUME

The Surveyor visited the site yesterday with the Official Verderer and Mrs Westerhoff. The Surveyor is very experienced and has found plenty of evidence to prove that the fence has been moved out. He will be preparing his report for submission to Moore Blatch in early March. A letter will then be sent by Moore Blatch to the solicitors acting for the owner of the property, setting out why we believe the fence must be reinstated in its original position and inviting them to take instructions from their client.

2011/5335 ENCROACHMENT – CANTERTON LANE RESUME

The Clerk apologised that she has not had time to contact the owner of the land to find out why the work he promised to do to remove the encroachment has not been carried out. She will do so before the next Court.

2011/5336 STALLION BLOODLINE DIVERSITY SCHEME RESUME

The Official Verderer reported that it has been agreed this project will go ahead. Suitable animals will now be sought. The scheme has been modified and it will now support fillies as well as colts.

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

2011/5337 MR LEN MANSBRIDGE

The Official Verderer said he is sorry to report the recent death of Mr Len Mansbridge. Mr Mansbridge was an Elected Verderer for six years from 1988 to 1994. He also regularly attended the Verderers Court and contributed greatly to its proceedings. The Official Verderer said members of the Court wished to extend their condolences to Mr Mansbridge's family.

2011/5338 FORESTRY COMMISSION PUBLIC FOREST ESTATE – PUBLIC CONSULTATION

On 27th January the Government published its long awaited consultation paper which contains its proposals for the disposal of the FC's land in England.

The paper proposes that the New Forest will be classed as what it calls a "Heritage Wood" which can then be passed to a new or existing charity in the form of a trust or a lease. There is mention of funding being given to the charity initially, but the document specifically states that the charity would be expected to become less reliant on Government grants over time, and in some cases move towards financial self reliance. The charity could pursue income generating activities in the forest, consistent with the delivery of public benefits. So ultimately the charity may be expected to meet the full running costs from its own resources and/or by generating income from the Heritage Wood.

We have considered the document and its ideas with care, however it must be said that the consultation paper is very scant on detail and raises many more questions than it answers. Our initial response is therefore as generalised as the consultation paper is itself.

We have to say that we do not believe the proposals, if applied to the New Forest, will work.

Unless a charity can prove beyond any doubt that it has the necessary funds from day one and in perpetuity, it would be negligent for its trustees to take on the responsibility for this huge and precious national treasure. That position should only change if guaranteed funding from the Government is offered instead. It would be an act of unforgivable recklessness to allow any new owner to take on the £5 million annual running cost of the New Forest without certainty that it was financially able to do so.

To use an analogy, it would be like giving a very large, beautiful and old historic house to someone who had insufficient money to do the necessary ongoing repairs and maintenance. Within a generation it would be in a very sorry state, and possibly even uninhabitable and derelict.

Whilst we recognise that the Forestry Commission is suffering cuts, as are we, in line with all Government departments, we still believe that the funding it obtains for the Forest, as a publicly owned asset, is the most secure way of ensuring its future.

With inadequate Government support, any new owner would have no option but to take up the advice of the consultation document and raise extra funds from its asset. The New

Forest currently runs at an annual deficit of £2.9 million, and that is the hole that the income will have to fill each and every year. The charity would be forced to take a ruthlessly commercial approach, and almost inevitably the first port of call will be to see how those who visit and enjoy the area and indeed those who live here, could be charged.

Commercial exploitation will be bad for the Forest, it is too fragile and precious an environment to withstand the pressures of such an existence, and ultimately the change of ownership will end up damaging the very thing it was meant to protect and preserve.

The ancient privilege that allows the public to enjoy the New Forest for free as of right, which has prevailed for generations, will be under threat.

The Consultation also speaks of the Big Society. We believe that the way the Forest has been managed over the last hundred years is already a good example of how Big Society should work. The historic system of checks and balances that we already have, which allows the long term national interest to be protected by the Forestry commission as landowner, and the local public interest to be represented and protected by the Verderers is a winning formula proven over decades.

In addition we now have the National Park Authority playing a key role, and like us, they have members who are directly elected by the local community who are unpaid volunteers, sitting around the table making decisions and having hands-on involvement on behalf of the local constituencies that they represent. All three organisations are based here in the New Forest, and taken together they are well proven to be local, accessible and with a strong element of democratic accountability.

Therefore we say that the Big Society requirements of direct stakeholder involvement and control are already well established here in the New Forest. Rather than dismantle this system we would invite the Secretary of State (The Rt.Hon. Mrs Caroline Spelman MP) to instead use it as an existing example of what Big Society can achieve in the custodianship of a huge tract of publicly owned land.

We feel we must do all that we can to persuade the Government that these proposals will not work, and are akin to dumping the New Forest on the side of the road with a few pennies in its pocket, and leaving it there as a "charity case".

We would urge the public, and the Forest's voluntary organisations, to respond individually to the consultation and say what you think. The Forestry Commission is running a number of events locally at which information on the consultation can be obtained, two of which will be 'drop-in' events here in the Verderers' Hall on the 7th and 12th March, all afternoon and early evening.

We would also encourage members of the public to contact their MPs directly in writing if they are as worried about these proposals as we are.

The New Forest Association, which is the Forest's oldest local charity, recently described this as the biggest crisis it has faced since 1877. We tend to agree.

2011/5339 PUBLIC BODIES BILL

This is the legislation that will allow the Forestry Acts to be altered by the Minister, and to enable these changes. It is currently going through the House of Lords.

The Constitution Committee of the House of Lords has already concluded that there are aspects of the draft legislation that are unsafe and amount to what it has called "Henry VIII clauses" which give Ministers wide ranging powers to amend primary legislation without parliamentary scrutiny. Having examined the Bill we need to be assured that there are no

powers contained in it that may allow the existing New Forest Acts to be bypassed. We shall thus be considering this morning whether or not to seek specialist legal advice on the matter from parliamentary agents in London.

ANIMAL ACCIDENT REPORT

2011/5340 ACCIDENT REPORT FOR JANUARY 2011

The Agisters attended 12 accidents, compared with 15 in December the previous year.

7 ponies were killed.

1 pony and 1 donkey were injured.

11 accidents occurred during the hours of darkness.

7 involved private cars or light commercials and 1 involved a heavy vehicle.

4 accidents were not reported and have been logged as hit and runs.

5 accidents involved local motorists.

The total killed and injured so far this year is 9, compared with 6 in the same period last year.

PRESENTMENTS BY THE DEPUTY SURVEYOR OF THE NEW FOREST

There were no presentments by the Deputy Surveyor

PRESENTMENTS

2011/5341 FORESTRY COMMISSION PUBLIC FOREST ESTATE – PUBLIC CONSULTATION
Presentment by Mr William Ziegler, Chairman, New Forest Association

'In common with many hundreds of thousands of others the New Forest Association is deeply concerned by the proposals outlined in the Government's consultation document relating to the disposal of the Public Forest Estate which is presently owned and managed by the Forestry Commission and in particular to those proposals relating to the New Forest.

We are concerned not just by what is in the consultation document but, just as importantly, what is not as it fails to address a number of vital points pertaining to the New Forest:-

1. No reference is made as to the New Forest being treated as a Cultural as well as a Natural Heritage Forest.
2. No information is given as to whether the full infrastructure of the New Forest would remain intact e.g. the housing, timber, staff etc nor any recognition of the fact that it vital that the whole Forest estate is kept together as a single unit.
3. No reference is made as to whether the existing New Forest Acts would remain unaltered as the cornerstone of the existing protective legislation the New Forest presently enjoys nor that the Verderers' powers would continue unaffected.
4. No reference is made as to how or by whom any new management body would be deemed to be experienced and competent enough to run the New Forest.

5. Apart from suggesting that any new management body might "pursue income generating activities in the Forest" no detail is given as to how adequate funding might be made available to run the New Forest in the long term.
6. No definite information is given as to how the current levels of public access would be maintained.

We are also deeply concerned by the power that would be granted to the Government by the proposed Public Bodies Act as it appears that it could be used to override the existing New Forest Acts and we are making moves to include an amendment to the bill stating "Nothing in this Act shall prejudice or derogate from the provisions of the New Forest Acts 1877 to 1970 or any byelaw made thereunder, or s.4 of the Agriculture & Forestry (Financial Provisions) Act 1991."

We would therefore ask the Verderers to reject the consultation as it stands now and support our efforts to ensure that the Public Bodies Bill is not allowed to threaten the existing New Forest Acts which are the legal basis of their powers'.

2011/5342 FORESTRY COMMISSION PUBLIC FOREST ESTATE – PUBLIC CONSULTATION
Presentment by Mr Derek Bennett

'My wife and I would like to say how concerned we are about the Government's proposals regarding our forests. We are particularly concerned about the future of the New Forest and the Verderers' Court. The Forestry Commission and the Verderers have served this area well for many years, it would be tragic if control of the Forest is given over to people with no understanding of the area.

We have written to Dr Julian Lewis MP to support his stance on the subject, and hope that there is still time to avoid a disaster taking place'.

2011/5343 FORESTRY COMMISSION PUBLIC FOREST ESTATE – PUBLIC CONSULTATION
Presentment by Mr Graham Ferris, Chairman, New Forest Commoners' Defence Association

'The Commoners Defence Association fully supports the position outlined by the Verderers.

The reaction of our members to the Forestry Commission consultation document was one of shock. Shock that neither the Verderers nor Commoning merited a mention, shock that so little detail of, and justification for the proposal for "heritage forests" was given, and shock that a Government we expected to be in tune with rural issues should have put forward a proposal that runs the risk of jeopardising centuries of care for the New Forest's unique landscape, habitat and commoning system.

As everyone here is aware, it is the grazing and browsing action of Commoners' animals, together with the management actions on the Open Forest, most recently by the Forestry Commission, that have shaped this unique environment. If Commoning is threatened, the New Forest is threatened.

And the threats from the proposal are three fold:-

-Firstly new legislation in the Public Bodies Bill runs the risk that, by accident or design, it may sweep away centuries of struggle, which resulted in the various Acts of Parliament specific to the New Forest, including those relating to the power of the Verderers to control development on the Crown Lands and to regulate Commoning.

-Secondly whoever, including the Forestry Commission, is responsible for managing the Forest in the future will be hamstrung by the Government's objective of diminishing financial support. Without adequate funding they will be driven to raising revenue in ways which will have a negative impact on Commoning such as selling homes currently occupied by Commoners, or promoting large scale fee paying recreational events. Alternatively cost cutting will impact on Open Forest management.

Thirdly, the expertise, knowledge and experience of the Forestry Commission managing the Open Forest, much of it held by Commoners, will be impossible to replicate in short order.

We would encourage the Verderers to continue to question and campaign against the current proposal.

The Forest is in excellent hands, with the checks and balances of the various bodies, including those volunteers who give up their time because the future of the New Forest matters to them.

This IS the "Big Society", this IS a "National Treasure", Commoning IS the key to its survival and we urge the Government to think again'.

2011/5344 FORESTRY COMMISSION PUBLIC FOREST ESTATE – PUBLIC CONSULTATION
Presentment by Mrs Mary Gray, Commoner from Brook

Mrs Gray said that she fully supports all that has been said today. She added 'we are all extremely worried' and she asked everyone to please write, as the Official Verderer has asked, to Mr Cameron and Mr Clegg – and perhaps even bring back Gordon Brown!

2011/5345 RECLAMATION AND PRESERVATION OF BROOK COMMON - BRAMSHAW GOLF CLUB LICENCE RENEWAL
Presentment by Mr Basil Trenowieth, Friends of Brook Common

In a long Presentment that the Official Verderer reluctantly felt obliged to cut short on the grounds that the Court's Procedures for Making Presentments permit presentments to take a maximum of 5 minutes, Mr Trenowieth expressed concern at what he described as the 'deforestation of Brook common through the granting of a licence for the playing of golf'.

Mr Trenowieth provided the Court with a copy of his Presentment and the Official Verderer promised the Court would consider everything contained in it later in committee.

Mr Trenowieth's Presentment set out the issues that he felt need to be addressed in the new licence as in his opinion the current one does not offer sufficient protection to the Forest environment.

Mr Trenowieth acknowledged at the beginning of his Presentment that the Official Verderer always declares an interest in matters concerning Golf Clubs and the Minutes show this to be the case.

IN COMMITTEE in the Library

2011/5346 WELCOME TO MR SPENCER PETTIT, FOREST HOLIDAYS CARAVAN AND CAMPING CLUB DISCHARGE

The Official Verderer welcomed Mr Pettit to the Court. Mr Pettit explained to the Court that the Camping and Caravanning Club are taking operational control of the Forest Holidays Campsites from 1st March this year. Mr Pettit explained that he is the Business Development Manager and he is responsible for the sites in the New Forest. The campsite staff will report to him and all activities on the sites are his responsibility. He has met with Ms Jackie Kelly of Natural England and of course the Deputy Surveyor and other Forestry Commission staff. He has also spoken with the Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust and he is working on a protocol which will address the SSSI status of the sites within the New Forest.

Mr Pettit said he is also putting in place guidelines and a checklist in response to the Campsite Survey commissioned by the New Forest Association in order to monitor the state of the sites in relation to the survey.

2011/5347 ROUNDHILL CAMPSITE FACILITIES BLOCKS RESUME

The Court was provided with proposals for the re-siting of the facilities blocks on Roundhill Campsite. However, several Verderers felt that the proposals are potentially controversial and suggested that a Presentment may be necessary. The Official Verderer decided that in view of this, it would be appropriate for the Court to discuss this further later in the meeting and this was agreed.

2011/5348 HOLMSLEY CAMPSITE REPLACEMENT ELECTRICITY CABLE DISCHARGE

Holmsley campsite has hook ups for touring caravans and motor homes for spring, summer and autumn visitors. The site is open to stock out of season.

The underground power cable from the main intake at east block running to a distribution centre has a fault on one of the phases causing failure to a section of hook up points. It is proposed to replace this cable by opening and closing a trench and reconnecting to the existing main distribution circuit breaker and distribution pane. Maps were provided showing the suggested route for the new cable. The routing is intended to cause minimal disturbance to the Open Forest and can be seen to follow the grass verge between the roadway and the children's playground.

The Court was happy with the proposals which were approved subject to the usual conditions regarding reinstatement, safe working conditions, compensation for loss of grazing etc. However, in addition, in view of the recent accident at Newbury Racecourse when two horses died as a result of being electrocuted by a live underground cable that no-one knew was there, the Court requested that the old cable be properly and safely disconnected in order that there is no possible chance that it can become live in the future. The Forestry Commission assured the Court that all electrical work on the Forest is carried out to the highest possible standard.

2011/5349 CAMPSITE OPENING TIMES DISCHARGE

The Court asked Mr Pettit to ensure that the campsites are not opened before the agreed dates as problems have occurred in the past. Mr Pettit gave his assurance that the campsites will adhere strictly to the dates set out in the lease. He added that Site Managers will, however, be on site prior to the opening date in order to ensure the sites are clean and tidy prior to opening. Mr Seddon said he will re-check the dates and confirm them with Mr Pettit.

Mr Pettit left the meeting.

CONSIDERATION OF PRESENTMENTS

2011/5350 FORESTRY COMMISSION PUBLIC FOREST ESTATE – PUBLIC CONSULTATION RESUME

The first four presentments were all supportive of the Announcement made by the Official Verderer. The Official Verderer told the Court that a meeting was held with representatives of the main Forest bodies with the Deputy Surveyor attending by invitation in order that he may provide information and advice on the consultation process. Every organisation went away having agreed to make sure that their early thoughts and opinions were made known to the Government. The Announcement made in Court this morning reflected those views. The group will re-convene in a few weeks. In the meantime, Richard Benyon MP has been invited to the Forest by the National Park Authority and, if he comes, the Official Verderer will ask to meet him.

2011/5351 RECLAMATION AND PRESERVATION OF BROOK COMMON - BRAMSHAW GOLF CLUB LICENCE RENEWAL RESUME

It was agreed that Mr Trenowieth should be invited to a meeting on site to discuss his concerns. In the meantime a copy of his presentment will be circulated to all members of the Court.

NEW SUBMISSIONS AND OTHER MATTERS RAISED BY THE FORESTRY COMMISSION

2011/5352 HOLMSLEY CAMPSITE REPLACEMENT ELECTRICITY CABLE DISCHARGE

Returning to this item, the Deputy Surveyor confirmed that a standard method statement has been issued to all contractors. Forestry Commission staff will attend to make sure that all installations are made safe. The Court accepted this assurance.

2011/5353 REPLACEMENT SEWAGE SYSTEM AT HOLIDAYS HILL COTTAGE DISCHARGE

Further to this matter being raised at the Court last year, the Forestry Commission submitted a revised proposal to replace the existing traditional septic tank system with a new treatment plant.

The new plant will be a Pureflo 6 unit and details were provided to the Court. This system will serve Holidays Hill Cottage only and not the public lavatory block as had originally been proposed.

The Court was satisfied with the proposal which was therefore approved subject to the usual conditions.

2011/5354 REPLACEMENT SEWAGE TREATMENT PLANT AT FOREST END DISCHARGE

As part of the Forestry Commission's ongoing work to improve and maintain the condition of the SSSI a proposal was submitted to replace the existing 'traditional' three stage septic tank system at Forest End which has been in place for over 30 years, with a package treatment plant. The brickwork within the existing plant is showing signs of serious collapse.

The proposal is to connect the new plant into the existing herringbone discharge pipework. Some of the existing foul drainage from the cottages will have to be re-routed and an electric cable provided to power the treatment system. The old tank will be broken up and the material arising from the excavations from the new installations will be used to reinstate the old tank area.

The new plant is similar to that which has been approved for use at Holiday's Hill but is not by the same manufacturer.

Natural England's consent has been obtained.

The Court approved these proposals, subject to the usual conditions.

2011/5355 APPLICATION BY LYNDHURST SMALL SCHOOL FOR KISS AND DROP POINT AT THE ENTRANCE TO THE NEW FOREST GOLF COURSE DISCHARGE

The application is withdrawn.

MATTERS ARISING OF CONCERN TO THE FORESTRY COMMISSION

2011/5356 A36 FENCING RESUME
March

All the organisations who wrote to the Highways Agency have received the same answer which is that it is the landowner's responsibility to ensure stock do not gain access to a public highway.

This road differs from the other A roads which cross or abut the Forest in that the New Forest Acts contain no reference to it. In view of this, it was suggested that it could be argued that the Highway Agency is an adjacent landowner with responsibility to fence against stock legally depastured on abutting common land.

Prior to 1964 Plaitford Common extended over the other side of the A36 and remained unfenced until that time. The 1964 New Forest Act excluded that part of the common north of the A36 from the Forest. The Act was silent as respect any fencing of the A36 on the south side and the National Trust and Wellow Parish Council had put up a fence before the Act went through. It seems no proper consideration was given to the future maintenance of the fence or liability to the public.

It was agreed the matter needs further consideration.

SSSI RESTORATION WORKS

2011/5357 SILVER STREAM DISCHARGE

There is at present, disagreement about whether this area is a stream restoration or mire restoration project. In due course a decision will be made and formal proposals will be brought to the Court for consideration.

ANY OTHER BUSINESS OF CONCERN TO THE FORESTRY COMMISSION

2011/5358 VISITORS' CARS ON CAMPSITES RESUME

The Forestry Commission was asked to clarify the position concerning additional cars on campsites and whether they are charged for. At present, some people who are visiting campers are parking outside in order not to have to pay. This is sometimes causing unnecessary obstructions.

In reply, the Deputy Surveyor said that he is not sure of the exact position and asked for further information about specific problems. He will then take this up with the Camping and Caravanning Club/Forest Holidays and report back to the Court.

2011/5359 NEW FOREST GOLF COURSE – LYNDHURST RESUME

Mrs Westerhoff reported that Mr John Ledger of the Lyndhurst Golf Club has contacted her with reference to the Management Plan that is currently being drawn up for this course.

Mr Mark Street said he will provide a copy of the Licence for Mrs Westerhoff's information and to help her in her discussions with Mr Ledger. Mrs Westerhoff has told Mr Ledger that she is happy to meet him but that she cannot make any decisions on behalf of the Court. Mr Ledger has confirmed he understands her position.

The Deputy Surveyor and Mr Street left the meeting.

OTHER MATTERS ARISING FROM EARLIER COURTS

2011/5360 EXPENDITURE REVIEW DISCHARGE

Mr Deakin reported that this now appears as a regular item on the Agenda for the Staff Committee.

The Agisters have been allocated an annual budget of £200 each for pound repairs. It has been stressed once more that health and safety and the welfare of stock must not be compromised in an effort to reduce costs.

Discussions have also taken place about how to optimise the use of the vehicles in order to avoid excessive mileage. Trusted commoners may be contacted and asked to investigate reports of problems with stock that may not in fact turn out to be problems. The Agisters will try not to deliver animals unnecessarily and commoners with their own transport will be asked to collect their animals instead. Consideration is being given to recording the mileage on the Staff Minutes.

The Land Rovers will be inspected every 3 months to ensure that there are no problems and to check on the mileage. The trailers will also be inspected to make sure they are kept in good order.

The Clerk is also making every effort to reduce costs in the office. A cheaper stationery supplier has been identified and most mail is now sent second class.

VERDERERS' HIGHER LEVEL STEWARDSHIP SCHEME (HLS)

2011/5361 HEALTHCHECK DISCHARGE

Jim Seymour, Regional Programme Manager for Environmental Stewardship has completed the annual HLS Healthcheck. This included the Verderers' Management Committee. Everything went well. However, he did say afterwards that it is important to remember that the HLS is *one* agreement, for 10 years, with one payment of £16 million paid annually in instalments. The critical outcome is the restoration work on the Forest which must be carried out. He is happy with the plans for this year and next. All parts of the HLS are equally as important, but deliver the outcomes in a different way. He said he likes the level of consultation that takes place, in particular that which includes the commoners.

Mr Seymour will be back next year when he will sit in on a Management Committee meeting.

2011/5362 BEAULIEU ROAD WATER SUPPLY DISCHARGE

This project has unfortunately run into problems. However, Mr Draper, who is Project Manager, is hopeful that the pipe will be laid at no extra cost and maybe even at a reduced cost.

Mr Maton expressed dissatisfaction with the work at the Longdown End. He said the turf has been removed and no protection has been given to it. The trench has been left open and needs to be made safe. Mr Maton suggested that it would be better if the work was carried out in stages with the trench filled in as they went and the turf replaced.

Mr Draper will be asked to speak to the contractors about their method of working.

NEW FOREST NATIONAL PARK

2011/5363 FORESTRY COMMISSION PUBLIC FOREST ESTATE – PUBLIC CONSULTATION RESUME

The National Park Authority has issued a Press Release in which the NPA states its strong support for the present system of management in the New Forest, and says that the Chairman Julian Johnson has asked Ministers to visit the New Forest to discuss the consultation on the future management of England's Forest Estate.

Defra's Minister of State, Richard Benyon MP, is expected to visit the Forest within the next month. The Official Verderer will ask that the Minister also meets with representatives of the Court, hopefully in the Verderers' Hall.

ITEM RESUMED FROM EARLIER IN THE MEETING

2011/5364 ROUNDHILL FACILITIES BLOCKS 2011/5347 DISCHARGE

The Court felt this type of submission should be made by presentment as it is potentially contentious. However, the re-siting of the blocks is something that the Court requested some time ago as there are clear benefits in that the area of gravel needed to provide access to the blocks will be reduced by this proposal.

On this occasion, therefore, the Court agreed to consent to the proposals but wished to make it clear that this decision does not set a precedent and in future more time should be allowed in case a presentment is considered necessary.

MATTERS ARISING FROM EXTERNAL COMMITTEES AND WORKING GROUPS

No matters requiring the Court's immediate attention were reported.

STAFF MATTERS (including the Staff Committee)

2011/5365 LONE WORKERS RESUME

This matter is still outstanding but a policy will be in place by the next Court.

TRAINING

No training is taking place

HEALTH AND SAFETY AT WORK

Apart from the Lone Workers issue mentioned above there are no other health and safety issues at present.

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

2011/5366 LYNDHURST GOLF CLUB (NEW FOREST COURSE) RESUME

Mrs Westerhoff explained that she had received a call from Mr John Ledger at the Golf Club asking for her assistance and advice with drawing up the management plan for the course. Mr Ledger asked Mrs Westerhoff to meet him at the Club. The Court was pleased that Mr Ledger is seeking the advice of the Verderers and it was agreed that the best way forward is for Mrs Westerhoff to agree to meet Mr Ledger, together with one or two elected Verderers. Mr Deakin and Mr Gerrelli said they would like to go along. Mrs Westerhoff will go back to Mr Ledger to arrange a convenient time.

2011/5367 POLICY FRAMEWORK FOR SSSI's DISCHARGE

Mrs Westerhoff explained that Defra announced a new SSSI Policy Framework in a speech to key SSSI stakeholders in London on 27th January 2011 by Defra Minister Richard Benyon MP. Mrs Westerhoff said she would circulate the details to all members of the Court. (Note: This was done by email/post on 19th February 2011).

2011/5368 PUBLIC BODIES BILL

RESUME

Concerns at some parts of the Bill have been discussed in the House of Lords and an amendment has been tabled by Baroness Williams amongst others.

The Official Verderer said he has concerns with some aspects of the Bill. Mr Pasmore said he feels Parliamentary Agents should be asked to look at the Bill and advise. The Official Verderer said he has already taken the step of speaking to Bircham Dyson Bell and they expect the cost is likely to be between £1,000 and £5,000. The Court felt that such is the importance of this matter, that the Official Verderer should draft instructions to BDB.

Mr Clive Maton proposed that the Official Verderer should proceed with instructing BDB at a cost not exceeding £5,000. Mr Gerrelli seconded this proposal which was approved unanimously.

There was no further business and the meeting closed at 1.05 p.m.