

**MINUTES of the Court of Verderers held on Wednesday 20th February 2013 at 9.30 a.m. in
the Verderers' Hall and the Library, the Queen's House, Lyndhurst.**

PRESENT:	Mr Dominic May Mr R Deakin Mr A Gerrelli Miss D Macnair MBE Mr C Maton Mr B Dowsett Mr A H Pasmore Mr D Readhead Mrs P Thorne Mrs D Westerhoff	Official Verderer Elected Verderer & Staff Committee Chairman Elected Verderer Elected Verderer National Park Appointed Verderer Forestry Commission Appointed Verderer Elected Verderer Elected Verderer DEFRA Appointed Verderer Natural England Appointed Verderer
IN ATTENDANCE:	Miss S Westwood Mr J R Gerrelli	Clerk to the Verderers Head Agister

IN COMMITTEE in the Library

2013/6480 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING RESUME

The Minutes of the Court held on Wednesday, 16th January 2013 were approved and signed by the Official Verderer.

2013/6481 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST RESUME

The Official Verderer, the Elected Verderers, including Mr Readhead together with Mrs Thorne and Mr Maton all declared an interest in the Higher Level Stewardship Scheme.

Mr Gerrelli declared an interest in matters concerning campsites.

Mr Maton advised the Court that he undertakes contract work for the Forestry Commission and therefore declared an interest in such matters. He also declared an interest in the New Forest Show Society's proposal to tarmac the old Buckhound Kennel's entrance. A member of Mr Maton's family is employed by the Show Society.

Mr Barry Dowsett advised the Court that he is a Forestry Commission Voluntary Ranger.

2013/6482 CONDITION OF STOCK RESUME

The Head Agister reported that the Agister team has been busy removing ponies which have lost condition quite rapidly as a result of the cold, wet weather. The Agisters have the situation under control and the commoners are also assisting by monitoring their animals and removing them where necessary either with or without the Agisters' assistance.

2013/6483 STOCK LOSING CONDITION AND REMOVED FROM THE FOREST RESUME

In January 91 animals, consisting of 24 mares with yearlings, 13 mares, 43 fillies, 5 geldings and 6 donkeys were removed from the Forest due to poor condition.

This compares with 26 animals removed in January 2012.

2013/6484 MARKING FEES RECEIVED TO DATE

	Forest	Common	Total
Ponies	331	15	346
Cattle	57	41	98
Total 444			

2013/6485 FUTURE SCANNING SURVEILLANCE FOR ANIMAL DISEASES DISCHARGE

The Head Agister attended the workshop in Exeter on 28th January. He reported that it was a very interesting event but more relevant to vets.

The Animal Health & Veterinary Laboratories Agency's budget is being cut from £10M to £7M. The cut will have an inevitable effect on animal disease surveillance and diagnostics. As a result the AHVLA is seeking the assistance of veterinary surgeons in ensuring that effective surveillance for animal diseases such as foot and mouth, Schmallenberg etc., is maintained.

2013/6486 RINGWORM DISCHARGE

The Staff Committee recently discussed the Court's policy on ringworm and wished to know whether it had changed.

The Court confirmed that animals on holdings showing evidence of ringworm will not be marked and must not be turned out. Animals already on the Forest which show signs of ringworm may remain out providing they are treated and there are no welfare concerns.

The weather conditions have been perfect for ringworm and veterinary surgeons are apparently reporting a larger number of cases than usual.

Ringworm is self-limiting and will disappear on its own in due course but it is highly infectious both to other animals and humans and must therefore be treated.

2013/6487 SPRING WELFARE TOUR RESUME
May

The Welfare Tour will be held on Friday, 10th May.

2013/6488 BYELAW ENFORCEMENT RESUME

There are no byelaw enforcement issues at present.

The Head Agister left the meeting

2013/6489 ANNOUNCEMENTS AND DECISIONS RESUME

The Announcements and Decisions were approved.

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

2013/6489 COMMONERS - RESPONSE TO MRS MARY GRAY

Mrs Gray made an excellent presentation at January's Court, regarding her family's cattle turned out at Brook, and the clash with Bramshaw Golf Course adjacent to her farm. She specifically asked "do commoners' legally turned-out stock have support from the Official Verderer and the commoners' Elected Verderers, or will recreation and other interests become priority over commoners' rights on Open Forest in general."

I am pleased to confirm that all the Verderers do support commoning.

From time to time there are inevitably conflicts between commoning and recreational activities. It is one of the tasks of the Verderers to work hard to resolve such conflicts. In this case, the Verderers have been working hard with Natural England and the Forestry Commission, including another site meeting since the last Court. Additionally, the golf club is proposing a modified course layout for the first and eighteenth hole. We will continue to try to resolve this issue.

2013/6490 MR GEORDIE COOK – SHEEP ON THE COMMONS

At the January Open Court, Mr Cook complained that he wasn't treated with respect by the Verderers in the November Court.

I apologise to Mr Cook for any offence caused.

ANIMAL ACCIDENT REPORT

2013/6491 THE ANIMAL ACCIDENT REPORT FOR JANUARY 2013

The number of accidents for January were up by 4 compared with the same period last year. The Agisters attended 16 accidents involving 11 ponies, and 5 cattle. 15 of the accidents occurred during the hours of darkness and 1 at twilight.

4 ponies were injured and destroyed.

4 ponies were uninjured and 3 reported as having been involved in an accident were not be found.

3 cattle were killed and 1 cow was injured; 1 reported to have been involved in an incident was not found.

Accidents occurred on the B3054, at Hatchet Moor, Hill Top, Bull Hill, and Norleywood Crossroads.

On the B3078 there were accidents at Longcross and Godshill and a further 2 at Crows Nest.

2 accidents occurred on the C10 within a day of each other, one at Goatspen, Burley on 3rd January involving a cow which was killed, and another in the same vicinity at Burley Golf Course on 4th January involving a pony which was injured and dispatched by the Agister.

There was a 'hit-and-run' incident on 4th January at Latchmoor (B3055) where the driver hit a yearling filly wearing a reflective collar and failed to report the accident - the animal had to be dispatched by the Agister.

Another 'hit-and-run' on 16th January involved a Shetland pony wearing a reflective collar at Setley between the B3055 and the A337 - fortunately the animal was uninjured.

At this point we are still waiting for information from the police, but to our knowledge – all of the accidents in January involved cars. We know at least 3 of the drivers were local, with other drivers coming from Swanage, Glastonbury, London and Salisbury.

PRESENTMENT BY THE DEPUTY SURVEYOR OF THE NEW FOREST

There were no presentments from the Deputy Surveyor at this Court.

PRESENTMENTS

2013/6492 COMMONERS – MRS MARY GRAY

Mrs Gray said that she feels reassured that she is getting support from the Court. She added that since 1973 she has had problems with the Golf Club. Mrs Gray thanked the Court and said that support from the Verderers has heartened her.

2013/6493 BRIDGE AT NEWLANDS CROSSING

Presentment by Mrs Ailsa Farrand, Commoner and New Forest Equestrian Association (NFEA) Committee Member

'Good morning - Official Verderer and Verderers, my name is Ailsa Farrand a Commoner based at Furze Hill Nr. Ogdens and am a Committee Member of the New Forest Equestrian Association (NFEA). I wish to draw the Court's attention to issues raised by the installation of the new bridge at the crossing of Dockens Water beside Newlands Plantation. The NFEA has received numerous complaints in recent months regarding this new structure, and since December we have been in discussion with Hampshire County Council, as have the Verderers, and we would draw the Court's attention to some of the issues that have emerged, which will assist with regard to future developments on rights of way within the perambulation.

As the Court knows, the bridge was installed with gates and a notice banning riders from using it, despite the absence of any such restrictions on the use of its predecessor. Also, the earlier structure was open on one side, but the replacement has rails on both sides, which anyway make it very narrow for ridden use. As a rather lengthy suspension bridge it also suffers from significant movement in use. Additionally, the dramatic increase in the size of the bridge and its placing in the ford have adversely affected the safety of the ford itself as was raised at the Court in January. This is particularly the case when the stream is in spate and the enlarged bridge creates great turbulence over the ford and disturbance to the stream bed.

The construction project raises issues of great concern. Firstly, local riders were not included in the consultation with regard to the new structure, despite the historic importance of this crossing as a safe means of ridden access to the adjacent commons and the lack of any alternative safe crossing point nearby. Secondly, subsequent discussions with the Council who constructed the bridge revealed that is unaware of its legal obligations under the National Trust Act – 'not to undertake any works that impede or prevent access to land with rights of common', the NFEA believe that the council has committed a very serious breach of its legal obligation to seek approval for these works from the Planning Inspectorate. In light of this we requested as a first step to rectify the situation that the Council desist from the reinstallation of the gates following their removal

by persons unknown.

We therefore seek the Courts support in 2 points, the Court takes this opportunity to remind HCC of its legal obligations not to impede or prevent access land with rights of common, and that the NFEA and other relevant amenity groups will be consulted on any such work within the perambulation.

IN COMMITTEE in the Library

CONSIDERATION OF PRESENTMENTS

2013/6494 BRIDGE AT NEWLANDS CROSSING DISCHARGE

This is really a matter for the County Council and the National Trust. However Mrs Thorne and the local Agister did attend a recent site meeting. Having helped facilitate a resolution at that meeting, it was agreed no further action is required by the Court.

NEW SUBMISSIONS AND OTHER MATTERS RAISED BY THE FORESTRY COMMISSION

2013/6495 HAMPSHIRE COUNTY HIGHWAYS - UNDERGROUND CABLE TO ROAD SURFACE SENSOR AT STONEY CROSS DISCHARGE

The proposal to put a new underground service in a 50mm duct to be installed in a trench on the Forest side of the A31 fence at Stoney Cross (north of the road) was approved subject to the usual conditions regarding satisfactory reinstatement, safe working conditions, compensation for loss of grazing etc.

2013/6496 LYNDHURST SEWAGE WORKS – TEMPORARY ACCESS FROM THE A35 DISCHARGE

Southern Water wishes to carry out improvements to the Lyndhurst Waste Treatment Plant. Due to the nature of the plant being delivered by large lorries, an extension to the fence and installation of a temporary additional gate further into the Forest is requested to facilitate safe access.

The proposals were approved subject to the usual three conditions, in particular proper reinstatement when the fencing, gate and guard hut is removed. A further condition is that the gates must be managed in such a way that stock cannot at any time gain access to the adjacent A35.

2013/6497 CAMPSITE OPENING - 2013 SEASON DISCHARGE

A request for the winter site staff to arrive on Roundhill Campsite on the 4th March, 17 days in advance of the opening date (21st March) in order to prepare the site was agreed. The usual period of time allowed for setting up is 10 days but Roundhill requires extra time due to the reinstating of the toilet blocks which are stored off site whilst the campsite is closed.

The Court was concerned about potential damage because of the very wet ground conditions this year. In response, the Deputy Surveyor stressed that it is not in Camping in the Forest's interests to damage the ground, especially at the start of the season and consideration is already being given to whether all the Forest campsites will be able to open on time. It has already been decided that Ashurst and Ocknell will not open until towards the end of April even though Easter is early this year - at the

end of March.

The Deputy Surveyor assured the Verderers that the campsite operators are bound by the conditions of their licence and that they must manage the New Forest's sites in the context of the Forest environment and the SSSI status. Damage must be avoided. Camping in the Forest has written to Dr Graham Ferris, Chairman of the CDA, in this connection following a letter that the Deputy Surveyor received from him.

2013/6498 ROUNDHILL WATER TOWER

DISCHARGE

After careful consideration of the options, the Court voted in favour of allowing the water tower to be replaced. Mr Pasmore and Mr Readhead wished it to be recorded that they abstained from voting as they felt very strongly that the water company reservoir design was deliberately slanted in such a way that the Court would not approve it. Members of the Court all agreed that the proposals were drafted to put the cheaper option in the best light

Both options were, however, discussed in detail, after which consent was given for the replacement water tower because it has less impact on the area of grazing and is well-screened against the backdrop of Stockley Inclosure. Agreement is given subject to the following conditions:-

1. No trees are cut down during the replacement of the tower,
2. there is no fence/enclosure around the tower and
3. the three usual conditions regarding satisfactory reinstatement, safe working conditions, compensation for loss of grazing etc., are strictly adhered to.

A proposal in respect of re-siting a transformer will be brought to the next Court by Mr Street.

2013/6499 PITMORE LANE MEMORIAL RECREATION GROUND

RESUME
May

The Clerk produced photographs which show the fence is once more in appalling condition. The photographs will be kept on file for future reference. The invitation to a site meeting in April was accepted and Mr Deakin, Mr Dowsett, Mr Gerrelli and Mr Readhead all said they would like to attend. It was suggested that (commoner) Mr Mark Adams, who has expressed an interest in the future of the ground, should be invited to attend as well.

The Court discussed its likely decision in respect of the granting of a new licence. In view of the poor maintenance history, borne out by the present state of the fence, the Court felt it would be unwilling to grant a licence of more than 5 years with no fence allowed. The Court will want the licence to contain conditions such as no equipment being left out on the ground, no new tracks being laid, parking only in agreed places and no fencing. The ground must also be kept clear of rubbish. However, a final decision will not be made until a formal application is made through the Forestry Commission.

The Clerk added that she believes that the lack of maintenance of the ground is due to the fact that the Parish Council holds the lease, but the Sports Club uses the field. Neither party seems to be willing to monitor the condition of the site properly.

2013/6500 NEW FOREST SHOW SOCIETY OLD BUCKHOUND KENNELS DISCHARGE
ENTRANCE

Mr Maton repeated his declaration of interest.

A request has been received to tarmac what is now the main entrance and exit for the annual New Forest Show as well as providing access to the campsite and the cottages within New Park. There are two reasons for the request. One is that the present gravel track is expensive and time consuming to maintain and secondly during Show time in particular, the dust that is created by vehicles causes health and safety issues for the stewards on duty at the gates.

The Court expressed two concerns regarding this request. Firstly, the proximity of the stock pound. Driving ponies across tarmac is dangerous and something to be avoided where possible. Secondly, the Court has a long standing policy of not permitting tarmac on the Open Forest because of its urbanising effect which is detrimental to the traditional character of the Forest. The request was therefore refused.

In discussion with the Deputy Surveyor, it was agreed that it will be suggested that the Show society should consider using basalt as a surface rather than hoggin gravel which is used now. The Forestry Commission's experience is that basalt does not break up and form pot holes quite as readily as hoggin.

The suggestion that the entrance on the road side of the A337 fence, up to the cattle grid (which is the responsibility of the Highway Authority), be tarmacked was also discussed briefly. The Court will await formal proposals in this respect from Hampshire Highways. It is also believed that a request to install a double cattle grid may be received at the same time. Both requests will be considered when proposals are received.

2013/6501 BRAMSHAW GOLF CLUB

RESUME

A request was received for short term remedial works to remedy poaching that has been caused by a combination of wet weather and cattle using a walk way to the 1st and 18th holes, resulting in both being closed. The Golf Club is proposing a temporary solution to the poaching in the form of either laying hoggin or bracken mulch to create a stable and passable walk way. A plan showing the proposed treatment areas was provided. The Court considered the proposal and was happy to approve the temporary laying of bracken mulch, but not hoggin.

On a separate matter, the Golf Club would like to change the layout of the course at the start and finish to mitigate the above issues. This will result in the 18th green being abandoned and making it the teeing ground for the 1st hole. Two existing silver birch trees will need to be removed to create a line between the 1st and 18th fairway to create a new line to the potential new teeing ground. A new 18th green would be created. Some scrub clearance will be required but the plants are quite small.

The Court indicated it would be prepared to further consider the reworking of the holes. Mr Street will bring detailed proposals to the Court in due course. In the meantime Mrs Westerhoff agreed to check that the proposal does not conflict with the conditions of the Management Plan. Natural England must of course also give approval.

Action
DW/MStr

2013/6502 DEADLINE FOR SUBMISSIONS FROM THE FORESTRY COMMISSION DISCHARGE

Members of the Court were concerned that they do not always have time to undertake site visits or other essential investigations prior to the Court where they consider the submissions. The Court therefore stipulated that in future submissions for consideration by the Court must be with the Clerk by lunchtime on the Wednesday of the week before the Court. All papers must be provided, with the requisite number of copies, by that deadline so that the Agenda can be finalised and papers sent out that night. Anything received by the Clerk after that time will not be included and will have to be held over until the following month's meeting.

MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES OF THE LAST COURT AND PREVIOUS COURTS OF CONCERN TO THE FORESTRY COMMISSION

2013/6503 AGE LIMIT FOR VERDERERS DISCHARGE

The Deputy Surveyor had researched if there are any age limit rules in local government elections, and found none. The Deputy Surveyor also provided a very helpful paper setting out the conditions for public appointments. Although the election of Verderers is not exactly the same as election to local government, and the appointment of Verderers does not appear to fall within the ambit of the Commissioners for Public Appointments, the same conditions can be said to apply. It was therefore confirmed once more that there is no age limit for Verderers – either elected or appointed.

2013/6504 HIGHWAY MAINTENANCE PLAN DISCHARGE

Mr Street advised the Clerk that he has one or two comments which he will let her have. It was felt this matter can now be discharged from the Agenda. The plan will be helpful for future reference.

Action
MStr

2013/6505 CAMPSITE SURVEY RESUME

An audit check is being carried out on one survey area, namely Ashurst Campsite. Mr Martin Fletcher is carrying out the work.

Action
MStr

2013/6506 NEW FOREST GOLF CLUB RESUME

Mrs Westerhoff and Mr Dowsett visited the Course to look at flooding on one of the greens and a problem with two passages. A proposal to drain the green by removing a small bank was discussed and is acceptable to Natural England. Two passages across the adjacent mire are in need of maintenance and consideration is being given as to whether one new passage can be constructed to replace the present two. The Golf Club will prepare proposals for consideration.

Action
NFGC/MStr

It was noted that the course has much less clutter on it than in the past and the attitude of the management is now very much improved.

2013/6507 HOLLY POLLARDING DISCHARGE

The Deputy Surveyor confirmed that holly pollarding is continuing apace. He said there are no issues with the programme which is expected to be completed in full.

SSSI RESTORATION WORKS

2013/6508 SNAGGING LIST

DISCHARGE

An updated snagging list was provided.

Some of the problems at Slufters have been resolved. The baler twine has been cut and removed. However the remainder of the work will have to wait until the weather improves. The tree stumps are five years old and rotting well, so no further action will be taken by the Forestry Commission.

2013/6509 SITE VISITS – PENNY MOOR

DISCHARGE

The site visit to Penny Moor will be arranged soon.

ENCROACHMENTS

2013/6510 ENCROACHMENT LIST

RESUME

Mr Street circulated the latest list which is getting shorter.

Miss Macnair advised that the lay-by by the pumping station at Shappen Bottom appears to have been extended. Mr Street said he is aware of this issue and hoggin is to be laid in place of the pea shingle that the Water Company used. The lay-by will also be reduced in size.

Action
MStr

Mr Street said he has some text concerning re-surfacing of driveways that he would like to be included in the Advice and Guidance to Property Owners leaflet presently being drafted by the National Park Authority. The Clerk said she will send a copy of the leaflet to him by email.

Action
MStr
SW

2013/6511 NEW GATE OPPOSITE COOMBES GATE FARM

RESUME

Mr Gerrelli reported that a new gate has been put into a boundary of a property opposite Coombes Gate Farm and he asked Mr Street if the Forestry Commission could please investigate whether it is permitted.

Action
MStr

2013/6512 CAR FREE DITCHING AND DRAGONS TEETH

DISCHARGE

Mr Street confirmed there are a number of areas where dragons teeth are missing. He is in discussion with the Recreation team regarding whether new dragons teeth should be hardwood rather than softwood. The HLS is helping to support the car free works and Mr Gary North is in the process of preparing a paper for a future programme which will include replacing missing dragons teeth.

Action
GN (FC)

The Court thanked the Forestry Commission for the car free ditching works which have been undertaken. In particular the ditching opposite the Filly Inn is welcomed as there has been a lot of verge parking in that area.

ANY OTHER BUSINESS OF CONCERN TO THE FORESTRY COMMISSION

2013/6513 BROKEN CONCRETE POST IN THE VICINITY OF CADMANS POOL

RESUME

The Official Verderer reported that there is a dangerous broken concrete post in the ground adjacent to what is left of the old runway on Stoney Cross. The broken concrete has left jagged edges which are dangerous,

and it appears that the post may be hollow leaving a hole in the ground which stock could trap its foot in. It is thought the posts could be connected with a utility service because there is a manhole cover adjacent. The location is on the side of the road from Janesmoor Pond to Cadman's Pool on the right before the car park. The Forestry Commission was asked to investigate and address the hazard as a matter of urgency.

Action
MStr

- 2013/6514 GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO THE INDEPENDENT PANEL ON DISCHARGE FORESTRY REPORT

The Deputy Surveyor said that the Government's response has been well received by the Forestry sector. He gave a brief resume of his understanding of the report. A lot of work will now be required to take forward the recommendations contained in the report. If legislation is required, it is unlikely to be implemented within the life of the current parliament. The Deputy Surveyor confirmed the Court will have the opportunity to feed in to the consultation process which will be set up in due course, and he offered to assist in this respect. The Official Verderer thanked him for his offer.

- 2013/6515 DUR HILL DISUSED RAILWAY FENCE, NO-RIDING SIGN AND DISCHARGE RHODODENDRON CLEARANCE IN BURLEY

Miss Macnair thanked the Forestry Commission for repairing the fence along the disused railway line. She also thanked the FC for removing the 'No Riding' sign outside Little Hay in Burley and also for the rhododendron clearance at Long Pond.

- 2013/6516 NO-CYCLING SIGNS DISCHARGE

The Deputy Surveyor assured the Court that the replacement 'no-cycling' signs that it has been agreed will be installed, will be in place before Easter.

- 2013/6517 HOLMSLEY LODGE FENCING DISCHARGE

The orange temporary fencing which has been erected around part of the old Holmsley Lodge/Shrike Cottage boundary is now loose and a hazard to stock. Stock are also able to access the site of the properties where the demolished buildings used to stand. There are a lot of hazardous materials on the site and the Forestry Commission was asked to take action to get the site secured. Mr Street said he will pay a visit to the Agent handling the sale who it is understood is based in Lyndhurst.

Action
MStr

- 2013/6518 DRIFT MANAGEMENT RESUME

Mr Deakin said he is awaiting contact from Mr Simon Smith regarding the management of the drifts as respects cycle route and car park closures.

Action
MS

- 2013/6519 DISUSED RAILWAY LINE AT SETTHORNS DISCHARGE

The bridge that gives access to Setthorns Campsite over the disused railway line is dangerous and has been closed to traffic. Parts of the bridge have fallen onto the track below and as a result scaffold has been erected with a safety net to catch fallen debris. Investigations are underway with a view to deciding how to make the bridge safe.

The Deputy Surveyor and Mr Street left the meeting

ENCROACHMENTS

There were no encroachments to discuss.

OTHER MATTERS ARISING

2013/6520	REPLACEMENT SINGLE FARM PAYMENT SCHEME	DISCHARGE
	<p>The letter drafted by Mr Sam Dovey, Assistant Group Secretary at the National Farmers' Union New Forest Branch, and signed by Mr Dovey, Mr Graham Ferris Chairman of the New Forest Commoners Defence Association, Ms Alison Barnes Chief Executive of the New Forest National Park Authority and the Official Verderer was sent on 8th February 2013. The letter expressed the concerns of these organisations regarding the possible effects the CAP Reform may have on the farmers and commoners within the New Forest, and the fragile nature of the Forest's unique landscape.</p>	
2013/6521	PROPOSAL TO INDEX THE COURT MINUTES	RESUME
	<p>The Clerk reported that unfortunately the New Forest Trust is likely to only be able to assist with funding for this project up to a maximum of £1,000. The Official Verderer suggested the Hampshire Archive Trust may be able to help and the Clerk said she will investigate.</p>	Action SW
2013/6522	CAMPING BROCHURE & CYCLE MAPS	RESUME
	<p>Mr Pasmore said he has scrutinised the cycle maps and has no objections to the content.</p> <p>Mr Gerrelli will check the Camping brochure and report to the next Court.</p>	Action AG
2013/6523	REVIEW OF ELECTION REGULATIONS	DISCHARGE
	<p>The Official Verderer reported that some new legislation may be introduced concerning a Scottish Referendum. If this is primary legislation it may be possible to obtain an amendment to the Verderers' Election Regulations permitting the minimum age for voting to be reduced from the current 21 years of age. The Official Verderer will maintain a watching brief.</p>	Action OV
<h3>OTHER AGENDA ITEMS</h3>		
2013/6524	GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO THE INDEPENDENT PANEL ON FORESTRY REPORT	RESUME April
	<p>The Court will wish to respond. The Clerk was asked to find the previous letter that was written and provide a copy to the Official Verderer and Mr Pasmore. This will assist them in drafting a new letter.</p>	Action SW OV/AHP
2013/6525	STALLION BLOODLINES SCHEME	RESUME
	<p>The stallion sub-committee is due to meet next week (Wednesday 27th February). The sub-committee will make recommendations to the Court as respects the future of the bloodline scheme.</p>	Action Stallion Sub-Cttee

THE HIGHER LEVEL STEWARDSHIP SCHEME & THE VERDERERS' GRAZING SCHEME

2013/6526 HLS REPORT

RESUME

The Minutes of the HLS Board meeting held on 30th January were circulated.

2013/6527 VGS REPORT

RESUME

The minutes of the VGS Advisory Committee and Management Committee meetings were circulated.

Matters requiring the attention of the Court include...

1. Proposed interest-free loan to the VGS from the Verderers Current Account of £13,000 which will enable all Crown Land VGS payments to be made in the current financial year. The Clerk asked for a proposer and seconder in respect of this transfer. Mrs Westerhoff proposed the transfer should be agreed. Mr Dowsett seconded the proposal which was carried unanimously. The Clerk will organise the loan. The loan will be repaid immediately when the next HLS payment arrives from Natural England in early April.
2. Review of the VGS rules. The management committee will meet to decide whether it believes any amendments are required. If so, recommendations will be brought back to the Court.
3. The closing date for applications for the year 2013/14 is to be agreed. It was also agreed that the closing date must be adhered to.

Action
SW

MATTERS ARISING FROM EXTERNAL COMMITTEES AND WORKING GROUPS

2013/6528 BACKUP GRAZING LAND GROUP

DISCHARGE

Mrs Westerhoff reported that the group is considering its strategy for taking forward a means of recording the backup grazing land resource. In addition calculations will be made to ascertain how much backup land and what infrastructure is considered necessary to secure commoning for the future. A study will be undertaken and a map is to be produced. It will include publicly owned land (NFDC, HCC etc.,) as well as that owned by the National Trust. A proposal for funding for the group will be put to the HLS.

Action
DW

2013/6529 BIODIVERSITY GROUP

DISCHARGE

This meeting was well attended, possibly because it included a buffet lunch. A useful discussion took place.

2013/6530 LANDSCAPE WORKSHOP

DISCHARGE

Mr Dowsett reported that there were not many attendees and no Forestry Commission representative. Potential projects are in their very early stage and feedback is awaited on a number of items.

2013/6531 CULTURAL HERITAGE WORKSHOP

DISCHARGE

Mr Pasmore and Miss Macnair attended this workshop.

2013/6532 HOT BRANDING

DISCHARGE

Mrs Thorne attended a meeting organised by Defra on hot branding. Defra is not minded to ban hot branding of semi-ferals at present because the alternatives are recognised as not being fit for purpose. However, Defra is keen to see a code of practice for hot branding. It is likely that there may be a restriction on those who are permitted to brand with named individuals only being able to carry out the procedure. The Court is feeding into the consultation and a draft code of practice will be produced in due course. Defra will shortly be discussing the matter with the Minister who has requested information for parliament

Action
PT

FINANCIAL MATTERS

2013/6533 FINANCIAL STATEMENT FOR JANUARY 2013

RESUME

The financial statement for January 2013 was approved.

STAFF MATTERS (including the Staff Committee)

2013/6534 CONTRACTS OF EMPLOYMENT

DISCHARGE

The paragraph concerning the provision of Land Rovers to the Agisters has been amended. No objection was raised. The Clerk will issue the new contracts as soon as possible.

2013/6535 PYLEWELL ESTATE FENCING

DISCHARGE

The Official Verderer reported that the Pylewell fence may be replaced. Natural England has confirmed that such expenditure can be included as a capital item under Pylewell's HLS agreement.

2013/6536 ANIMAL ACCIDENT SIGNS

DISCHARGE

Mr Readhead said he has some information on new signs for the Staff Committee to consider.

HEALTH AND SAFETY

2013/6537 HEALTH & SAFETY REVIEW

RESUME

Mr Deakin reported that he and the Head Agister met with Mrs Julie Brown, to review the Court's Health & Safety Policy, documentation and procedures. Ms Brown thinks that the Court's Health and Safety Systems are in good order but do require some updating and tidying up. She has made several suggestions which will be taken forward. These include her meeting with the Agisters out on the Forest to raise awareness of the importance of risk awareness, especially Agisters are working alone. Ms Brown has also offered to run a bespoke course to raise health and safety awareness generally and the importance of ongoing monitoring. She feels the course should be attended by the Agisters, Mr Deakin himself and the Clerk.

Action
RD/JRG

The Official Verderer confirmed he is happy with Ms Brown's proposed way forward.

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

2013/6538 COWS IN BURLEY

DISCHARGE

Miss Macnair commented that during a conversation about cattle getting into property someone had said that barbed wire is not permitted on a fence adjacent to a highway. That is incorrect, and in practice in the New Forest where free-roaming stock need to be excluded a good barbed wire fence is necessary in order to deter determined cattle.

2013/6539 MYOTONIA

DISCHARGE

Miss Macnair expressed her disappointment that the VGS Board turned down the New Forest Pony Breeding and Cattle Society's application for funding for DNA testing for Myotonia. The Official Verderer said that the reasons for the refusal are in the VGS Management Committee minutes.

2013/6540 NEWSLETTER

DISCHARGE

The Clerk confirmed she is in the process of writing a newsletter. Members of the Court with topics that they would like included are requested to let the Clerk know as soon as possible.

2013/6541 HOT BRANDING STUDY

DISCHARGE

Mrs Thorne said that two experts have gone off with the data to analyse. Mrs Thorne will come back to the Court once she has further information.

2013/6542 FOREST FIT CLUB

DISCHARGE

Complaints have been received by the Clerk concerning the potentially damaging activities of this organisation which is carried out weekly on Rockford Common and in the vicinity of Moyles Court. The Clerk was asked to write to the National Trust to express the Court's concern that the activities have reportedly received consent from the National Trust. The Court feels this is not an appropriate use of the Forest.

Action
Clerk

2013/6543 ATLAS PROJECT

RESUME
April

The Clerk asked for approval to spend up to £2,500 on a system which will allow an electronic version of the Forest Atlas to be taken to the New Forest Show. The present microfiche based system is outdated and has become virtually unusable due to age. The Court gave approval for the expenditure.

Action
Clerk

There was no further business and the meeting closed at 13.22 hrs.