

MINUTES of the Court of Verderers held on Wednesday 17th January 2018 at 9.30 a.m. in the Verderers' Hall and the Library, the Queen's House, Lyndhurst.

PRESENT:

Lord Manners	Official Verderer
Mr R Deakin	Elected Verderer & Staff Committee Chairman
Mr A B Dowsett	Forestry Commission Appointed Verderer
Mr J Greenwood	Elected Verderer
Cllr E Heron	National Park Appointed Verderer
Miss D Macnair MBE	Senior Elected Verderer
Mr G M H Mills DL	DEFRA Appointed Verderer
Mr D Readhead	Elected Verderer
Mrs D Westerhoff	Natural England Appointed Verderer

APOLOGIES: Mr A H Pasmore Elected Verderer

IN ATTENDANCE: Miss Sue Westwood Clerk to the Verderers
Mr Jonathan Gerrelli Head Agister

IN COMMITTEE in the Library

2018/9688 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING RESUME

The Minutes of Court held on 20th December 2017 were approved and signed.

2018/9689 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST RESUME

The Official Verderer declared an interest in the Verderers' Higher Level Stewardship Agreement as tenants on his Estate benefit from the Verderers Grazing Scheme and his Estate is in Higher Level Stewardship.

Elected Verderers Mr Deakin, Mr Greenwood, Miss Macnair and Mr Readhead declared an interest in the New Forest Higher Level Stewardship Scheme, Verderers Grazing Scheme and Basic Payment Scheme.

Mr Deakin and Mr Greenwood are members of the New Forest Commoners' Defence Association committee. Mr Deakin is also Treasurer.

Mr Deakin and Mr Readhead are Directors of the New Forest Livestock Society. They are also members of the New Forest Stallion Syndicate.

Mr Dowsett is a Forestry Commission Volunteer Ranger.

Mr Greenwood is employed part-time by Cadland Estate and therefore has an interest in the Stallion Grazing. Mr Greenwood also has a stallion of his own.

Cllr Heron declared his membership of Hampshire County Council, New Forest District Council and the New Forest National Park Authority. He will declare any additional interests that may arise during the course of the meeting at the item.

Mr Hallam Mills declared an interest in HLS Schemes as his Estate is in Higher Level Stewardship. The Estate is also involved in the Better Boundaries Project, run by the New Forest Land Advice Service with support from Natural England. Mr Mills is also a Patron of the New Forest Trust

Mrs Westerhoff is a tenant of the Forestry Commission. Mrs Westerhoff sits on the Board of Trustees of the New Forest Trust.

2018/9690 CONDITION OF STOCK,

RESUME

The cold wet weather is now impacting on the condition of stock and a few animals are being removed. As usual, it is mares with foals, older ponies and 2 and 3 year olds which are losing condition. The vast majority of animals still look very good.

It was noted that so far not much holly cutting has taken place. The animals definitely benefit from the holly being cut early.

The Agisters are very busy marking cattle and helping with TB testing.

A number of 2 year old colts will need to be removed shortly and the Agisters have received requests for help from a small number of commoners.

There is some damage outside holdings where cattle move in and out on a daily basis but with the wet conditions it is inevitable. To date, nothing particularly serious has been noted.

2018/9691 REPORT ON MARKING FEES RECEIVED TO DATE AND COMPARISON WITH PREVIOUS YEAR

RESUME

	<u>2017</u>	<u>2016</u>
Forest Ponies	4743	4754
Forest Cattle	4916	4255
Forest Donkeys	115	110
Forest Pigs	397	256
Forest Sheep	0	0
Total Forest Stock	10171	9375
Common Ponies	815	762
Common Cattle	1455	1383
Common Donkeys	124	112
Common Pigs	106	120
Common Sheep	244	293
Total Common Stock	2744	2670
Ponies, Cattle & Donkeys on the Forest	9774	9119
Ponies, Cattle & Donkeys on the Commons	2394	2257
Total Ponies, Cattle & Donkeys	12168	11376
Total Stock – Forest & Commons	12915	12045

The Head Agister left the meeting.

2018/9692 ANNOUNCEMENTS AND DECISIONS

RESUME

The Announcements were approved.

2018/9693 ENCROACHMENTS

DISCHARGE

The Official Verderer updated the Court on the situation at Acorns, Seamans Lane, Minstead where the new gate has been erected and one side blocked up.

2018/9694 NEW ACCESSES

DISCHARGE

The Court confirmed that where planning applications are made in respect of new accesses which will impact grazing, it is appropriate for the Clerk to object on behalf of the Court. Objection will be on the grounds that the proposals will have a detrimental impact on grazing and, where relevant, the SSSI and visual amenity.

2018/9695 PLANNING APPLICATION AT ROCKFORD FARM FOR 2 DISCHARGE
COMMONERS' DWELLINGS

The Court has been asked to support an application by the New Forest Trust to build two new dwellings on land acquired by Hampshire County Council specifically to assist with providing housing for practising commoners. The Court originally supported HCC in its purchase of this land.

The Court's policy is not to comment on planning applications unless they have a direct impact on the Open Forest. However, in view of the background to this particular planning application, it was deemed appropriate that the Court should write in support of the New Forest Trust's planning application. The proposed dwellings will be secured in perpetuity for occupation only by practising commoners.

Action
OV/Clerk

OPEN COURT – 10.00 a.m.

IN ATTENDANCE: Mr Bruce Rothnie, Deputy Surveyor of the New Forest
Mr Paul Grugeon, Land Agent (New Forest)

The Head Agister opened the Court with the usual proclamation.

ANNOUNCEMENTS & DECISIONS BY THE OFFICIAL VERDERER

The Official Verderer welcomed everyone to this first Court in 2018

2018/9696 FORMER AGISTER RAYMOND BENNETT

It is with great sadness that we have to report the passing of former Agister, Raymond Bennett.

Raymond was born on 25th August 1930 at Mockbeggar Farm. He passed away on Monday this week, the 15th January 2018, aged 88 years.

Appointed in January 1959, Raymond served as an Agister for 2 years until December 1960.

Raymond was reappointed in 1975. Raymond was due to retire in 1995, however, it was agreed that from August 1994, Raymond would take semi-retirement; the Verderers not wanting to lose his knowledge and skill until such time as a replacement Agister could be appointed and trained.

However, Ray broke his collar bone shortly after that decision was made and so the Verderers kept him on as a full time employee until mid October at which time he reduced his hours and began to work part time.

Raymond retired fully at the end of August 1995. In the September 1995 Open Court, Raymond was presented with a Barry Peckham painting of his birthplace, Mockbeggar Farm.

Raymond was a real Forest character with years of experience Agisting and running his own stock on the Forest and he always had a story to tell!

Raymond passed away peacefully in the nursing home in which he has been living in recent years.

ANIMAL ACCIDENT REPORT

2018/9697 THE ANIMAL ACCIDENT REPORT FOR DECEMBER 2017 & THE YEAR AS A WHOLE

The Agisters attended 17 accidents in December. This compares with 29 in December last year.

5 ponies were killed and 3 were injured and had to be destroyed. 1 cow was injured.

1 accident occurred in daylight, 4 at twilight and 12 in the dark.

3 accidents in December were not reported by the driver involved.

7 motorists are known to have been local.

The total number of accidents in 2017 was 134. The previous year it was 146. That is a welcome reduction.

The number of hit and runs was also down, 14 in 2017, 17 in the previous year.

In 2017, 78 animals were killed or injured, compared with 98 the previous year; so again, that is a welcome reduction.

PRESENTMENTS

2018/9698 COMMERCIAL DOG WALKING Presentment by Mrs Mary Gray, Practising Commoner from Brook

Mrs Gray asked that if and when the subject of commercial dog walking is raised again, the Court would support some control over the number of dogs that can be allowed to be walked on the Forest off lead, by one person. Recently, a commercial dog walker was seen walking on Brook Common with ten dogs, only one of which was on a lead. The Forest stock in the area at the time ignored the dogs but Mrs Gray expressed concern that later in the year when there are foals and calves about, there could be problems.

2018/9699 NEW FOREST NATIONAL PARK RECREATION MANAGEMENT STRATEGY Presentment by Mr Brian Tarnoff, Chairman Habitat & Landscape Committee, New Forest Association

'Last summer the National Park authority conducted a survey as part of its much needed Future Forest initiative to review its Recreation Management Strategy (RMS). While this was a great success of public engagement, with 1500 responses from online and the New Forest Show, raising the profile of the RMS, the survey itself was poorly constructed. Tomorrow, the meeting of the Park Authority members will review reports on the results before taking them to the RMS Steering Group, made up of the six statutory bodies including the Verderers.

Although the Findings Report admits that no attempt was made to get "a balanced and representative sample" , it then presents some results as authoritative, with unwarranted exaggeration. For example, the concluding report states "The consultation responses suggest that there is wide public support for the England Coast Path."

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"The position of the new fence on the north side of the old railway line has been agreed. It is yet to be decided if the old fence on the south side will be retained." Staff Cttee

Mr Grugeon will write to the Golf Club regarding its fence and will confirm that responsibility for future maintenance lies with the Golf Club.

SSSI RESTORATION WORKS

2018/9702 SSSI REPAIR & MAINTENANCE WORKS RECORDING SHEET RESUME

The content of the sheet was noted.

2018/9703 FOULFORD BOTTOM & VALES MOOR RESTORATION PROPOSALS DISCHARGE

Following the site meeting on 18th December 2017, the proposed works were approved. Action DS

ACTION LIST

2018/9704 ACTION LIST RESUME

An updated action list was provided.

2018/9705 FENCED AREA AT APPELMORE DISCHARGE
to Action List

The fence surrounding a small area below Sleepy Hollow is in a very dangerous condition. It was requested that this be added to the action list. Action DS

ANY OTHER BUSINESS OF CONCERN TO THE FORESTRY COMMISSION

2018/9706 BT EXCAVATIONS AT WOOTTON DISCHARGE

Mr Grugeon reported that BT contractors recently excavated two large holes at Wootton using a method not approved by Natural England and without consulting the Forestry Commission and the Verderers.

The work was not carried out to an acceptable standard and the Forestry Commission is seeking compensation for damage to the SSSI and grazing. The Court fully supports the Forestry Commission in this approach.

2018/9707 WATERS GREEN FOOTPATH DISCHARGE

The construction and design of the new footpath and culverts is considered unacceptable by Natural England and the Forestry Commission. Action PG

2018/9708 PONIES DE-BARKING BEECH TREES DISCHARGE

The Court asked the Forestry Commission to set parameters for monitoring and reporting damage caused by ponies chewing the bark of beech trees. Photographic evidence is requested wherever possible. No damage has been reported to date. Action
DS

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2018/9709 FOREST DESIGN PLAN – FENCE ALIGNMENT DISCHARGE

The Court feels that before any more site meetings are held, it is important to agree the funding stream and future responsibility for fences where inclosures are to be thrown open. Action DS

2018/9710 NORDIC WALKING DISCHARGE

A group of Nordic Walkers are advertising night walks from Ashurst and Bolton's Bench. The Forestry Commission was asked to investigate. Action DS

The Deputy Surveyor and the Land Agent left the meeting.

OTHER MATTERS ARISING

2018/9711 RECREATION MANAGEMENT STRATEGY RESUME

The Official Verderer read an email from Mr Pasmore (who was absent due to ill health) relating to this subject.

The Court noted the content of the Findings Report and 'Next Steps' Report and confirmed the Verderers' commitment to ongoing partnership working to help draft the new actions for the update to the Recreation Management Strategy 2010-2030. Action OV

MATTERS ARISING FROM EXTERNAL COMMITTEES AND WORKING GROUPS

2018/9712 FUTURE GOVERNMENT SUBSIDY SCHEME FOR THE FOREST DISCHARGE

Mr Greenwood reported on a meeting of the National Common Land Stakeholder Group which he attended recently.

It is thought that in future, subsidies may be paid via statutory commons councils or the like. In the New Forest that may be the Verderers.

The Court feels strongly that future schemes must benefit the environment and support commoning but must not encourage the sort of increases in stock numbers that have resulted from the present BPS.

The New Forest Pony is on the Rare Breeds Survival Trust's Watch List. At present it is categorised as a breed 'At Risk' which means that since 2016, it has moved further towards rare breed status. Previously it was a 'Minority' breed. The suggestion was made that for the purposes of subsidy schemes, pure bred ponies should be valued at a whole livestock unit rather than 0.8 of a unit as at present and it was suggested that pure bred geldings should also attract a payment under the Verderers Grazing Scheme.

2018/9713 NEW FOREST SPRING CLEAN DISCHARGE

Mr Dowsett confirmed this year's Spring Clean will be held on the 3rd and 4th March.

The Official Verderer will announce the event at the February Court and he will include mention that the Commoners' Defence Association is organising a litter pick on Blackfield Common. Leaflets are being produced and they will be distributed at the February Court. Action OV/Clerk

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FINANCIAL MATTERS

2018/9714 FINANCIAL STATEMENT FOR DECEMBER 2017 DISCHARGE

The Financial Statement was noted.

STAFF MATTERS

2018/9715 HOUSEHOLD WASTE & RECYCLING COLLECTIONS IN THE FOREST DISCHARGE

Cllr Heron advised that a new NFDC Waste Collection Manager has been appointed – Chris Noble. Problems with waste collection should be raised with him.

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

2018/9716 RIDGE & FURROW RESUME

A site meeting to look at reinstatement of ridges and furrows which are left in felled inclosures has been arranged by the Forestry Commission. The meeting will be on 2nd February. Further details will be circulated when they are to hand.

Action
Clerk

There was no further business and the meeting closed at 12.50 p.m.

Jul Mannell
21/2/2018