VERDERERS COURT

20th May 2020

ANNOUNCEMENTS & DECISIONS

DAMAGE CAUSED BY CATTLE

In March we received a presentment expressing concern about the damage caused by cattle moving to and from Pondhead Farm.

We have had a very wet winter and some degree of poaching is inevitable in such conditions. Usually this is not a matter for concern as these poached areas support certain rare plant species and the ground normally recovers in the spring and summer months. However, in some places where the cattle traverse a narrow area winter damage can, as here, be extensive. The Verderers will therefore monitor the conditions around Pondhead Farm over the coming months. We will liaise with Natural England, Forestry England and the commoner concerned if further remedial action is required.

The presentment raised the issue of the grazing scheme. The increase in stock numbers throughout the Forest is the result of the Government’s Basic Payment Scheme over which the Verderers have no control. Whilst the Government has committed to phasing out BPS from 2021 and replacing it with ELMS (environmental land management schemes) this is not likely to have an immediate effect. The BPS is not to be confused with the Verderers’ Grazing Scheme which pays a modest and capped level of grant and is not responsible for increased stock numbers.

STALLIONS

After careful consideration, and taking into account the restrictions imposed by Government to control Covid-19, it was decided that ten stallions could safely be turned out onto the Forest this year. This is five fewer than last year.

The following stallions were turned out on Monday 11th May and their names and the areas in which they are running are as follows:-

Mallards Wood Law and Order at Black Knowl

Portmore Downpour on Penn Common

Lucky Lane Pegasus on Beaulieu Aerodrome

Fidleywood Falconer at Hale

Sturtmoor Top Hat on Hilltop

Cadland Masterplan at Canterton

Knavesash Gold Fever at Longdown

Knavesash Polaris on Mill Lawn

Bunny II at Bratley

and

Lucky Lane Warrior at Holmsley

The stallions will run out for six weeks until Monday 22nd June although some may come in a week earlier.

Members of the public are reminded that it is always best to avoid getting too close to the ponies but particularly during the stallion season when they can get rather frisky. It is also worth mentioning that stallions do not always remain in the areas in which they are first turned out and so it is wise to be particularly aware of the behaviour of the ponies at this time of year.

FOALS ON THE FOREST’S ROADS

Foals are being born on the Forest. Like all young things, foals love to play. However, they have no road sense and will run across the road without warning, so we would like to remind drivers to please take extra care in the Forest.

OUT OF CONTROL DOGS

Another commoner’s animal has been attacked by a dog. This time it was a heavily pregnant Jenny donkey which was badly bitten on her belly and has other less serious injuries on her back end. The Jenny’s owner has the animal in and is waiting to see whether the Jenny will give birth to a live foal. Meanwhile, the Police have been asked to identify the dog owner from information that is available.

It is simply not acceptable for dog owners to allow their animals to chase and attack any other animal, particularly depastured stock and Forest wildlife. Dogs must be under control at all times.

GARDEN WASTE

The Council waste disposal sites are now open. During the lockdown we had a spate of incidents where garden waste was deposited on the Forest. There was at least one report of an animal dying as a result of eating some discarded vegetation. Apart from the risk to the Forest’s animals from lawn mowings which can kill and other garden vegetation which is often toxic to stock, disposing of such material on the Open Forest amounts to fly-tipping, the penalties for which can be severe.

Please dispose of your garden waste responsibly. Compost it on your property or take it to the tip now that they are open again. Please remember if you live in an area accessible to Forest stock and your garden waste is collected by NFDC always keep the waste sacks inside your boundary for collection, not outside your gate where Forest animals can gain access to it.

OFFICIAL VERDERER’S RE-APPOINTMENT

Three years ago, in March 2017, I was invited to accept the appointment of Official Verderer on the undertaking that I should place the office at Her Majesty’s disposal on 1st May 2020 and I accepted the office on that basis.

In order to honour that undertaking I wrote to No. 10 Downing Street in the Autumn last year, and I am pleased to announce that I have been informed that The Queen is content for me to remain in office for a further three year term until 1st May 2023, and I have accepted Her Majesty’s invitation to do so.