

MINUTES of the Court of Verderers – Wednesday 20th May 2020

At the time of this Court, the UK is in the grip of an outbreak of a novel Coronavirus, known as Covid-19. Government advice is for the population to avoid meetings where the disease could potentially be passed from person to person. For this reason, the Verderers did not meet in Open Court or in person in Committee.

Items included in these minutes were discussed in a virtual online meeting via 'Zoom'.
The following is a record of what was agreed.

PRESENT ONLINE	Lord Manners Mr R Deakin Mr A B Dowsett Mr J Greenwood Cllr Edward Heron Mr R Manley Mr A H Pasmore Mr D Readhead Mrs D Westerhoff	Official Verderer Elected Verderer & Staff Committee Chairman Forestry Commission Appointed Verderer Elected Verderer National Park Appointed Verderer DEFRA Appointed Verderer Elected Verderer Elected Verderer Natural England Appointed Verderer
APOLOGIES	Miss D Macnair MBE	Senior Elected Verderer
IN ATTENDANCE ONLINE	Miss S Westwood	Clerk to the Verderers
IN ATTENDANCE ONLINE UP TO MINUTE 11080	Mr Bruce Rothnie Mr Paul Grugeon	Deputy Surveyor of the New Forest Forestry England Land Agent (New Forest)

2020/11042 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING RESUME

The Minutes of Court held on Wednesday, 15th April 2020 were approved and will be signed by the Official Verderer at the earliest opportunity.

2020/11043 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST RESUME

Declarations of interest can be found on the Verderers' website – www.verderers.org.uk. No new declarations of interest were made today.

2020/11044 CONDITION OF STOCK – REPORT FROM THE HEAD AGISTER RESUME

The majority of stock are looking OK, although they have been slow to pick up this Spring, due to the fact the grass just hasn't come through yet. A lot of stock really struggled and became quite low in the Winter. We are still removing one or two animals, including some mares that have just foaled, but we hope the rest will now improve.

This is always the most difficult time of year for us, looking at the stock and having to decide whether a particular animal should be taken off, or if it can be left, because we know it will pick up once the grass comes through.

The 10 stallions were turned out on Monday, and this week has seen a sudden burst of foals being born. More cattle are being turned out.

One thing which is surprising, is the number of calls we are still getting from the public about stock issues, considering there have definitely been fewer people on the Forest in the last few weeks. I had imagined it would go quiet on that front, but far from it! A lot of those calls have been about stock breaking into private land, nearly all through poor fencing.

The one really positive consequence of the lockdown is that it has led to a dramatic reduction in the number of road traffic accidents involving the stock. Let's hope that with the easing of restrictions and the inevitable extra traffic back out on the roads, we don't see an increase.

2020/11045 REPORT ON MARKING FEES RECEIVED **TO DATE** AND COMPARISON WITH PREVIOUS YEAR RESUME

	<u>2020</u>	<u>2019</u>
Forest Ponies	4424	4538
Forest Cattle	3275	2816
Forest Donkeys	132	110
Forest Pigs	0	0
Forest Sheep	0	0
Total Forest Stock	7831	7464
Common Ponies	561	600
Common Cattle	1311	1350
Common Donkeys	43	81
Common Pigs	73	41
Common Sheep	223	89
Total Common Stock	2211	2161
Ponies, Cattle & Donkeys on the Forest	7831	7464
Ponies, Cattle & Donkeys on the Commons	2211	2031
Total Ponies, Cattle & Donkeys	9746	9495
Total Stock – Forest & Commons	10042	9625

2020/11046 BYELAW ENFORCEMENT RESUME

There were no byelaw breaches reported.

2020/11047 ANNOUNCEMENTS & DECISIONS RESUME

The Announcements and Decisions were approved.

THE ANNOUNCEMENTS & DECISIONS BY THE OFFICIAL VERDERER, RTA REPORT AND PRESENTMENTS were published on the Verderers' Website after this meeting.

2020/11048 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.

2020/11049 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.

2020/11050 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.

2020/11051 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.

2020/11052 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 an official 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 them.

2020/11053 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.

ANIMAL ACCIDENT REPORT

2020/11054 THE ANIMAL ACCIDENT REPORT FOR APRIL 2020

The Agisters attended 1 accident in April, which is pleasingly less than in April last year when there were 5 accidents.

1 sheep was killed in daylight by a driver who sadly failed to report the collision.

The total killed and injured to date is 18, compared with 33 in the same period last year.

The reduction in accidents is clearly a result of the Government imposed lockdown which continued throughout April.

PRESENTMENTS

The following Presentments were received by email

2020/11055 DAMAGE TO FENCING BY CATTLE
Presentment from the Beaulieu Estate

We are again having massive problems with cattle breaking into woods and fields, they are having to be turned out either by Robert or Chris (our forestry manager and the only member of staff I still have working in this strange time) on a daily basis!

I appreciate some of our fences are not perfect but Chris is repairing daily and Graham and Julian Potheary are starting on further renewal next week. As you know we have already renewed several miles of roadside fencing recently but the truth is there appears to be too many cattle being allowed out on the forest too early when there is insufficient grazing for them, making everything on the inside of the fences look very attractive! They are now even jumping on top of the fences to get in. Please could the Verderers help by allowing less animals out early and wait until there is enough for them to eat on the Forest.

This is an annual problem at this time of year and in in some areas is resulting in ancient hedgerows being destroyed as well as the hassle of constantly getting cattle out and we would welcome the Verderer's consideration of the problem. Whilst we all appreciate we need to fence the animals out, as some of our tenant farmers have commented the fences are good enough to fence their animals in, but their animals are not hungry and it only seems to be a problem at this time of year, but every year.

Many thanks for your assistance.

2020/11056 DAMAGE TO HEDGING BY CATTLE
Presentment from the Sowley Estate

Good Morning. I must inform you that the cattle where there is no grazing for them on the grass verges are breaking through the fences and damaging the hedgerows.

The hedgerows, I believe, have been here since the middle of the 19th century at least and the damage will soon be beyond repair.

I know our fences are not brilliant but they have kept the cattle and ponies out all winter, but now we are having to get cattle out 3 or 4 times a day where they are constantly breaking in. What worries me is the damage they are doing to the ancient hedgerows.

Just to add our neighbours at Pylewell and Beaulieu Estates are having the same problem.

2020/11057 CATTLE BREAKING INTO PRIVATE PROPERTY
Presentment by Mr John Boyd

Dear Ms Westwood, I have been given your name & contact details by Rachel Pearson from the Beaulieu Estate.

I am a tenant farmer on both the Beaulieu & Pylewell Estates with many miles of fields/fences contiguous with Forest grazing areas. The issue of hungry animals breaking into cropped land during the early spring months is a perennial one but seems particularly bad this year. My family having farmed on the Estate for over 100 years are well aware of the common grazing rights & maintain our fences accordingly. When the growing season gets going properly, usually after May, the Forest cattle find sufficient grazing & generally do not trouble reasonable hedges & fences, on the odd occasion when we have had particular issues your Agisters have been helpful to us.

Turning out so many cattle in March & April is irresponsible of their owners & I believe those owners know that full well. Therefore can this matter be brought to the attention of the Verderers, from the correspondence you have sent Rachel I believe this should be as a 'presentiment'.

Thank you for your help.

2020/11058 PONDHEAD RESTORATION WORKS
Presentment by Mrs Sally Tear

Pondhead HLS Wetland Restoration project: Planning Application Number 15/00294 – Approved 27 June 2016.
Specifically works to Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) Unit 387 Matley Inclosure Bog completed September 2018

My name is Sally Tear and I am writing concerning the above completed HLS works at Pondhead. I am not qualified to comment upon the overall effectiveness of the works across the site, (the lapwings no longer nest on Parkhill Lawn, we have not seen spawning trout since 2018 and the removal of the spoil heaps has made an increasingly well used flat mountain bike track through the riverine woodland), but I write specifically about the works in Matley Inclosure Bog (SSSI Unit 387, also a RAMSAR and SAC site).

Matley Inclosure Bog (SSSI Unit 387) was in "unfavourable recovering" condition, and the planning application aim was to "prevent further erosion and drying out of the mire system" via works to the Beaulieu River (SSSI Unit 562 – favourable condition) to "reconnect the stream to the floodplain". (Application Planning Statement, Biodiversity Statement etc...) i.e. the standard HLS river bed raising method to slow flow and increase flooding over the open lawns, but also to improve the riverine woodland bog of SSSI Unit 387.

At the time of the application I made my points via presentments, but the application was approved in June 2016, works started in September 2016 on Parkhill Lawn and finally completed in the “riverine woodland” of Matley Inclosure Bog in September 2018. I continued to walk past the works throughout. I had concerns and took photographs, but knew from experience that any further comment would fall on deaf ears, any “repairs” would only compound any damage done by the works, and frankly after two years of works, I just wanted the work to finish and the contractors to go.

It has now been almost two years since the works in the riverine bog were completed; it has had time to settle a little. On 1st May 2020, after a night of heavy rain and following a long dry spell I walked alongside the stream and was concerned enough by what I saw to feel I needed finally to query what has happened here.

In September 2018 the works in the bog involved a large digger with caterpillar tracks and significant other related plant. It entered the woodland next to the new stock crossing, (Application Site Plan with description No.004 point 9) and worked its way along the north side of the stream eastwards, downstream to the bridge at Holmhill Passage (Application Site Plan with description No.004 point 13). The digger was therefore travelling along, and manoeuvring within the bog as it worked on the stream to reduce the bed level, remove the old spoil heaps and reinstate the two remnant meanders. There being no exit available at the bridge on Holmhill Passage, it had to make the return journey westwards upstream to get back off site.

Throughout the digger’s journey downstream we were horrified to see that because it was so wet, in order to make its way through the bog, it dug out the actual bog peat and piled it next to its path (Photograph 1). The contractor had therefore dug out the very peat which constituted the SSSI 387 when the works were intended to improve it! I am not an expert, but know that bringing peat to the surface releases carbon into the atmosphere and starts the peat’s decay. It also ruins the integrity of the bog, which is a whole organism, like a sponge. By digging the peat up, even if it is replaced, you have effectively ripped up the bog and once damaged it may take centuries to recover. This cannot have done anything but degrade the SSSI Unit 387 and have multiple seriously negative impacts. However, there was worse to come...

By the time the digger reached Holmhill Passage it had left an impassable river of mud in its wake (Photograph 2), and we wondered how it was going to get out. The incredible answer was that the contractor infilled the cleared and disturbed SSSI bog with the consolidated hoggin (gravel, sand and clay mix) that they had been using to raise the stream bed! (Photograph 3) They then covered the hoggin with the extracted peat, visually replacing the bog initially to appear as it was, but in fact building an underground hoggin wall within the SSSI bog interrupting seepage both vertically and horizontally. These works were unauthorised by the grant of planning permission and were certainly not described in any method statement. The project therefore has wrecked the SSSI bog it alleged it was improving merely in order to enable the movement and extraction of the contractors plant and machinery!!!

At the time I could not believe what I was seeing. All involved in the HLS projects continuously assure us that the contractors are “experts” with high tech equipment. They may be used to the standard HLS stream bed raising, but for them the bog appeared to be a hindrance to accessing the stream, rather than the very thing the works were claimed to improve. Additionally, the works were supposed to be constantly monitored by the Forestry Commission ecologists and Natural England. Where were they? Were and are they aware this has happened?

Two years later there are the usual HLS project stream issues: exposed clay plugs, huge beaches of gravel, banks of the reinstated meanders gauged out etc... However, most concerning is the bog. The photograph taken on 01 May 2020 (Photograph 4) was after heavy rain. The stream is full but there is not and clearly has not been any “reconnection with the stream floodplain” as although the spoil heaps have been removed, the ground

between the bog and the stream is solid and dry (both above and below ground as we now know). The bog has become a lagoon as it can no longer gradually seep into the stream except over a couple of paths of exposed imported pink clay. The bog contents has become blacker and stagnant with presumably the decaying peat changing its make up.

Matley Inclosure Bog and riverine woodland is not only SSSI Unit 387, but is also a RAMSAR and SAC site. It was therefore the most ecologically significant part of the entire Pondhead HLS project, but has I fear been irreparably damaged.

What does this tell us about the works on other, if not all projects? The intent might be to improve, but the practice falls woefully short. No lessons seem to have been learned from previous projects, the HLS projects just carry on using their “one size fits all” methods and mantras. It is a joke to suggest that “turning the clock back” is happening because the Victorians wrecked so much of the Forest with their spades, yet somehow HLS projects are rectifying those mistakes by using massive amounts of imported non-indigenous materials and employing huge and damaging plant and machinery.

It is impossible to “repair” the damage to this SSSI Unit 387 without damaging it still further. So I ask the Verderers:

1. When and by whom was the removal of the peat from the SSSI Unit 387 bog approved?
2. When and by whom was the very significant hoggin infill in the SSSI Unit 387 bog approved?
3. If any monitoring of this operation was done, why were the works not halted when it would have been obvious very early on that it was too wet for the digger to even enter the riverine woodland without digging up the bog and seriously damaging the SSSI Unit 387?
4. If no monitoring was done – why not?
5. What was the original quote for that element of the project and what was the final cost?
6. What was the original quantity of hoggin required and what was the final tonnage?

I doubt very much that you will be able to answer these questions yourselves, but perhaps you should. You are the custodians of the New Forest and are allowing people to continue to work unchecked on open, precious Forest as if they were on a building site. Where else have they done this type of thing and just covered it up, knowing or unknowingly. I suspect your contractors do roughly as they please and the Forestry Commission’s theoretical experts know little of how to administer large engineering contracts.

These projects are actively damaging the New Forest. Photographs: *(provided for the Court’s information but not appended to the minutes)*

1. 2018 - September 4th: Piles of the bog peat removed from the bog (SSSI 387) to enable the diggers path downstream
2. 2018 – September 4th: The river of mud left in the wake of the digger through the SSSI bog after the peat was extracted
3. 2018 – September 5th: Hoggin infill into the base of the SSSI bog to enable the diggers return upstream
4. 2020 – May 1st: One of the newly created lagoons where the digger removed then infilled the SSSI bog to enable the works to the SSSI stream!!

2020/11059 REQUEST FOR VERDERERS' OPEN COURTS TO BE HELD ONLINE
Tony Hockley, Chairman of the New Forest Commoners Defence Association.

The CDA asks the Verderers urgently consider holding the monthly Open Court online whilst the Coronavirus restrictions on public gatherings remain in place.

For many of us the monthly Open Court plays an important role in the life of the New Forest. The current arrangement whereby announcements and presentments are simply placed on the website in the days following each Court date seems a very poor alternative. There is no good substitute for a live event, when everyone has access to the same information, at the same time, including the capacity to make planned or impromptu presentments.

Voluntary and statutory organisations across the New Forest, our own included, have adapted to online video meetings, many are open to the general public to watch or engage. I am confident that we or any of the other partner organisations would be very willing to assist the Court in establishing a suitable arrangement.

This is an opportunity for the Court to raise its visibility and accessibility, demonstrating its value to the New Forest. Our worry is that the lack of any apparent attempt to maintain the practice of an Open Court, despite ready means to do so, does the opposite. This risks undermining its status.

We look forward to the day when we shall be able to once again participate in the Open Court in person. We trust that the Verderers are making plans as to how this might be done safely, when regulations permit the resumption of such activities.

CONSIDERATION OF PRESENTMENTS

2020/11060 DAMAGE TO FENCING & HEDGING BY CATTLE RESUME

Several herds of cattle have been turned out when it is really too early. In a few other cases, commoners have stopped feeding cattle which have remained on the Forest all winter. Some private fencing is not in particularly good order which makes the land more vulnerable to hungry cattle.

The Court understands the land owners frustrations but it was agreed that an opportunity for counter presentments at the next Court should be given before any action is taken in respect of contacting the owners of the cattle which have been breaking into private land, or the land owners who made presentments. One Estate is currently investing in a significant fencing project which has greatly improved its fencing. Others need to look at their fences and undertake repairs or replacement as necessary to make them stock proof.

2020/11061 PONDHEAD RESTORATION WORKS RESUME

The Deputy Surveyor will ask the HLS team to review the works carried out to confirm they were in line with the consents. He said a response to Mrs Tear's presentment will be prepared by the Senior Ecologist. The Court asked to see it before it is sent.

2020/11062 REQUEST FOR VERDERERS' OPEN COURT'S TO BE HELD ONLINE RESUME

The Court agreed to investigate whether it is technically possible for the Open Court to be held online. Cllr Heron offered to investigate whether any of the other statutory bodies in the Forest have experience of such events and if so, endeavour to enlist their assistance.

Action
EH

Meanwhile, every effort will be made to ensure that the announcements and decisions, road traffic accident report and presentments appear on the Verderers' Website as soon as possible after each video conference meeting of the Court in committee.

NEW SUBMISSIONS AND OTHER MATTERS RAISED BY FORESTRY ENGLAND

2020/11063 IPLEY CROSSROAD JUNCTION REALIGNMENT – REQUEST FOR DISCHARGE
PERMISSION FOR TEMPORARY FENCING

The Court discussed the realignment which is necessary because of the fatal and serious accidents involving cyclists which have occurred on the cross roads.

Some concern was expressed regarding the temporary fencing, particularly in respect of its potential close proximity to the road, which could create a hazard to stock and a detailed plan of the proposed fencing is required. The Court agreed to delegate authority to approve the fencing to a small sub-committee consisting of the Official Verderer, Mr Deakin, the Head Agister and the Clerk. Mr Grugeon was asked to obtain full details of the fencing, including a plan showing the precise layout, for consideration by the sub-committee.

Action
PG
OV/RD/JRG/
Clerk

DE-MINIMIS CONSENTS RECORDED AT THIS COURT

2020/11064 DE-MINIMIS CONSENTS APPROVED DISCHARGE

DM0081 – New 6m duct to former Lees Nursery, Portmore. BT Openreach.

MATTERS ARISING FROM MINUTES OF PREVIOUS COURTS OF CONCERN TO FORESTRY ENGLAND

2020/11065 COMMERCIAL DOG WALKERS RESUME
July

The Deputy Surveyor asked for this to be resumed in July.

Cllr Heron said he appreciates the current difficulties but this matter is rumbling on. The Court hoped that the Deputy Surveyor would have a substantive response to the problem of out of control dogs which is getting worse.

Action DS

2020/11066 TELECOMMUNICATIONS MASTS (HYDE) RESUME

To date, a permanent site for the mast which is currently sited (temporarily) on Hyde Common is proving difficult to find. The company responsible for the mast is now hoping an alternative site on common land / New Forest SSSI might be acceptable. The Court, however, was unanimous in its unwillingness to grant consent for such an installation. Mr Pasmore asked whether the Church tower has been considered. It was agreed the subject should be resumed and Cllr Heron was asked to try to obtain an update for the next Court.

Action
EH

2020/11067	STUMP CUTTING PROGRAMME AND RIDGE AND FURROW RESTORATION WORKS	RESUME
	<p>The Court felt that in general the works carried out have been very good. However, Mr Pasmore expressed concern regarding an area in the valley against Millersford Plantation where the drainage has been broken up. There was a small herd of ponies there at the time of his visit and one mare went in right up to her belly and floundered about. She was a strong animal and eventually managed to extricate herself, but a weak pony would have been less lucky. The damage to the drains was not part of the agreed restoration works.</p> <p>As it has not so far been possible to agree remedial works to secure a solution to what the Court feels is a serious animal welfare issue, a site meeting with members of FE's HLS Team will be arranged. The Clerk was asked to contact FE's Senior Ecologist, Mrs Leanne Sargeant.</p>	Action Clerk
2020/11068	A31 CATTLE GRIDS	RESUME
	<p>An impasse has been reached between Highways England, which continues to refuse to accept responsibility for all the cattle grids leading on/off the A31, Hampshire County Council and Forestry England.</p> <p>The Official Verderer has written to the Secretary of State for Transport, The Rt Hon Grant Shapps MP, copy to Sir Desmond Swayne MP and Dr Julian Lewis MP, asking for their intervention in order to obtain a solution.</p>	
2020/11069	A35 HOLMSLEY BRIDGE REPLACEMENT	RESUME
	<p>The legal documentation is nearly complete. Work is not expected to start until the Autumn.</p>	September
2020/11070	BROOMY PLAIN ROAD UPDATE & SIGNAGE	RESUME
	<p>The final safety audit of the scheme is awaited. That will inform the decision as to whether any additional signage is required. Consideration will then be given to the design and positioning of any such signage.</p>	Action HCC
2020/11071	DENNY CAMPSITE CONTAINER	RESUME
	<p>The Deputy Surveyor said removal of the container has been delayed by CV-19. He said he has spoken to the Denny Campsite Warden and it is expected the container will be removed next week.</p>	Action FE
2020/11072	HEATHER BURNING	DISCHARGE
	<p>Mrs Westerhoff said she has no further information and suggested the item should be discharged from the minutes. If there are further developments, Mrs Westerhoff will advise the Court.</p>	

SSSI RESTORATION WORKS

2020/11073	REPAIRS AND MAINTENANCE LIST	RESUME
	<p>The current list was circulated. The format has changed and it was questioned why that is so. The Deputy Surveyor said he will ensure it reverts to the previous format which has worked well.</p>	Action DS

ENCROACHMENTS INVOLVING FORESTRY ENGLAND

2020/11074 ENCROACHMENTS LIST RESUME

The current list was circulated.

ACTION LIST

2020/11075 ACTION LIST RESUME

The Action List was circulated.

2020/11076 BRIDGE AT TANTANY WOOD RESUME

The bridge at Tantany Wood which has been washed away and was the subject of a recent presentment by former Head Agister, Mr Brian Ingram, is not on the list. This bridge is important and is used on the drift. The Court asked for it to be added to the list and requested it be replaced as soon as possible. In response, the Deputy Surveyor explained that the bridge will be added to the list. He said the delay in its replacement was due to wet ground conditions, followed by CV-19. The need for the bridge is understood and FE is committed to replacing it as soon as possible.

Action DS

ANY OTHER BUSINESS INVOLVING THE FORESTRY COMMISSION

2020/11077 FUTURE FINANCIAL SUPPORT FOR THE FOREST – BPS REFERENCE YEAR RESUME

A letter has been sent to the Rt Hon George Eustice MP, Secretary of State for Defra, asking for the reference date for delinked payments to be announced as soon as possible. In addition, Dr Julian Lewis MP acted very promptly by asking a written question in Parliament. Unfortunately, the written answer to that question did not provide any comfort that the matter would be dealt with promptly. Copies of supporting letters sent by the Deputy Surveyor and the Chairman of the New Forest National Park, Mr Oliver Crosthwaite Eyre, will be circulated.

Action OV

Cllr Heron suggested the Official Verderer should seek a meeting with the Minister, to which the Official Verderer responded by saying he is already in touch with Mr Oliver Crosthwaite Eyre to see if he can assist in that respect.

2020/11078 FUTURE FINANCIAL SUPPORT FOR THE FOREST – DEFRA ELM CONSULTATION DISCHARGE

Due to CV-19, a timetable for the consultation is not yet available.

OTHER MATTERS ARISING

2020/11079 EAST BOLDRE VILLAGE HALL RESUME

A planning application has reportedly been submitted to transform East Boldre Village Hall into a Community Hub. The Court and Forestry England are disappointed as it was thought it had been agreed that mitigation for the proposed development of the Village Hall would be agreed prior to a planning application being submitted. The Court hoped that one of the landowners in the vicinity of EBVH would be willing to assist in the provision of suitable mitigation. Mrs Westerhoff agreed to find out Natural England's position on the application and about any compensatory land.

Action DW

2020/11080 ILLEGAL CYCLING & OTHER ABUSE OF THE FOREST

DISCHARGE

Members of the Court expressed their deep concern at the present level of illegal activity and what, unfortunately, can only be described as abuse of the Forest. Visitor numbers are exceptionally high at present. This is presumed to be the result of other venues being closed due to Covid-19 restrictions. People are cycling all over the Open Forest and there appears to be no attempt to stop them. Some cyclists are prepared to cycle straight at walkers.

Verge parking has escalated with vehicles seen parked well off the public roads. There is also a lot of overnight parking. The signage that has been put up is being ignored. People are feeding ponies and more dogs are out of control. Some people are using the Forest as a latrine as the toilets are shut. There is a real fear that bad habits formed now will be difficult to break in future.

The Deputy Surveyor said he fully understands and shares the Court's concerns and agreed that the abuse of the Forest by some members of the public is unacceptable. He went on to say that Forestry England Staff and the Police are trying to manage the situation but they also have to respond to the Government's wishes to re-open the countryside through re-opening of car parks. The massive influx of visitors was a natural response to both the good weather and the new guidelines which have allowed people to travel for their daily exercise. .

Mr Dowsett commented that the Ranger team is having to endure a significant and unacceptable level of abuse when doing their best to advise the public of what they may and may not do.

The Deputy Surveyor said that Forestry England will continue to take whatever steps it can to protect the Forest as far as possible.

The Deputy Surveyor and Mr Grugeon left the meeting

HIGHER LEVEL STEWARDSHIP SCHEME

2020/11081 FUTURE HLS WORKS

DISCHARGE

The HLS team is trying to put together a programme of works that can be done under current CV-19 restrictions. As much ridge and furrow levelling and stump clearance as possible will be carried out.

The Freshwater and Wetland Restoration Forum may try a virtual meeting towards the end of the month. It is hoped that the Evidence and Monitoring sub group will be able to report its advice at that meeting.

VERDERERS' GRAZING SCHEME

2020/11082 VGS COMMITTEE MEETING

DISCHARGE

The Committee met via Zoom. It is business as usual. The Official Verderer said he will ask Tina Woodley, the VGS Administrator, to circulate the minutes.

Two commoners have been sent letters warning that they rely too much on the Agisters to manage their stock and if they continue to do so, they may be penalised.

MATTERS ARISING FROM EXTERNAL COMMITTEES & WORKING GROUPS

2020/11083 EXTERNAL COMMITTEES & WORKING GROUPS RESUME

Some meetings which have been on hold because of the current situation are coming back to life. More use is likely to be made of video conferencing. The Forest Farming Group is due to meet virtually on Thursday 28th May via Microsoft Teams. The Official Verderer will report back at the next Court.

FINANCIAL MATTERS

2020/11084 FINANCIAL STATEMENT RESUME

The Financial Statement was noted.

STAFF MATTERS

2020/11085 STAFF COMMITTEE RESUME

A virtual staff committee meeting has been arranged for next week. The office staff are continuing to work from home.

HEALTH & SAFETY

2020/11086 COVID-19 RESUME

It was agreed that a separate heading for this should appear on the Agenda each month. The Court's admin staff are unlikely to return to the office for some time yet. The Clerk was asked to investigate Microsoft Teams with the Court's IT provider, as that is the video conferencing platform used by most public authorities.

Action
Clerk

2020/11087 INCIDENTS INVOLVING STOCK DISCHARGE

Complaints have been received concerning the behaviour of two stallions, one of which is allegedly aggressive towards ridden horses. The other was at Longdown, where a dog was reportedly set on by a roan pony which may have been the stallion, but it has not been possible to establish that for certain. A herd of ponies was grazing on either side of a track and the dog and its owners passed between the animals. The people have been advised that they were walking far too close to the ponies, particularly as they had a dog with them.

Three incidents have been reported involving cattle at Roughdown. In one incident, a cow reportedly knocked over a lady who was walking with her husband. The owner of the cow witnessed the incident. He had just separated some cows and calves and one cow was particularly upset. The lady's husband admitted the couple were close enough to the cattle that he could run his hand along the cow's back. He was advised to stay further away from Forest stock in future. The owner of the cow immediately removed his animal from the Forest in order to prevent any further incidents.

Mrs Westerhoff reported another incident from several weeks ago where a local resident claimed a herd of cattle had gone berserk. No reason has been identified and no-one was injured. All the incidents have been recorded.

The video conference ended at 11:45 hrs with thanks to the Clerk for arranging the meeting in this way.