

## **Announcements and Decisions** **December 2020**

### **TB IN FOREST CATTLE AND MARKING FEES**

Mr Parry Norton's presentment raised the issue payment of marking fees by commoners whose cattle are subject to Animal & Plant Health Agency (APHA) TB restrictions.

Under normal circumstances, Agisters do not mark cattle which have something wrong with them. This is in order to avoid unnecessary suffering or the risk of passing on disease to other animals. Examples are animals which are in poor condition, suffering from ringworm or forest eye. It is a tool which is useful in preventing animals being turned out that should not be.

TB does not come under the control of the Verderers. Its control and management is a matter for APHA. Holdings will not be shut down purely because they fall within a radial testing zone.

The Verderers' byelaws forbid the depasturing of any animal which is in a condition which is likely to cause unnecessary suffering or is known or suspected to be suffering from disease. The byelaws do not, however, say that such animals cannot be marked and/or paid for.

Commoners who cannot turn out their cattle may well suffer financial hardship if they have to keep their animals at home for a prolonged period and cannot claim subsidies. Furthermore, Commoners whose animals are found to be TB reactors, or are confirmed positive for TB, have no influence on the situation they find themselves in. However, they have most of the year to pay marking fees and may become free of restriction after a period of 60 days.

The Court agreed that for the various reasons explained above, it would accept marking fees from commoners whose herds are subject to TB control restrictions.

With reference to Mr Parry Norton's request to meet with the Verderers to discuss how the Forest herd can be safeguarded against TB, the Court feels that the Commoners' Defence Association Committee, on which three of the Elected Verderers sit, should discuss the issue first.

### **REWILDING**

Mr Eccles expressed concern that if some form of rewilding were implemented in the Forest, it would adversely impact on the commoners' rights to depasture stock. The Court believes that rewilding or the introduction of different species is not something that is likely to be necessary in the New Forest which already possesses a rich mosaic of habitats supporting a diverse range of species.

### **HIGHWAY FENCING**

In Tony Vanderhoek's further presentment on the subject of highway fencing he asked that all HCC replacement fencing be post and rail and not post and wire. Wherever possible HCC does replace post and wire fences with post and rail. However, post and rail is significantly more expensive to erect and there may be occasions when post and wire is used. The Verderers are in regular contact with HCC on these matters and advise them of the appropriate specification. For example, we have recently contacted them to remind them that they are not following best practice as respects the construction of its post and rail fences as all three rails end on the same post. However, post and rail is more expensive and we recognise that the ability to use only post and rail is constrained by the available finance.