

MINUTES of the Court of Verderers – Wednesday 18th November 2020

At the time of this Court, the UK outbreak of novel Coronavirus, known as Covid-19 continues. Government advises the population to avoid meetings where the disease could potentially be passed from person to person and homeworking is recommended wherever practical. Once again, 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 proceedings.

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 Senior Elected Verderer Elected Verderer Natural England Appointed Verderer
ABSENT	Miss D Macnair MBE	Elected Verderer
IN ATTENDANCE ONLINE	Miss S Westwood	Clerk to the Verderers
IN ATTENDANCE ONLINE from Minute No. 11285	Mr Bruce Rothnie Mr Paul Grugeon	Deputy Surveyor of the New Forest Forestry England Land Agent (New Forest)

2020/11327 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING RESUME

The Minutes of Court held on Wednesday, 21st October 2020 were approved and will be signed by the Official Verderer at the earliest opportunity.

2020/11328 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.

ANNOUNCEMENTS & DECISIONS FOR PUBLICATION

The Announcements & Decisions, as followed, were approved.

2020/11329 MARKING FEES 2021

Marking fees have remained at the same level since 2012 and I am pleased to announce that there will be no increase next year.

Marking fees for 2021 are therefore the same as this year:

Ponies & Donkeys on the Forest £24.00 per head
Ponies & Donkeys on the Commons £12.00 being ½ of the Forest marking fee
Cattle on the Forest £24.00
Cattle on the Commons £3.00 being 1/8 of the Forest marking fee
Sheep on the Forest £8.00
Sheep on the Commons £4.00
Pigs on the Forest £4.00
Pigs on the Commons £2.00 per head

Please remember that marking fees are due from the 1st January. Under our Byelaws, the deadline for payment of all marking fees for continuously depastured animals is 31st March.

If not paid by 31st March, you will not be eligible to join the Verderers Grazing Scheme. Marking fees for animals which are not continuously depastured are due before the animals are turned out. It is the responsibility of commoners to volunteer payment of marking fees, not the responsibility of the Agister to chase you for them.

2020/11330 CATTLE MARKING

Earlier this year the Verderers decided, in the light of the issues raised by the Covid-19 pandemic, to instruct the Agisters not to mark cattle.

We have now reviewed that decision in the light of the presentment we received at our October Court from three commoners and the current circumstances and have decided that we will not physically mark cattle for 2021. The decision is based on minimising health risks to our staff and also to commoners, which are thought to outweigh the benefits of marking.

Cattle owners are requested to send in a list of the ministry ear tag numbers for the cattle they wish to mark, and pay the appropriate marking fee, preferably by bank transfer having first contacted their agister to obtain a marking fee receipt number to use as a reference. Ear tag lists and payment will not be accepted until after 1st January. Owners will be expected to only include cattle that are in acceptable condition, eligible to be depastured, with no ring worm or forest eye, and bearing a legible brand tag. The Agisters will be vigilant looking out for compliance, and reacting swiftly to any issues.

Because we are not physically marking the cattle, the linkage to the TB testing window is irrelevant, hence no marking for 2021 will be processed until January 2021. Some Commoners rely on the Agisters to help with their TB test while attending for marking purposes. It is felt inappropriate to assist with the TB test if the Agisters are not there to mark cattle, so we have instructed the Agisters to communicate to those commoners that they will need to arrange alternative assistance.

Whilst we will keep the matter under review, we think it unlikely that this decision will change for 2021.

2020/11331 NEW GATE AND STEPS IN PROPERTY BOUNDARY AT IPLEY

At our last Court Mr Eccles brought to the Court's attention, a new gate and steps hewn out of the bank on the boundary of an adjacent property, to give access to the Open Forest at Ipley Green. Mr Eccles wondered if this bank had any historical geological or archaeological merits? It is thought the bank is private property.

We have referred the matter to Forestry England.

PRESENTMENTS

2020/11332 MARKING OF CATTLE AND TB

Presentment by: Andrew Parry Norton (NFCDA Member and Cattle Owner), Adam Coutts (NFCDA Member and Cattle Owner) on behalf of the New Forest Commoners Defence Association (NFCDA)

'The NFCDA committee and our members are becoming increasingly concerned with the number of TB outbreaks within the New Forest perambulation.

The National APHA TB restrictions, placed on a Commoner's holding, would prevent the selling and turning out of cattle with the subsequent non- issue of marking receipts. The loss of BPS payments and possibly entitlements, could lead to serious financial hardship.

I am sure you will agree that losing any cattle to TB is detrimental to the Forest and should be avoided if at all possible.

Without delay, we ask the court that a meeting is arranged with members of the NFCDA committee and the Verderers to work towards a resolution that can help the cattle Commoners and ultimately, benefit the Forest.'

2020/11333 **REWILDING**

Presentment by Mr Mike Eccles, Practising Commoner

'I was alerted to and read a news item in The Telegraph (7/11/20). This involved plans to rewild 10% of Exmoor National Park by Exmoor National Park Authority. Whilst no detailed plans were shown, local users were concerned about loss of sheep & cattle grazing.

I would hope the introduction in the Forest of lynx, wolves & any gifts of beavers from the Prime Minister would not be considered as if they were, our rights would be affected!'

2020/11334 **REPLACEMENT OF FENCES ALONG THE A337/A35/A326 WHICH ARE THE RESPONSIBILITY OF HAMPSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL (HCC)**

Presentment by Tony Vanderhoek, New Forest CDA Co-opted Committee Member and Practising Commoner

'Further to my presentment dated 8th August 2020 highlighting this crucial issue, it is very welcome to see that HCC are replacing the dilapidated stock fencing along the A roads that they are responsible for through the Forest. I visited the site opposite Cadnam Cricket ground on 13th November and wooden post and rail/wire stock netting is being erected to replace the damaged wooden post and wire which is excellent news.

Unfortunately, in other areas replacement fencing I have recently viewed and made aware of is still just wooden post and wire, which is not of a good enough standard to be effective stock proofing. In some places the repairs are very poor, for example opposite Hollands Wood campsite, the entrance into Buckford Inclosure where a repair left a straining post at a 45 degree angle.

The default stock fencing standard adopted by HCC is very poor and I urge the Verderers make it clear to HCC to improve the standard of fencing to the wooden post and rail/wire stock netting type and there must be a programme of complete replacement of the fencing along all these A roads to that standard - good examples seen along the A31 erected by Highways England. I understand that this type of fencing is more costly than wooden post and wire; however, it is longer lasting and effective. No one wants to see breaches by Commoners' animals onto these busy fast roads and the people/animal carnage that could ensue, so good fencing is imperative.

Local contractors who are familiar with the correct standard of stock fencing should be used.

I repeat the fact that it is also imperative that HCC conducts a routine regular perambulation of the fences to ensure their integrity. Thank You'

CONSIDERATION OF PRESENTMENTS

2020/11335 **MARKING OF CATTLE & TB**

DISCHARGE

The Official Verderer's Announcement at this Court followed discussions on whether the Agisters should mark cattle. As respects accepting marking fees and issuing receipts for cattle on holdings which are subject to TB restrictions, a detailed discussion took place later in this meeting. See Minute No. 2020/11296.

2020/11336 REWILDING DISCHARGE

Rewilding or the introduction of different species is not something that is likely to be necessary in the New Forest which already possesses a variety of habitats, flora and fauna.

2020/11337 HIGHWAY FENCING DISCHARGE

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.

Mr Greenwood expressed concern that HCC is not following best practice as respects the construction of its post and rail fences as all three rails end on the same post. Cllr Heron will take that point back to HCC with a request that they revise the specification.

Action EH

DE-MINIMIS CONSENTS TO BE RECORDED AT THIS COURT

2020/11338 DM0099 BT Openreach, The Lodge, Moyles Court – new duct, 30m in carriageway & 25m in customer's gravel drive. DISCHARGE

MATTERS ARISING FROM PREVIOUS COURTS OF CONCERN TO FORESTRY ENGLAND

2020/11339 RENEWAL OF THE CROWN LANDS WAYMARKED CYCLE NETWORK RESUME

The Deputy Surveyor apologised that he has not been able to circulate a paper on this. However, he confirmed a plan is being put together which he will share with the Court. Further information is being collected to accurately identify specific areas where cycling off track is a problem. Once that information has been obtained, a targeted campaign will commence, with a concerted effort made to try to change behaviours.

Action DS

2020/11340 BROOMY PLAIN ROAD PASSING PLACE SIGNAGE AND CONCRETE REMOVAL DISCHARGE

The Deputy Surveyor had circulated details (previously provided to the Court in 2017) of the areas of concrete that were removed as mitigation for land taken for the passing places. He confirmed all the work was carried out in accordance with those plans.

Mr Dowsett said he has been in touch with HCC regarding passing place signage, suggesting that if and when it becomes necessary, consideration should be given to using heritage style signage which should be more acceptable in the Forest landscape. The Safety Audit of the scheme recommends the continuation of monitoring for the time being and therefore no signs will be erected for now. HCC believes the scheme is working well. Very few complaints about the road have been received to date.

2020/11341 BT PROPOSAL FOR THE PROVISION OF A BROADBAND FIBRE SPINE AT EAST END RESUME

Natural England reportedly considers this to be a borderline case. It usually asks for cables to be put under the road or verge. In this case, in places the verge may not be wide enough to bury a duct. There is not a huge amount of biodiversity in the verges in this area and in some places along this route, other services have already been put in the verge. The question

of whether poles are appropriate, comes down to their visual aspect on the area. On the Open Forest, poles are definitely a blot on the landscape.

The Clerk was asked to communicate with BT and explain they will have to produce a strong case if they wish to erect poles. Full details are required of why the usual option of burying the duct in the verge is not feasible.

Action Clerk

2020/11342 SPECIAL BY DESIGN

DISCHARGE

At the recent meeting discussion focused on what might be put on the bottom rung of the new Forestry England ladder-board gateway signs which are due to be rolled out from March.

Given the wide divergence of views, we made it clear that the content is ultimately a decision for Forestry England alone. The FE team has gone away to consider the suggestions.

We have suggested that this group is not going to achieve anything more and should therefore be disbanded. Our recommendation to the Court is that once the content of the bottom rung has been settled, we participate no further.

2020/11343 MINSTEAD CRICKET CLUB LICENCE RENEWAL

RESUME
January
2021

Mr Grugeon explained he is trying to standardise the licences for all sports clubs with facilities on the Forest. Individual management plans will then set out specific details.

Minstead Parish Council is keen to retain the cricket ground facilities for the benefit of the village as well as the Cricket Club.

A number of issues must be resolved before a new licence is granted. These include, removal of the old concrete practice wicket, removal of the fence around the back of the pavilion and the installation of shutters to protect the windows of the pavilion from stock and vandalism whilst it is not in use. In addition, the rusty corrugated iron cladding must be removed and the pavilion refurbished. The Court does not want grass cuttings stored on site, even temporarily. They must be removed and not be taken to the Cadnam Cricket Pitch for disposal. Finally, the site management statement, which has to be approved by Natural England, must be up to date.

Action
PG

In response to the question of why a 25 year lease is required, Mr Grugeon explained that a 25 year term allows the Club to apply for grant funding which may not be available for lesser periods.

2020/11344 IPLEY CROSSROADS REALIGNMENT

DISCHARGE

The mitigation has been agreed. The documentation is acceptable. The Official Verderer will respond to HCC.

2020/11345 FORESTRY ENGLAND INCLOSURE FENCING

RESUME
January
2021

Mr Deakin said he is trying to arrange a socially distanced meeting with Mr Jonathan Blanco (FE) and the Head Agister. In order to facilitate discussions, Mr Blanco has offered to arrange for 3 sets of large-scale plans to be made available.

Action RD

2020/11346 BRAMSHAW GOLF CLUB RESUME

The meeting was unable to take place because of the lockdown. The Golf Club is still keen to meet and meanwhile has asked for permission to fence the 4th and 15th tees over winter, using post and rail fencing. Mr Grugeon said this is permitted under the current management plan.

The Court was concerned that the half-moon fences that are currently in place are not in the plan, even though they have apparently been in place for some years. Fencing should not be carried out unless it is in accordance with the plan.

The current lockdown is due to end on 2nd December and the Court asked that a meeting be arranged in advance of the December Verderers' Court. If that is not possible, the Court requested that all fences which are not approved, be removed until a site meeting can be arranged. Mr Grugeon will do his best to arrange a meeting.

Action PG

2020/11347 POSSIBLE RE-FENCING OF DIBDEN INCLOSURE RESUME

February
2021

The proposed meeting could not take place because of the lockdown.

2020/11348 RESTORATION OF TURF HILL RESUME

The Deputy Surveyor explained that some of the area which has not been restored contains important archaeological interest and he said he will share the map with Mr Pasmore.

At the OFAC meeting, it was stated that work will continue on most of the unrestored area but it is being carried out in stages to allow reptiles to relocate. The Deputy Surveyor will clarify the areas to be worked and provide the details to the Clerk.

Action
DS

2020/11349 RECREATION MANAGEMENT STRATEGY STEERING GROUP – VERGE PARKING RESUME

This group is due to meet in week commencing 23rd November 2020. The Official Verderer said he has a quotation from I Transport for giving independent advice on how to solve the problem of verge parking in the Forest.

Action OV

SSSI RESTORATION WORKS INCLUDING THE ENHANCEMENT LIST

2020/11350 ENHANCEMENT LIST RESUME

The Deputy Surveyor was asked to see if the layout of the list can be improved. He undertook to ask if this can be done.

Action DS

ENCROACHMENTS ON FORESTRY ENGLAND LAND INCLUDING THE ENCROACHMENTS LIST

2020/11351 ENCROACHMENT LIST RESUME

Noted. Nothing to add

ACTION LIST

2020/11352 ACTION LIST RESUME

Noted. Nothing to add

OTHER AGENDA ITEMS INVOLVING FORESTRY ENGLAND

2020/11353 ADVERTISING SIGNS ON HCC HIGHWAY SIGNAGE POSTS RESUME

Mr Pasmore expressed concern at the potential for proliferation of advertising signs on HCC highway posts. One has appeared recently for a new development. Cllr Heron said he would find out the criteria for when and where such signs are permitted on HCC infrastructure. Mr Grugeon said that HCC has a longstanding licence permitting it to display certain types of signs on verges belonging to the Crown and he will look to see what it says.

Action EH

Action PG

2020/11354 BT OPENREACH 330M DUCT FROM HARWOODS GARAGE TO OAK COTTAGE (BRAMSHAW THAT'S LIFE) DISCHARGE

The proposal for an additional 330m of cable to extend broadband to Oak Cottage exceeds the de-minimis committee's authority, hence it has been brought to the Court for consideration. The cable will be put on existing poles and no objection was raised. The Clerk will advise Openreach accordingly.

Action Clerk

2020/11355 BT OPENREACH PROPOSAL FOR BROADBAND PROVISION FROM BROOK TO FRITHAM RESUME

This proposal also falls well outside the authority of the de-minimis committee. Under Covid-19 Lockdown rules, meetings are permitted for work related matters providing social distancing is observed. The Clerk will arrange a site meeting with Openreach for week commencing 23rd November.

Action Clerk

ANY OTHER BUSINESS INVOLVING FORESTRY ENGLAND

2020/11356 FORESTRY ENGLAND STAFF APPOINTMENTS DISCHARGE

Forestry England have appointed two Keepers/Wildlife Rangers recently. Austin Weldon joins Forestry England from the 23 November to take up the Keeper post vacated by Howard Taylor. He has come from the Game and Wildlife Conservation Trust where he was a Game and Wildlife Advisor to private landowners. He has also been involved with the Great Bustard re-introduction project on Salisbury Plain. He brings not only great wildlife knowledge but a lot of experience of engaging with landowners and stakeholders.

In December, Jordan Thomas will join FE as an additional Keeper/Wildlife Ranger. FE anticipates further retirements from the team over the next 2 years and this is an opportunity for Jordan to learn from the existing team before taking up a vacancy once a retirement takes place. He will be working across the District during this time including supporting the Keeper team in the New Forest. He comes from Epping Forest where he has been for many years. He brings great experience of enforcement, management of the public access and deer management. He has spent time previously shadowing the Keepers in the New Forest as part of FE's exchanges with Epping Forest.

The Deputy Surveyor and Mr Grugeon left the meeting

MATTERS ARISING FROM EARLIER IN THE MEETING

2020/11357 MARKING OF CATTLE AND TB

RESUME

Mr Richard Manley declared an interest in this subject.

The position, as respects payment of marking fees, concerning commoners whose cattle are subject to Animal & Plant Health Agency (APHA) TB restrictions, was discussed at length.

Under normal circumstances, Mr Deakin said that 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. In the past, commoners would not have wished to pay for such animals but now, where a marking fee receipt is required in order to claim BPS subsidies, they obviously do wish to pay. 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.

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. 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 felt that the Commoners' Defence Association Committee, on which three of the Elected Verderers sit, should discuss the issue first.

Action
RD/DR/JG

MATTERS ARISING FROM PREVIOUS COURTS

2020/11358 DE-LINKING OF BPS PAYMENTS

RESUME

The Official Verderer reported that he has written to Dr Julian Lewis MP, asking if he can facilitate a meeting with Victoria Prentis MP, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State at the Department for Environment and Rural Affairs (DEFRA). A response is awaited.

Action OV

2020/11359 MISS DIONIS MACNAIR

DISCHARGE

It is with regret that the Court accepted Miss Macnair's retirement from the Court, on which she has served since 1973. The Court is extremely grateful for her long and dedicated service to the Forest and all her contributions to the Verderers' Court over the years.

2020/11360 CO-OPTED ELECTED VERDERER

RESUME

When an elected verderer retires within their elected term of office, the remaining elected verderers co-opt their replacement. In this instance, the Court felt it would be beneficial to announce the vacancy and so open up the opportunity. The Official Verderer and the Clerk were asked to suggest some suitable wording which will be circulated for comment.

Action
OV/Clerk

2020/11361 STOCK FEEDING AREAS REVIEW

DISCHARGE

A criticism has been received concerning September Court Minute No. 2020/11249 which recorded that no problems were identified with the stock feeding areas which were inspected over the summer.

Unfortunately, for technical reasons, at the time of the September Court, Natural England had been unable to furnish the Court with its findings following its inspections of the 2019/2020 feeding areas. Upon receipt of that report, it was clear that NE is concerned about the feeding area at Sandhole. As a result of the concerns raised, in conjunction with NE and Forestry England, it has been agreed that this winter (2020/2021), the Sandhole area will not be used. The existing feeding areas at Matley Wood and adjacent to Big Matley will continue to be available for use.

In response to suggestions that feeding areas on the Forest should not be permitted, it was pointed out that in the absence of on-Forest feeding areas, commoners will have to feed their cattle at home. Depending on the location of the holding, that can create significant damage where cattle move in and out of the gate each day and as they disperse from the location, especially if the area is wet.

The current high numbers of stock in some areas are the result of national subsidy payments which the Verderers feel are inappropriate to the Forest. The Verderers have tried to influence the subsidy system, unfortunately without success.

It is recognised that excessive numbers of stock may create significant poaching in certain areas. In most cases, however, the problems occur over a fairly short period of time and areas do generally recover to an acceptable condition during the summer months. High stock numbers in specific areas often create special, valuable habitats, which managers of some nature reserves around the country would very much like to see.

OTHER AGENDA ITEMS

2020/11362 COURT DATES FOR 2021 DISCHARGE

The usual pattern of meetings, held on the third Wednesday of the month was agreed.

20th January, 17th February, 17th March, 21st April, 19th May, 16th June, 21st July, No August Court, 15th September, 20th October, 17th November, 15th December (Committee only).

2020/11363 AUDITED ACCOUNTS DISCHARGE

The Audited Accounts were approved. They will be signed by the Official Verderer and posted on the Verderer's website. Action OV

2020/11364 ELECTED VERDERERS' HONORARIUM DISCHARGE

In 1992, the Government's Response to the Illingworth Working Party Report on Grazing in the New Forest recommended that Verderers should receive an annual honorarium of £1,000. However, it was not until 1996 that the Verderers' funds were such that it was possible to consider making any payment.

Over the years the honorarium has been gradually increased, but if inflation is taken into account, the present level should be upwards of £1,500. It was, therefore, agreed that a payment of £1,500 per annum is more realistic, particularly as the payment is regarded by HMRC as taxable income. The Clerk was asked to implement the increase with immediate effect. Action Clerk

2020/11365 HIGHER LEVEL STEWARDSHIP SCHEME DISCHARGE

The Official Verderer gave the following report -

By the end of October, a full range of stump removal was completed at Turf Hill (10.46 ha), Markway (0.9 ha). Highland water (5.2 ha) and Ferny Knap (4.9 ha).

Further work is in progress or due to start before the end of the year at Highland water (10.7 ha), Norley (2.4 ha) and Longdown (4.09 ha).

Work is also being planned for a number of other sites to be restored during winter 2020/21. The plans are not finalised but are likely to include sites at Marchwood, Ipley, Dibden and Fawley.

The Woodcrates Phase 2 site visit will take place in early 2021, with a view to carrying out the work in winter 2021/22

Rhododendron management and verge restoration continue.

Lost lawn. Tantany Wood (3.2ha) previously agreed with stakeholders and will be carried out this winter.

Restoration work has concentrated on snagging works and enhancements. Work at Pond Head and Wootton 2 has been put back until next year.

2020/11366 VERDERERS' GRAZING SCHEME

DISCHARGE

Mr Deakin reported that the VGS Committee had met. Small Grants were awarded within budgets. Mrs Woodley is finalising the documents to pay the usual grants when the money is received from the RPA.

A rule change was discussed, concerning not allowing young calves under 2 weeks of age to be on the Forest but it was abandoned due to lack of support.

REPORTS FROM EXTERNAL COMMITTEES AND WORKING GROUPS

2020/11367 FOREST FARMING GROUP

DISCHARGE

Report from the Official Verderer - The group has worked on the terms of reference. A presentation was heard from Jo Swier of the Foundation for Common Land who is the part-time test and trial facilitator. There are trials on eight different commons in two batches of four. The New Forest will be in the second batch early next year. A local facilitator will need to be appointed and a test area defined.

It has been suggested that we try to make sure that funding is included for recreation management.

The Defra policy consultation report is due at this month.

2020/11368 ACCESS FORUM

DISCHARGE

Mr Manley said unfortunately he is not able to join the next meeting which is scheduled for 7th December. He suggested another Verderer should attend in his place.

GENERAL REPORTS AND ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS

2020/11369 STAFF SALARY REVIEW

DISCHARGE

The Remuneration Committee is meeting later today and the Court authorised the Committee to decide on salary levels for the coming year.

Action
RemCo

2020/11370 FINANCIAL STATEMENT

RESUME

The Financial Statement was noted.

2020/11371 REPORT ON MARKING FEES RECEIVED TO DATE AND COMPARISON WITH PREVIOUS YEAR

RESUME

	<u>2020</u>	<u>2019</u>
Forest Ponies	5029	5036
Forest Cattle	5422	5520
Forest Donkeys	135	132
Forest Pigs	504	402
Forest Sheep	0	0
Total Forest Stock	11090	11090
Common Ponies	839	792
Common Cattle	2540	2025
Common Donkeys	138	136
Common Pigs	139	196

Common Sheep	223	212
Total Common Stock	3879	3361
Ponies, Cattle & Donkeys on the Forest	10586	10688
Ponies, Cattle & Donkeys on the Commons	3517	2953
Total Ponies, Cattle & Donkeys	14103	13641
Total Stock – Forest & Commons	14969	14451

2020/11372 CONDITION OF STOCK REPORT BY THE HEAD AGISTER

RESUME

The overall condition of the stock is currently very good. So far, the autumn weather has been fairly kind to us, and the grass has continued to grow, as opposed to this time last year when we had almost continuous rain for the 2 months up to now. So, the majority of the ponies are looking pretty good going into the winter.

The drifts have now finished, and I must say I am very relieved they are, and am very pleased how they went overall, considering all the added complications of this year. It has only been possible by a lot of hard work by everyone concerned.

As to the cattle, the biggest issue has to be TB. We now have three herd breakdowns affecting the Forest and generating the need for radial testing. Two are farms close to the Forest, and one is a large scale commoner. One in the north, one on the south west side and one in the south of the Forest. All will result in commoners having to radial test, which requires a test now, followed by another in 6 months. It will affect a large number of commoners.

There have been a few casualties due to acorn poisoning, but as of now, not as many as I had feared with the size of the acorn crop this year.

The pigs appear to be doing well, but they are generating a lot of call outs mainly due to them straying off the Forest because of the lack of pig proof fencing. This is a problem throughout the Forest.

2020/11373 ANIMAL ACCIDENT REPORT FOR OCTOBER

RESUME

The Agisters attended 12 accidents in October, compared with 19 in the same period last year.

2 ponies, and 1 cow were killed and 1 pony and 2 pigs were injured.

1 of the ponies which died was wearing a reflective collar.

4 accidents occurred in daylight, 3 at twilight and the other 5 in the dark.

2 drivers failed to report having been involved in an accident.

The total killed and injured to the end of October was 51, compared with 74 in the same period last year.

2020/11374 HEALTH & SAFETY THE AGISTER TEAM

RESUME

Mr Deakin said he has been thinking about splitting the Agisters into two teams, north and south of the Forest with the Head Agister floating between the two. The aim is to protect the team from the impact of Covid-19, should an Agister test positive.

Action RD

If all the Agisters were afflicted or had to isolate, significant problems would result. The Court agreed that the Agisters from the north should therefore avoid mixing with those from the south and vice-versa. The Head Agister will take the necessary precautions if he is required to visit both teams within a short time period, ensuring he observes social distancing and uses PPE as appropriate.

2020/11375 2020 DRIFTS

DISCHARGE

The drifts have finished. On the whole the smaller number of drifts which were undertaken this year have gone well. The lack of the usual assistance from Forestry England personnel was, however, very noticeable with fewer people being available to help ensure social distancing was observed and anyone not actively involved in the drifts encouraged to leave. In a normal year, FE Volunteer Rangers are strategically placed to help inform the public and keep them safe. This year they were unable to attend, as were the full time Rangers. The National Park Authority's Ranger Team did attend and their assistance was greatly appreciated.

2020/11376 WELFARE TOUR

RESUME

For obvious reasons, it will not be possible to hold the usual Welfare Tour of the Forest. The Head Agister has suggested a virtual tour should be arranged and it was agreed this is an excellent idea which should be taken forward.

Action
RD/JRG

There being no further business, the video conference ended at 13:22 hrs.

Julia Mannell
16 December 2020