

**Minutes of the Court of Verderers held on Wednesday 16th April 2025 at 9.30 a.m.
in the Library, the King's House, Lyndhurst**

| | | |
|---------------|-------------------|---|
| PRESENT | Mr E Heron | Official Verderer |
| | Mr R Deakin | Elected Verderer & Staff Committee Chairman |
| | Mr A H Pasmore | Senior Elected Verderer |
| | Mr R Stride | Elected Verderer |
| | Miss A Tilbury | Elected Verderer |
| | Miss K Harrison | Elected Verderer |
| | Mr M Gammon | Forestry Commission Appointed Verderer |
| | Miss A Sevier MBE | National Park Appointed Verderer |
| | Mr R Manley | DEFRA Appointed Verderer |
| | Mr C Chatters | Natural England Appointed Verderer |
| IN ATTENDANCE | Miss J Bayley | Assistant to the Clerk |
| | Mr J Gerrelli | Head Agister |
| APOLOGIES | None | |

IN COMMITTEE in the Library

| | | |
|------------|---|-----------|
| 2025/14036 | MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING | RESUME |
| | The minutes of the last Court, held on Wednesday 19 th March 2025 were approved, and signed by the Official Verderer. | |
| 2025/14037 | NEW DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST | RESUME |
| | There were no new declarations of interest. | |
| 2025/14038 | AGISTER VEHICLES | DISCHARGE |
| | The Head Agister thanked the Verderers for the Agisters new vehicles. He said they are smart and professional and the Agisters are very happy with them. There have been a few teething problems with the towing electrics, but it is hoped that this has now been resolved. | |
| 2025/14039 | CONDITION OF STOCK | RESUME |
| | The Head Agister said the Forest was still very dry with little grass and in need of some rain. Lots of ponies are still in good condition but some are looking scruffy in their winter coats. It is a difficult time of year for the Agisters deciding whether ponies need to be removed knowing that the grass will come, and they will pick up quickly. Lots of in foal mares will need to be closely monitored after they foal and the Agisters will continue to remove animals as and when required. | |
| | The Head Agister said the Agisters were still marking cattle. Following the death of several cattle last year to bracken poisoning, it is hoped that commoners will delay turning their cattle out. | |
| 2025/14040 | STALLIONS | RESUME |
| | The Head Agister said thank you to everyone who helped at the stallion grading. 19 stallions were put forward for the Verderers Stallion Scheme. | |

A letter has been received from a commoner who is unhappy that her stallion has been dropped from the scheme. The Stallion Committee will write to her.

Action RD

2025/14041 BOVINE TB

RESUME

The Head Agister reported on a TB Breakdown in the Thornyhill area, the cattle involved do not run on the Forest.

Nothing has been heard from APHA about radial testing following a TB breakdown in the Fritham area.

2025/14042 AFRICAN HORSE SICKNESS

DISCHARGE

The Head Agister said an invitation has been received to an online exercise regarding African Horse Sickness on 14th May. The Head Agister is on leave that week, the Court agreed someone should attend in his place.

Action Asst
Clerk

2025/14043 SOUTHERN EDGE RTA STUDY

DISCHARGE

Mr Manley updated the Court on the TB Edge RTA Study, Hampshire is one of the lowest areas with 0.6% of badgers testing positive for TB. He will circulate the full report following the meeting.

Action
RM/Asst
Clerk

2025/14044 AVIAN FLU

DISCHARGE

The Head Agister said there was a confirmed case of Avian Flu in Romsey with a 10km exclusion zone. APHA have confirmed that the restriction only applies to poultry and the movement of equines, cattle and sheep is not affected.

2025/14045 AGISTER VEHICLES

DISCHARGE

Mr Deakin said the Agisters have been given the new Vehicle Policy to read and sign.

Mr Chatters asked if some driver training might be a good idea. Mr Deakin said he has looked online to find something suitable. Mr Stride said he has attended 4x4 Driver Training with Forestry England.

2025/14046 MARKING FEES RECEIVED TO DATE AND COMPARISON WITH PREVIOUS YEAR

RESUME

| | <u>2025</u> | <u>2024</u> |
|--------------------|-------------|-------------|
| Forest Ponies | 4172 | 3443 |
| Forest Cattle | 972 | 975 |
| Forest Donkeys | 87 | 74 |
| Forest Pigs | 0 | 0 |
| Forest Sheep | 0 | 0 |
| Total Forest Stock | 5231 | 4492 |
| Common Ponies | 495 | 304 |
| Common Cattle | 79 | 265 |
| Common Donkeys | 69 | 19 |
| Common Pigs | 10 | 11 |
| Common Sheep | 0 | 91 |

| | | |
|---|------|------|
| Total Common Stock | 653 | 690 |
| Ponies, Cattle & Donkeys on the Forest | 5231 | 4492 |
| Ponies, Cattle & Donkeys on the Commons | 643 | 588 |
| Total Ponies, Cattle & Donkeys | 5874 | 5080 |
| Total Stock – Forest & Commons | 5884 | 5182 |

The Head Agister left the meeting

OPEN COURT

IN ATTENDANCE: Mr Craig Harrison, Deputy Surveyor
Mrs Tessa Cook Land Agent

The Head Agister opened the Court with the usual proclamation.

ANNOUNCEMENTS & DECISIONS

2025/14047 ANIMAL ACCIDENTS

The Court is grateful for the presentment by Gilly Jones, and for all the work she does to try and reduce the number of stock casualties on the Forest roads. I am pleased to advise that a date in June has been agreed for a meeting with the Police and Crime Commissioner and the Chief Constable to discuss animal casualties and in particular the high rate of deaths and injuries on certain routes. Gilly, as the chair of the Animal Accident Reduction Group, has been invited to attend this meeting.

2025/14048 DOG INTERACTIONS WITH COMMONERS STOCK

Ahead of the making of the two current Public Space Protection Orders in 2023, New Forest District Council considered the merits of an order in respect of the control of dogs, concluding there were insufficient grounds to do so at that time. The Court will ask the Council to consider available evidence again ahead of any extension of the existing PSPOs, which is required for them to remain the effect beyond June 2026.

The Court is also concerned regarding the use of the Forest by commercial dog walkers and has again asked Forestry England to consider introducing mandatory licencing for this activity on the Crown lands.

2025/14049 STALLION TURNOUT 2025

This year a total of 21 stallions will be turned out for a period of 6 weeks. They will be put out on Monday 12th May and be brought back in during the week ending 23rd June.

This yearly activity is a very important part of ensuring the future of the New Forest pony herd, and the Verderers would ask that all members of the public give the stallions a wide berth and leave them to do their work.

Following last year's turnout, the Verderers received presentments complaining that the large number of geldings running the Forest impacted the stallions effectiveness and were responsible for many mares not getting in foal. Geldings are out all year round and can in some cases become very dominant, and in the worst

cases fight with stallions, and in lesser cases actively prevent mares from joining the stallion herd. The Verderers would ask that gelding owners consider removing their geldings while the stallions are out and want owners to know that in cases where a gelding is known to be actively causing a nuisance to a stallion it may be ordered off under the Verderer Bylaws.

THE ANIMAL ACCIDENT REPORT

2025/14050 THE ANIMAL ACCIDENT REPORT FOR MARCH 2025

The Agisters attended 4 accidents in March compared with 2 in March last year.

2 Ponies were killed, 1 Cow escaped injury and in 1 instance the pony reportedly involved in an accident could not be found.

1 accident happened in daylight and the other 3 in the dark.

All drivers reported having been involved in an accident.

The total number of Commoners' animals killed and injured this year is 12.

PRESENTMENTS BY THE PUBLIC

2025/14051 CONTROLLED BURNING

Presentment by Andrew Parry-Norton Chair of the Commoners Defence Association

The CDA would like to thank Forestry England, the Deputy Surveyor and his team for a very successful burning season this year. It's been well done and a lot has been achieved, thank you.

2025/14052 TREE BARKING BY PONIES

Presentment by Andrew Parry-Norton Chair of the Commoners Defence Association

Following a suggestion made last month in court that pony numbers have increased on the Forest, this is incorrect, the marking fee register and the recent Commoners survey has shown the numbers have remained reasonably static albeit with a slight decline. Cattle numbers as we know are falling dramatically.

As most of the people in this court will know, New Forest ponies are well adapted for life in the Forest. This includes the process of storing fat reserves during the summer months in preparation for providing a source of energy over the cold winter. These fat reserves will be getting low in early spring, but with warmer temperatures the grass soon grows. Part of a job as a Commoner is to monitor this very carefully not just for ponies but all turned out livestock. However occasionally one or two ponies will become poor and our excellent Agister team will remove that pony to the Commoners holding for supplementary feeding.

We ask the public to always report an animal to the Verderers office if they feel its not looking right; the ponies' welfare is always our top priority, nobody including the Commoners, wants to see a pony in a poor condition.

It is accepted that a small percentage of ponies do develop a habit of barking, this is normally associated with Holly so it's unusual in Beech trees and research has shown that its bark can be toxic to ponies.

Barking is a learned behaviour; similar to crib biting by stabled horses and it's incorrect to suggest its due to hunger. This is not a new trend and it's certainly not

a reflection on the Verderers or Agisters management, in the past ponies have been caught and removed from the Forest who have developed this habit.

It is regrettable that the Beech trees have been damaged in this way but as the spring growth starts to appear on the Forest the ponies will disperse; the CDA would suggest that persistent offenders are removed although provision of a mineral block might help in that particular area.

We all take our roles in protecting the Forest very seriously and an early telephone call to the Verderers or an Agister will ensure the correct information being given and will prevent a situation escalating.

The Head Agister closed the Court

IN COMMITTEE (in the Library)

CONSIDERATION OF PRESENTMENTS

2025/14053 CONTROLLED BURNING

DISCHARGE

The Official Verderer said the Court had expressed its thanks to Forestry England for the successful burning season at the last Court. It is still felt that better communication could be put out by Forestry England next year, especially if there is another break in burning due to the weather conditions.

2025/14054 TREE BARKING BY PONIES

DISCHARGED
TO STAFF
LIAISON
COMMITTEE

The Deputy Surveyor said the Keepers were removing ponies from inclosures. Tree barking has been discussed within his team, at a landscape scale it is not a major concern at this stage but Forestry England have concerns about localised impact, especially if it continues or becomes more widespread. Agree action required.

The Agisters will continue to collate evidence of the ponies actively barking trees and commoners will be advised that the ponies may be ordered off the Forest if the behaviour continues.

Mr Pasmore said Undersley Wood has been badly damaged by storms and now ponies barking the ancient trees. He said FE need to carry out regeneration work in the area including some fencing.

The Court agree and welcome the CDA's suggestion regarding mineral licks in areas of concern and will continue to work closely with FE.

NEW SUBMISSIONS BY FORESTRY ENGLAND

2025/14055 BOURNEMOUTH UNIVERSITY STUDY ON HABITAT
CONNECTIVITY FOR DEADWOOD ASSOCIATED
COLLEOPTERA

DISCHARGE

The study is approved with no objections subject to the three usual conditions regarding satisfactory reinstatement, safe working conditions and compensation for loss of grazing etc.

MATTERS ARISING FROM PREVIOUS COURTS OF CONCERN TO FORESTRY ENGLAND

2025/14056 DOG INTERACTION WITH COMMONERS' LIVESTOCK DISCHARGE

The Official Verderer said he is unable to attend the PSPO review held by NFDC. He asks that a Verderer attend in his place and request that NFDC look again at a PSPO aimed at the control of dogs in the Forest. He will circulate the date once NFDC have confirmed.

The Court again asked the Deputy Surveyor to look into the licencing of commercial dog walkers. The Court feels the current dog charter does not go far enough to manage the commercial walking of multiple dogs.

2025/14057 PEDESTRIAN GATE AT BOLTONS BENCH AND VOLUNTEERING DISCHARGE

The gate at Boltons Bench has been inspected and is in good working order, it is believed the donkeys were pushing their way out as people were going through the gate.

The Deputy Surveyor said the Parish Council have been provided with PSPO leaflets to hand out to people seen petting and feeding livestock. FE have carried out joint patrols with the police in the Lyndhurst area, signage has been checked and is in place at the entrance to Boltons Bench car park. He continued that the CDA and Young Commoners have asked permission to set up their display at Boltons Bench to engage and educate the public and ranger patrols in the area have been increased.

A letter will be sent to the Parish Council directing local residents to the current Forestry England Volunteer Schemes.

Action Asst
Clerk

2025/14058 CAMPING ADVISORY GROUP RESUME

The meeting will be held on the 22nd April.

The Official Verderer expressed his disappointment that CNF have claimed to not know what was expected of them after the meeting at the last Court. The Court made it very clear that to obtain consent for waste bin areas the Verderers require full details of the size and proposed location of all the bin stores.

CNF have gone ahead and placed large bins on the grazing in the campsites without Verderers Consent. The Deputy Surveyor said they are just adhering to new Defra Regulations. The Official Verderer said that as a competent operator they should have been prepared well in advance of the new waste regulations coming into force. He said they cannot pick and choose what legal regulations they follow and which they ignore. The bins are of a huge concern to livestock especially the food waste bins. The bins are without Verderer consent and are therefore illegal.

Mr Deakin expressed his concerns that commoners are having to police the campsites and have discovered several illegal activities carried out by CNF already this season including the laying of gravel, sewage works and now the bins. Miss Sevier asked how frequently

FE inspect the campsites. The Deputy Surveyor said FE carry out quarterly KPI reviews and annual inspections.

2025/14059 BRAMSHAW GOLF CLUB

DISCHARGE

Mrs Cook said she is waiting for a proposal from the clubs new managers. A meeting is being arranged between the golf club and a local commoner.

The Court asked for a site visit to be arranged after the proposal is received from the club.

UTILITY PROPOSALS FALLING OUTSIDE THE SCOPE OF THE DE-MINIMIS COMMITTEE

2025/14060 WESSEX INTERNET

RESUME

Mr Deakin said he has been contacted by Wessex Internet regarding the installation of broadband to Beaulieu Road. Wessex Internet are speaking to Alex Orttewell at Assetsphere. It was agreed that a site visit will be arranged when Alex confirms that the plans are at an acceptable stage.

DE-MINIMUS PROPOSALS

2025/14061 DE-MINIMIS-CONSENTS - UTILITY PROPOSALS AGREED BY THE DE-MINIMIS COMMITTEE

RESUME

Nothing to report this month.

EMERGENCY WORKS

2025/14062 EMERGENCY WORKS CARRIED OUT BY UTILITY COMPANIES

RESUME

Nothing to report this month.

SSSI RESTORATION WORKS

2025/14063 COOMY LAWN

RESUME

The proposed restoration works at Coomy Lawn were discussed. Mr Pasmore felt the restoration was unnecessary and said that only minimal erosion has occurred in his lifetime. Mr Gammon said he saw no problem with the filling of the erosion sites. Mr Stride agreed but said he had concerns that filling the ditch will make the area wetter than it needs to be and said grazing is already limited.

The Court could not approve the proposed works. Forestry England is asked to look at the site again.

Action DS

ENCROACHMENTS

2025/14064 FOREST COURT, BISTERNE CLOSE, BURLEY

DISCHARGE

An area of verge has been lost outside Forest Court as a result of the widening and tarmacking of the existing entrance. The contractor is claiming that when the grass was scraped back an existing tarmac layer was revealed and he has only recovered what was already there.

2025/14065 ELECTRIC FENCE ON FOREST AT BURLEY RESUME
 Mr Stride reported an electric fence that has been erected on the Forest near to the Moorhill House Hotel. Mrs Cook will ask the local Keeper to investigate. Action TC

2025/14066 FORESTRY ENGLAND ESTATES OFFICER DISCHARGE
 Mrs Cook said that the new Estates Officer, Helen Lynch, will be in post in the next two to three weeks.

ITEMS REQUIRING ACTION BY FORESTRY ENGLAND

2025/14067 ACTION LIST RESUME
 Nothing new has been added to the Action List.

ANY OTHER BUSINESS INVOLVING FORESTRY ENGLAND

2025/14068 FOOTBRIDGE AT MARTINS CORNER, BROCKENHURST DISCHARGE
 The Official Verderer said it is his understanding that Hampshire County Council have maintained this bridge for decades believing it to be theirs despite it being on FE land.

The Deputy Surveyor said the bridge has been inspected by an engineer and does not meet the current safety standards. He has written to HCC to try and find an amicable way forward, the bridge cannot remain as it is.

It was agreed that the Court's consent is not required for the removal of the footbridge and that the Court will be happy to consider any proposals put forward for its replacement.

2025/14069 BURLEY GOLF COURSE RESUME
 Mr Deakin said he had attended the site visit at Burley Golf Course and was disappointed that despite him mentioning it at the last Court no other Verderers had gone along.

He said the proposals will be made at the May Court.

2025/14070 NATIONAL GRID SITE VISIT AT TURF HILL RESUME
 Mr Deakin said a site visit was being held with National Grid on the 5th June to discuss the overhead power lines at Turf Hill and Hale Purlieu.

2025/14071 BURNING BAN RESUME
 Mr Chatters said he was concerned about the proposed Defra burning ban. He said Forestry England are world leaders in burning and are best placed to engage with Defra and explain the importance of burning for ecology, fire reduction reasons etc.

Action DS

Mr Manley suggested a joint letter be sent to Defra from FE, the Verderers and NFCD.

There being no other business involving Forestry England, the Deputy Surveyor and Land Agent left the meeting.

MATTERS ARISING FROM EARLIER IN THE MEETING

2025/14072 CNF REQUEST TO EXTEND THE OPENING OF HOLMSLEY CAMPSITE DISCHARGE

Mr Chatters said that a request from CNF had been received to extend the opening of Holmsley campsite from 31st October to the 3rd November. He believes that this may be a breach of the campsites planning consent.

The Holmsley drift is scheduled for Sunday 2nd November, the Court is therefore unwilling to agree to the request as it would adversely impact essential stock management.

Action Asst
Clerk

MATTERS ARISING

2025/14073 STURTMOOR POND DISCHARGE

Mr Chatters said Natural England have asked the National Trust to use herbicide to control the creeping water primrose without the need for fencing.

HIGHER LEVEL STEWARDSHIP SCHEME & THE VERDERERS' GRAZING SCHEME

2025/14074 HIGHER LEVEL STEWARDSHIP SCHEME RESUME

Oliver Cook of New Park Consultancy has written a letter to the Rural Payments Agency on behalf of the Verderers regarding the uplift to HLS payments.

The letter was circulated to the Court and will be sent by Mr Cook before the end of the week.

2025/14075 ROADSIDE DITCHING AT MATLEY AND LONGCROSS DISCHARGE

Mr Deakin will circulate the agreed ditching specification. It was discussed that the deeper ditching works already carried will not be rectified.

REPORTS FROM EXTERNAL COMMITTEES AND WORKING GROUPS

2025/14076 WHITE TAILED EAGLE STEERING GROUP DISCHARGE

Mr Gammon reported from the recent meeting where the subject of eagles taking livestock. In parts of Scotland there is clearly a problem with lambs being taken in early spring. This appears to be due to a lack of alternative food at that time of year.

In this part of the world, we do not appear to have the same problem as alternative sources of food are available. There is no evidence of any predation by eagles on livestock or domestic pets.

Eagles will take carrion including livestock carrion, but there is no evidence that they have killed any livestock

FINANCIAL MATTERS

2025/14077 FINANCIAL MATTERS INCLUDING THE FINANCIAL STATEMENT RESUME

The Financial Statement was noted.

HEALTH AND SAFETY

2025/14078 HEALTH AND SAFETY RESUME

The Court discussed a Health and Safety matter arising from the Staff Liaison Committee.

STAFF MATTERS

2025/14079 STAFF LIAISON COMMITTEE MINUTES DISCHARGE

The minutes were noted.

2025/14080 NEW TECHNOLOGY FOR THE AGISTER TEAM DISCHARGE

The Official Verderer, Mr Deakin and the Head Agister will meet to discuss the next steps for the electronic submission of the Agisters paperwork.

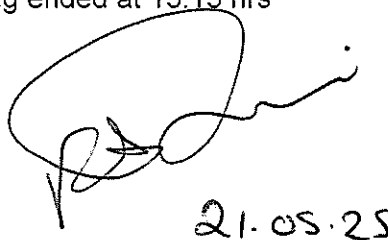
Action Asst
Clerk

2025/14081 SHARED DIARIES DISCHARGE

The Head Agister will be asked to share details of Agister leave days and holidays with the Assistant Clerk who will update the office shared diary.

Action RD

There being no further business, the meeting ended at 13:15 hrs



21.05.25