

**Minutes of the Court of Verderers held on Wednesday 18th June 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	Clerk to the Verderers
	Mr J Gerrelli	Head Agister
APOLOGIES	None	

IN COMMITTEE in the Library

2025/14130	MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING	RESUME
	The minutes of the last Court, held on Wednesday 21 st May 2025 were approved, and signed by the Official Verderer.	
2025/14131	NEW DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST	RESUME
	There were no new declarations of interest.	
2025/14132	CONDITION OF STOCK	RESUME
	The Head Agister said that the rain we have had since the last meeting has helped but we still need more. The grass is growing on the Forest and the majority of ponies are looking well.	
2025/14133	STALLIONS	RESUME
	The Head Agister said the stallion owners are starting to remove their stallions from the Forest this week.	
	Fidleywood Falconer had to be removed early due to being injured in a fight with another stallion. Knavesash Duty had to be removed from the Forest after he sustained a nasty bite wound on his nose. It is not known if it is a dog bite or if he was injured in a fight with another stallion.	
	The Official Verderer said he had had noticed lots of stray groups of mares, and he wondered if the stallions had not done as good a job as normal collecting a group of mares. Mr Stride said it was natural behaviour for mares to cluster at this time of year. Mr Deakin said there may have been a gelding in the group stopping the mares from joining the stallion.	
2025/14134	BOVINE TB	RESUME
	No new cases or updates to report this month.	

A meeting is scheduled with APHA next month to discuss and update the Verderers TB Plan for the New Forest.

It is hoped that a cow that escaped from a field in Bramshaw has now been TB tested. The Head Agister will speak to the commoner involved. Mr Deakin was asked to draft a letter with the Clerk if the animal has not been tested.

Action
RD/Clerk

2025/14135 SHEEP SCAB DISCHARGE

The Head Agister said the commoner's vet has confirmed that the sheep had sheep scab. They have been treated, and the commoner is following Natural England's advice to keep the sheep on the holding for 14 days following dipping.

2025/14136 UNBRANDED GELDING DISCHARGE

The Head Agister reported that an unbranded gelding has been caught at Bratley. The pony is microchipped and investigations into identifying the owner are ongoing.

2025/14137 MARKING FEES RECEIVED TO DATE AND COMPARISON WITH PREVIOUS YEAR RESUME

	<u>2025</u>	<u>2024</u>
Forest Ponies	4740	4640
Forest Cattle	1470	1447
Forest Donkeys	99	99
Forest Pigs	0	0
Forest Sheep	0	0
Total Forest Stock	6309	6186
Common Ponies	536	466
Common Cattle	238	363
Common Donkeys	97	36
Common Pigs	14	11
Common Sheep	6	91
Total Common Stock	891	967
Ponies, Cattle & Donkeys on the Forest	6309	6186
Ponies, Cattle & Donkeys on the Commons	871	865
Total Ponies, Cattle & Donkeys	7180	7051
Total Stock – Forest & Commons	7200	7153

The Head Agister left the meeting

2025/14138 BREACHES OF THE BYELAWS RESUME

There are no new byelaw breaches.

OPEN COURT

IN ATTENDANCE: Mrs Tessa Cook, Land Agent
Mr Fergus Robertson-McIsaac, Assistant Land Agent

The Head Agister opened the Court with the usual proclamation.

ANNOUNCEMENTS & DECISIONS

2025/14139 NATIONAL TRUST CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE VERDERERS' GRAZING SCHEME

During the last 14 years of the Verderers Higer Level Stewardship Scheme the National Trust and other adjacent Commons owners have made ongoing contributions towards the Verderers' Grazing Scheme for those Commoners paying Commons rate marking fee. For the last two years the National Trust has sourced their contribution from their reserves and not from any active Agri-Environment funding. They are however currently not in a position to continue that funding for the 2025 VGS year.

They are conscious that the VGS does continue to serve as a support for those who are able to continue grazing the Commons and they are keen to support the VGS in the future when funding allows and are actively working with Natural England to enter a new scheme.

2025/14140 FOOD WASTE BINS

The Court shares the CDA's concern regarding the advice being issued by New Forest District Council, that residents place their food waste bins outside of their properties on the day of their scheduled collection. This is a change from the previous advice, that properties within the grazed perambulation should place their refuse behind their gates, for collection.

I met with the Leader and Chief Executive of the Council on the 5th June and raised the concerns of the Court regarding this change in advice, and the risk that this presents to depastured livestock, particularly pigs. A formal response from the Council in respect of the concerns raised by the CDA, and questions as to the legality of bins being placed on the Forest, is awaited from the Council.

2025/14141 ANIMAL ACCIDENTS

I was pleased, along with Gilly Jones, Chair of the Animal Accident Reduction Group, to meet with Donna Jones, the Police and Crime Commissioner and Sam de Reya, Acting Chief Constable, last week. We had a positive discussion regarding the existing multi-agency measures seeking to reduce animal casualties, such as Op Mountie.

I am pleased that the Police and Crime Commissioner agreed to continue discussions regarding possible additional measures to seek to reduce speeding on unfenced Forest roads, including Average Speed Cameras. It was recognised that there are significant barriers, both legal and technical, that would need to be overcome in order to trial Average Speed Cameras within the Forest, but I am grateful for the Police and Crime Commissioner's willingness to work collaboratively to see if these can be addressed.

THE ANIMAL ACCIDENT REPORT

2025/14142 THE ANIMAL ACCIDENT REPORT FOR MAY 2025

The Agisters attended 3 accidents in May, compared with 5 in May last year.

Two sheep were injured in the same accident, unfortunately one of them had to be humanely destroyed by the Agister.

A pony was injured and had to be destroyed and a cow reportedly involved in an accident could not be found.

All the accidents happened in daylight. 1 driver failed to report having been involved in a collision.

The total number of commoners' animals killed and injured this year is 16 compared with 8 in the same period last year.

PRESENTMENTS BY THE PUBLIC

2025/14143 FUTURE AGRI-ENVIRONMENTAL SCHEME

Presentment by Andrew Parry-Norton Chair of the Forest Farming Group and the Commoners Defence Association

"Our Forest, like any other National Park, needs funding to maintain it. The infrastructure of tracks, fences and car parks, the ranger service to name a few responsibilities, all need funding. The vital job that the Commoners stock do by grazing the Forest needs a secure viable future.

The Forest Farming Group made up of several organizations, has the mission of getting the Forest into an agri-environmental scheme; this is not an easy task with a Government that is reducing spending at every opportunity and with little regard to the rural or agricultural sector.

The PA2 Study commissioned by the FFG, at the request of DEFRA, has now been concluded. This report highlights the important work that the Forest requires to maintain it for the future but due to a lack of information at the time, was unable to suggest a suitable Forest wide scheme.

It now looks likely that the Landscape recovery option with maybe a few adjustments would be our best option that is now becoming the focus of our efforts. The first stage on how to enter into this scheme will require submitting a bid, this window is short, possibly only 9 weeks, so we have to be ready. DEFRA has now had their budgets set for this year so I would assume an announcement will be made soon when the window will open.

If we get into this scheme, we will be the largest in the whole of the UK but this requires a huge amount of work. We will have problems and issues that will require careful handling and often compromises made but the end results will be rewarding for the Forest.

To achieve this goal all Forest organizations and stakeholders need closer cooperation, a meeting is set in July with as many landowners as possible attending to discuss their requirements, Commoning being an important part of these talks.

Time is running out, the HLS is finishing in 2028 and we need a replacement urgently, we cannot afford the luxury of time. We have a responsibility to keep up the momentum.

The Verderers have a crucial role in the Forest and will continue to do so into the future. I therefore ask that they continue to prioritize this as important work, take a joint leading role and use their influence to bring together all Forest stakeholders. Only together can we steer the Forest to long, sustainable, environmentally rich future that delivers the requirements of everything and everyone.

Thank you."

2025/14144 DEADWOOD AND FALLEN TIMBER IN THE ANCIENT WOODS
Presentment by Lucie Rowe Practicing Commoner

"Good morning Official Verderer, Verderers and all attending court here today.

My name is Lucie Rowe, and I am a commoner with land in the Linford area. My family have been in Linwood and Linford for at least four generations, maybe five, so I do draw on some 300 years of handed down knowledge of the Forest, which I hope gives me some credence to bring my presentment to court today. My previous presentment to Verderers Court back in 2021 regarding the need for dogs to be on leads in the New Forest was disregarded and things on that score have only got worse as far as I can see! I do hope that someone will acknowledge what I have to say today?

I would like to start by thanking Forestry England for continuing with the burning program, which I believe was a success this spring. I think this is one of the most vital aspects of the Forest's management and I don't think many people understand just how important it is to manage the scrub gorse on the Forest in this way. The controlled burning makes valuable fire breaks and creates a regeneration platform. The current trend for Re-Wilding all sounds idyllic but in practice unmanaged land becomes unusable land and as a commoner we need land for our livestock to graze on. So, thank you Forestry England – but that brings me to my presentment today where I want to question Forestry England's policies of leaving all the deadwood and fallen timber in the ancient woods.

I walk nearly every day in The Forest, I know Pinnock Wood, Ridley Wood, and Redshoot Wood almost like the back of my hand having ridden and walked them for over 50 years. I believe the decision to leave timber where it falls started back in the 1970s as a practice to save the 'bugs and bees'. At that time, we commoners didn't understand the reasoning, but I think we have come a long way since then and we do now understand the importance of the very special ecology and habitats of the Forest and that it does require some dead wood to be left, HOWEVER, I think it has now become more of a cost cutting measure to not clear up or remove any of the fallen timber. Surely there is commercial gain that could be made from the sale of the timber? I gather the current price of oak is through the roof so maybe the money made by selling some timber would help pay to repair bridges or even negate the need for car parking charges? After all, we all know that putting charges on the car parks will lead to cars being left in totally inappropriate places making Commoning activities even harder!

The current practice that Forestry England seemingly removes nothing at all from the ancient woods leaving what has effectively become large bonfires on the forest floor is in my opinion absolutely disastrous. The rides are no longer cleared, so colt hunting after wild forest ponies is impossible without the risk of staking the horse or rider on some spiney oak. This risks the commoner ending up in hospital, off work or a hefty vets bill or worse still putting your horse out of action altogether - meaning there will be one less rider on the next drift! Good colt hunters do not grow on trees and are difficult and costly to replace.

I think we all understand that climate change is happening. The extreme weather that we now experience means that at times we have stronger winds and higher temperatures than ever before. This spring gave us a particularly dry season and by early May I was walking in trainers where ordinarily I should have needed my wellies. Some of the brooks and streams had already dried up and the ground was parched and cracking like it was August. The leaves on the Forest floor crunched underfoot and the fern hadn't started to grow and last year's bracken was tinder dry. All very much a fire hazard.

Now, I have walked on Rockford Common to check my stock in recent summers and by 8.30 in the morning the heat was so strong out in the open that my dog and I had to duck into the woods to get out of the heat. That was at 8.30 in the morning! I believe that there could be spontaneous combustion on some of our heaths and once fire has spread into the woods, once that has got a lick on these bonfires of dead and dry timber the situation would be a nightmare.

I understand that those devastating fires that blazed in Hollywood were hard to get under control because of the natural debris that the homeowners there no longer cleared from around their properties. Now I know Hollywood is not exactly local, but my point is that they never thought it would happen to them, and we need to take heed of their misfortune. I believe that the debris we have here now in our woods would cause such heat if it were to catch light, that they would really struggle to get a handle on it to put it out. It might last for days, cover acres and the fire brigade who were tasked to put it out would find their lives at risk. It only takes a strong wind in the wrong direction to cause a very difficult situation. Think Picket Post Filling Stations!!

So, I ask that the Verderers put pressure on FE to review and amend their fallen timber policies, to clear decent tracks and ensure that there are adequate fire breaks. I know the FE is strapped for cash, I know that is one of the reasons that they don't clear the main rides and why they don't clear up some of the timber, but surely the cost of a devastating fire is a price that none of us want to pay? I also ask that the Verderers check with Forestry England what measures they have in place if and when this kind of fire happens, because I can see disaster looming with forest livestock being at best dispersed due to fires, and at worst being injured or dying. The devastation to wildlife would also be immense. No bugs and bees would be saved then!

In the event of such a fire I am sure that everyone will wring their hands and say "oh my goodness this is tragic", and I can assure you that, if I am still around to see it, although I will take no pleasure from doing so, I will stand up and say I told you so!

Thank you for listening to me today."

The Head Agister closed the Court

IN COMMITTEE (in the Library)

CONSIDERATION OF PRESENTMENTS

2025/14145 FUTURE AGRI-ENVIRONMENTAL SCHEME

RESUME

The Court welcomed Mr Parry-Nortons presentment and re-affirmed its commitment in working with the CDA, landowners and senior officials to push for a suitable agri-environmental scheme for the New Forest.

Mr Chatters said he has drafted a response to Hampshire County Council's Local Nature Recovery Strategy with Miss Sevier & Mr Gammon. The Official Verderer asked he work with the Clerk to circulate an official response to all Verderers for approval. The consultation ends on the 23rd June.

Acton
CC/Clerk

2025/14146 DEADWOOD AND FALLEN TIMBER IN THE ANCIENT WOODS RESUME

Mr Pasmore said he agreed with Mrs Rowe that there is an awful amount of deadwood littering the Ancient and Ornamental Woodlands, but he believes the fire risk is lower than Mrs Rowe perceives.

Mr Deakin said there is a deadwood policy in place which states that the rides need to be kept clear of fallen timber for the drifts. He is surprised that the cleared wood is left behind and not harvested for sale. Mr Stride said Forestry England are clearing deadwood but have limited resources.

The Official Verderer asked the Clerk to circulate the Deadwood Policy to all Verderers. Action Clerk

NEW SUBMISSIONS BY FORESTRY ENGLAND

2025/14147 PRIVATE WATER PIPE REQUEST THE COACH HOUSE KINGS DISCHARGE
COPSE ROAD

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

2025/14148 CAMPING NEW FOREST BIN SOLUTIONS FOR CAMPSITES RESUME

The Court approved the proposed mobile bin covers for a period of five years. CNF are asked to provide plans of all campsites showing the number of food waste bins and where they will be located before the roll out is approved by the Court.

The Court requests that where possible bins are sited on existing hardstanding. No permission is given for new bin compound areas to be created. Any bins on the grazing must be moved at least every 21 days.

The Court thanks Camping New Forest for finding a Forest Friendly solution to the problem of food waste bins in areas open to Commoners Livestock.

MATTERS ARISING FROM PREVIOUS COURTS OF CONCERN TO FORESTRY ENGLAND

2025/14149 CAMPING ADVISORY GROUP RESUME

The "Wild Camping" slogan is still on the Denny Campsite page of the Camping New Forest website. Mrs Cook will chase its removal. Action TC

Mr Chatters said the next meeting is on the 12th August, he will ensure that stock interactions, bins and slogans are discussed. He asked the Court to provide him with any comments or points to raise before the 1st August.

2025/14150 WESSEX INTERNET

RESUME

Alex Ortewell of Assestsphere circulated the plans for Beaulieu Road on Friday. Some Members of the Court were unable to download the documents.

The Court would like to see the working methods Wessex Internet are proposing to use on the different terrain on the proposed route. Mr Pasmore asked for clarification of the large plough they are planning to use on some sections and raised concern about the stated open trench at Fernycroft.

Mr Chatters said Wessex Internet are currently undertaking Habitats Regulations Assessments with Natural England.

2025/14151 BURLEY GOLF COURSE

DISCHARGE

The proposals have not been received.

2025/14152 VERDERERS HALL FIRE SAFETY/CAPACITY

RESUME

Mr Deakin re-affirmed the Courts willingness to assist Forestry England as required. The matter will be resumed at the next Court.

DE-MINIMUS PROPOSALS

2025/14153 DE-MINIMIS-CONSENTS - UTILITY PROPOSALS AGREED BY THE DE-MINIMIS COMMITTEE

RESUME

Nothing to report this month.

EMERGENCY WORKS CARRIED OUT BY UTILITY COMPANIES

2025/14154 EMERGENCY WORKS CARRIED OUT BY UTILITY COMPANIES

RESUME

EM0007 May 25 Southern Water significant leak on a 3" water main outside the Pig Hotel, Brockenhurst

SSSI RESTORATION WORKS

2025/14155 SSSI REPAIR AND MAINTENANCE LIST

RESUME

Mr Stride asked if the Court had agreed to the removal of the grass rides in Sluffers Inclosure. He will raise with Forestry England at the next OFAC meeting.

Mr Chatters declared an interest as he is currently surveying Sluffers for Footprint Ecology.

ENCROACHMENTS ON FORESTRY ENGLAND LAND INCLUDING THE ENCROACHMENTS LIST

2025/14156 ENCROACHMENTS LIST

DISCHARGE

Nothing to report this month.

ITEMS REQUIRING ACTION BY FORESTRY ENGLAND

2025/14157 ACTION LIST RESUME

Nothing new has been added to the Action List.

ANY OTHER BUSINESS INVOLVING FORESTRY ENGLAND

2025/14158 TREE ACROSS THE TRACK AT PITTS WOOD RESUME

Miss Sevier reported a small fallen tree across the gravel track in Pitts Wood just before the turning to Ashley Fields.

Action TC

2025/14159 NEW PICNIC BENCHES AT KNIGHTWOOD OAK RESUME

Mr Chatters said he has seen newly installed picnic benches at Knightwood Oak but that he cannot remember the Court giving consent for them.

The Official Verderer asked Mrs Cook to find out when the Court gave their approval for the installation.

Action TC

2025/14160 PANNAGE RESUME

Mr Deakin said that the Deputy Surveyor will be making his presentment regarding Pannage at the next Court. He said the Staff Liaison Committee will make a recommendation on dates when they meet on the 7th July and he will communicate their suggestions with the Deputy Surveyor.

Action RD

2025/14161 TREE BARKING BY PONIES RESUME

Mr Deakin said that although the behaviour has now stopped, the Staff Liaison Committee need guidance from Forestry England and the Court as to how the ponies identified as tree barking should be managed. He said if it is decided that the ponies should be removed from the Forest the drifts would be the ideal time to do this but that the owners of the animals concerned must be informed beforehand.

Mr Deakin said tree barking is a learned behaviour that starts in inclosures where the ponies shouldn't have access. This time it started in South Oakley Inclosure where the fences and gates are in very poor condition and the ponies can walk in and out as they please. If Forestry England maintained their fencing effectively the problem would be eliminated.

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

OTHER AGENDA ITEMS

2025/14162 LOCAL GOVERNMENT REORGANISATION RESUME

The Official Verderer updated the Court following his meeting with NFDC regarding the re-organisation of local government and the potential effect on Commoning.

HIGHER LEVEL STEWARDSHIP SCHEME & THE VERDERERS' GRAZING SCHEME

2025/14163 VERDERERS GRAZING SCHEME PAYMENT FOR NON- DISCHARGE
REGISTERED NEW FOREST PONIES

Mr Deakin said the Court has received another letter from the commoning family and that he feels he may have misrepresented their case at the last Court. Their ponies are part bred ponies so are registered with the NFPB&CS and are therefore different to non-registered ponies.

The Court again discussed the current VGS rules regarding non-payment, and by a majority vote decided to leave it unchanged.

The matter is discharged to the VGS Committee who will communicate with the family.

Action OV

REPORTS FROM EXTERNAL COMMITTEES AND WORKING GROUPS

2025/14164 HAMPSHIRE HIGHWAYS NEW FOREST GRIP 3 MEETING DISCHARGE

Miss Sevier updated the Court following her recent meeting with Hampshire County Council.

2025/14165 ACCESS FORUM DISCHARGE

Miss Sevier updated the Court following the Access Forum Meeting. The topic of dog waste bins on the Forest was raised again. Mr Manley asked Miss Sevier to share her response with him.

2025/14166 TURF HILL NATIONAL GRID PYLON REFURBISHMENT RESUME

Miss Tilbury and Mr Deakin updated the Court following the site visit they attended with The National Grid at Plaitford Common and Turf Hill.

FINANCIAL MATTERS

2025/14167 FINANCIAL MATTERS INCLUDING THE FINANCIAL STATEMENT RESUME

The Financial Statement was noted.

HEALTH AND SAFETY

2025/14168 POLICY ON ANIMAL AGGRESSION RESUME

Mr Deakin said the Staff Liaison Committee had discussed animal aggression and feel that the Agisters would benefit from there being a formal policy in place and their having a tool to use to decide if an animal can be turned out or not.

Mr Stride said he has a copy of a risk assessment used by commoners in Dartmoor to assess cattle aggression. He will circulate it with the Court.

Action RS

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

2025/14169 ANIMAL RESCUES INVOLVING HAMPSHIRE FIRE & RESCUE SERVICE RESUME

Mr Stride said on Monday night he was flagged down by a rider on the Bolderwood Road, whose horse had become seriously stuck in a bog. The rider had already contacted the fire service and a crew from Southampton attended. The fire crew had to wait for their animal expert to attend from Winchester who when on-scene quickly disregarded the advice given. Mr Stride asked if this was a Forest pony and not a riding horse would the Agister on scene take the lead.

The Court agreed that a meeting with the Hampshire Fire Service to discuss protocol would be beneficial.

Action
RS/Clerk

2025/14170 UNAUTHORISED WORKS ON THE SSSI AT IBSLEY RESUME

Mr Deakin said that Miss Sevier had found an unauthorised water pipe installation on a privately owned grass verge opposite the Ibsley Service Station. It was originally a neat job but there is now a hole surrounded by red plastic barriers. The site is very close to where the small fleabane is found. The Clerk was asked to report the works to Natural England.


Action Clerk

STAFF MATTERS

2025/14171 STAFF LIAISON COMMITTEE MINUTES RESUME

The minutes were noted.

There being no further business, the meeting ended at 13:05 hrs



18th July 2025