

15th January 2010

Dean Forest to wit

At a Special Court of Attachment
of our Sovereign Lady the Queen at
The Speech House on the fifteenth
day of January in the Fifty Eighth year
of the reign of our Lady Queen Elizabeth
the Second by the Grace of God , etc in
the year of our Lord Two Thousand and Ten

Before

A.M.R. Watts Esq., O.B.E., J.P,
R.W. Jenkins Esq., J.P.
Ray Wright, Esq.
M.V. Bent, Esq.

R. Guest Esq., B.Sc. (For), M.For.Sc.,
M.N.Z.I.F., Deputy Surveyor, Forestry
Commission
R.W. Davies Esq., F.R.I.C.S., Land Agent,
Forestry Commission
Miss P.J. Duggleby, M.R.I.C.S. Assistant Land
Agent, Forestry Commission

K. P. Griffin B.A. Solicitor, Steward

Prior to the commencement of the Court, the Senior Verderer welcomed the High Sheriff, Mrs Anne Chambers, and her husband Johnny and thanked them for gracing the Court with their presence. He also welcomed the new Verderer, Mr Maurice Bent to his first Court.

APOLOGIES

None.

MINUTES

The Minutes of the Court held on the 23rd October 2009 were approved and signed.

MATTERS ARISING

(1) Forestry Commission Estate

The Deputy Surveyor reported that the consultation process had now been completed and that there had been some 2,200 submissions. Publication of the results will follow in due course.

(2) Election of a new Verderer

The Court discussed the procedure and agreed that the eligibility question needs to be resolved. Former Senior Master Robert Turner had offered his assistance and had suggested the use of a map. It was agreed this was a good idea and the Steward was directed to draft a new and complete procedure for future elections. The Senior Verderer thanked the Deputy Surveyor and his staff, as well as the Steward for their efforts in connection with the election.

MINERALS

Mr Davies reported that the planners are visiting Stowfield Quarry in connection with the application for the proposed extension to the quarry.

COMMONING

The Deputy Surveyor commented that few complaints had been made about sheep since the last Court, mainly involving the animals in Bream. He added that the Commission is working with the District Council and Trading Standards on addressing the problem.

He further reported that the Sheep Liaison Group had been viewing areas of Forest Waste as directed in the Court Order, and a proposed grazing scheme at Moseley Green is being progressed.

Mr Jenkins added that the Commoner Association is viewing the proposed appointment of a shepherd or agister far more positively, although progress is slow.

DEER

The Deputy Surveyor advised that there had been two sightings of muntjac in the east of the Statutory Forest. Mr Wright commented that he had also seen a muntjac recently.

The Court also heard that about three-quarters of the deer management plan for the year had been completed.

The Court was also advised that 30 deer had been killed in RTAs in the current financial year.

BOAR AND FERAL PIGS

The Deputy Surveyor commented that the management plan for the animals had been published on the Verderers' website. He added that there had been a great deal of media attention regarding boar breaking into rubbish bins and so forth, and the Commission is concentrating on dealing with management of the animals where there are problems, such as in the communities.

The Deputy Surveyor warned the Court that boar numbers are not known, but there is potential for a population explosion as the animals have large litters. He added that there is a wide range of public views regarding the existence of the boar: some want the population eradicated; others want the animals to be left alone. There is some opposition to management of the population, with damage to high seats and threats to Rangers.

COALFIELD REGENERATION FUNDS

Mr Davies reported that the publication of the Area Action Plan is expected in September. He reminded the Court that some 14 million pounds has been earmarked for the scheme.

DEPUTY SURVEYOR'S REPORT

(1) Public Forest Estate

There is a Treasury initiative to investigate the possible commercialisation of State owned assets, such as the potential sale of the Ordnance Survey.

The Forestry Commission is unique as it involves the private sector and generates income, but two or three areas are to be investigated, such as the establishment of wind power on the Forest Estate and the commercialisation of recreational activities.

Mr Wright asked if this could lead to the sale of woodlands. The Deputy Surveyor replied that the Commission has been selling land, but not in the Forest of Dean.

(2) Phytophthora Ramorum

There is a new and potentially significant threat from the spread of the disease into larch in South West England. Checks are to be carried out in the Spring on the Forest's plantations.

Mr Bent enquired about the reddish brown growth on the trunks of oak trees and was advised this is a harmless lichen.

(3) Verderers Website

The Court heard there had been a significant increase in visits to the site in the last quarter of 2009, being the period leading up to the Verderer's Election, and showing it to be an important source of information in this regard.

(4) Deputy Surveyor

The Court heard that the next Court will be the Deputy Surveyor's last, as he will retire in June after 12 years service in the Dean. The Members of the Court were sad to hear this news, but thanked him for his considerable help and assistance to the Verderers throughout his period in office.

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Speech House

The Verderers were concerned that news that the lease was up for sale had surfaced soon after the last Court, but they had not been notified of the situation. Mr Davies commented that he too had been unaware of this at the time, but was advised of the proposed sale shortly after the Court in October.

Newent Rotary Club

The Court authorised the Steward to make a presentation to the Club regarding the office and duties of a Verderer.

Cannop

The Assistant Land Agent advised the Court that allocated funds of approximately a half million pounds will be used to improve the car parking and amenities at the Pedalabikeaway site and the construction of a bridge from the centre to the cycle route

New Verderer

Mr Bent donated signed copies of one of his books to all present at Court and said it was a great honour to be sitting as a Verderer. He reported that the Pan Tod Memorial had been repaired following the vandalism.

The High Sheriff’s husband presented Verderer’s ties to Mr Bent.

DATES OF NEXT TWO COURT SITTINGS

The date for the next Court will be Friday the 16th April 2010. The following Court date will be the 9th July 2010.

The High Sheriff thanked the Verderers for inviting her and her husband to the Court. She added that she had learned a great deal about the Forest as a result of her visit and the Election of the new Verderer and that she hoped to return to the area to visit the important sites later in the year.

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} Verderers
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Deputy Surveyor
Forestry Commission

Steward

Steward