

5th July 2013

Dean Forest to wit

At a Special Court of Attachment
of our Sovereign Lady the Queen at
The Speech House on the fifth
day of July in the Sixty First 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
Thirteen

Before

R.W. Jenkins Esq., J.P.
Ray Wright, Esq.
M.V. Bent Esq.
I. J. Standing Esq., BDS, M.A. MUSMS Dip.

K.G.Stannard Esq., Deputy Surveyor
Forestry Commission
Penny Simpson (Mrs) M.R.I.C.S.,
Area Land Agent, Forestry Commission

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

Prior to the commencement of the Court, the Senior Verderer welcomed Dame Janet Trotter, the Lord Lieutenant of Gloucestershire and The Honourable Hugh Tollemache, the County's High Sheriff and his wife, and thanked them for attending the Court.

APOLOGIES

None

MINUTES

The Minutes of the Court held on the 19th April 2013 were approved and signed.

MATTERS ARISING

David Heath

The Court heard that the Deputy Surveyor was continuing with his efforts to ensure the Minister's postponed visit would take place in the near future. .

Relationship with the general public

The Steward's article had been published in the Forester. He advised he had heard nothing from the Review.

Brian Mahoney

The Deputy Surveyor advised that he would make the necessary arrangements for the tree dedication ceremony at the next Court.

MINERALS

Mrs Simpson advised the Court that the the owners of the Birch Hill Quarry are retiring and the quarry will be in new ownership, with an assignment of the existing lease expected in the next few months.

The Court also heard that Bredon Aggregates had taken over Clearwell. It is hoped the Commission will soon receive income from the extraction of minerals by the new owner, although the land owned by the Commission is outside the Statutory Forest.

The new local mines inspector had met with the Deputy Gaveler, Dan Howell, to discuss the way in which mines operated under the Dean Forest Mines Act. He had visited working mines and his interest had proved to be very useful for both ongoing and future operations.

The Court also heard that the Gloucestershire County Council had surrendered two Gales and these would be offered for sale.

Finally, the owner of the Cannop Drift gale had carried out extensive repairs , including the formation of a new opening. A good coal stock is anticipated from this mine.

COMMONING

The Deputy Surveyor advised that all sheep had been removed and treated for sheep scab, although concern had been expressed about the standard of treatment by some members of the Commoners Association.

There was also the issue of back land and the Association have taken action against one member who did not have an adequate alternative.

The Court also heard that Mr Holder from the Commoners Association had requested revision of the existing Agreement to ensure responsible commoning, including specific sheep runs and enforceable penalties.

At the last SLG Meeting, the proposals for a new agreement had been accepted and will now be progressed.

The Senior Verderer offered the Court as an arbitration forum for any dispute between the parties to the SLG should that be required to support the new agreement..

The Deputy Surveyor reported a high number of complaints regarding sheep, especially in Bream and the Pludds areas, where there are issues of smell and faeces. He added there is also a growing problem in Yorkley.

DEER

The Deputy Surveyor had nothing to report on this issue, save that a cull target will have to be established in due course.

BOAR AND FERAL PIGS

The Deputy Surveyor advised he had met with two researchers, formerly employed by FERA (Food and Environment Research Agency), but now with the Animal Health Laboratory. They had been working in the Dean since 2008 and had found the boar population had expanded far outside the Forest. As a result, an accurate boar count is nigh impossible, but all the trends indicate a year on year increase in numbers.

The Deputy Surveyor advised that the Commission recommend an annual cull that is “reasonable” and keeps the population at a target number of 400. The High Sheriff commented that he was aware of studies in Texas showing a major problem as the sows have 3 litters averaging 10 piglets every two years.

The Deputy Surveyor added that all parties agree a cull is required, including the UK Wild Boar Trust and Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust, due to the damage to the environment and other species of wildlife.

Following a general discussion, the Verderers confirmed the target population should be no more than 400 and the population should be controlled to achieve this level.

CINDERFORD REGENERATION

Mrs Simpson advised that a biodiversity strategy is in course of preparation, but there has been little progress on other matters since the last Court.

An agent is to be instructed shortly to deal with land exchange arrangements. Mr Wright enquired about the Linear Park and Mrs Simpson commented there was no firm deal in place.

The Deputy Surveyor repeated that there must be no net loss of public open space within the Statutory Forest, and no net less of land available for common sheep grazing. The Council had identified 30 – 40 hectares of available land to compensate for the 8.4 hectares to be developed, but the Linear Park is already public open space and is not to be taken into account in the land exchange, although the Commission is content to take on board and manage in addition to the compensatory land.

The Senior Verderer commented that he was not happy with the College move as the Five Acres site had been deforested for the construction of the College. This was now considered defunct and another piece of Forest is being used for a new College on land he considered wholly unsuitable.

DEPUTY SURVEYOR'S REPORT

Heritage Lottery Fund

The bid had been completed and submitted by the end of May. The Heritage Lottery Fund is to send two representatives to the Forest in August on a fact finding mission, with a decision by the 22nd October. Almost £3 million pounds is being sought towards the estimated £6 million cost. He explained the plans for expenditure, including the management of open spaces, as well as a history of the Forest – “The Forest Narrative” - and training and education.

Mr Bent thanked the Deputy Surveyor for his considerable efforts to enable the bid to be made and the Verderers endorsed this expression of gratitude.

Forestry Commission

The Deputy Surveyor mentioned progress on the development of a successor body to the Forestry Commission. This would involve a new public forest management organisation to replace Forest Enterprise England

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Ian Gambles

The Senior Verderer commented that he had received a letter of thanks from Ian Gambles, following his attendance at the last Court.

Verderers Court

It was agreed the costs of the Court and associated issues referred to in the memorandum from the Deputy Surveyor would be discussed at the next Court.

DATES OF NEXT TWO COURT SITTINGS

The date for the next two Courts will be Friday the 11th October 2013 and the 17th January 2014.

Dame Janet thanked the Verderers for inviting her to the Court. She commented that she loves the Forest and the vigilance of the Court is a very important factor in keeping it safe for the present and future generations.

The High Sheriff added his thanks and commented that he was very proud of the association of the two ancient offices of the High Sheriff and the Verderers. He wished good fortune on the Heritage Lottery Fund bid.

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Verderers

Deputy Surveyor
Forestry Commission

Steward