

25th April 2014

Dean Forest to wit

At a Special Court of Attachment
of our Sovereign Lady the Queen at
The Speech House on the Twenty Fifth day
of April in the Sixty Second 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
Fourteen

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 Peter Hands, the Speech House Lessee. Mr Hands advised the Court that the visit of His Royal Highness, Prince Edward Earl of Wessex and his wife, Countess Sophie had gone very well. The couple had received a very enthusiastic welcome on the 24th April and had enjoyed their visit to the Forest.

The Senior Verderer commented that he had presented the Earl with a copy of Cyril Hart's book "The Verderers and the Forest Laws of Dean" (2005 Edition).

APOLOGIES

None

MINUTES

The Minutes of the Court held on the 14th January 2014 were approved and signed.

MATTERS ARISING

Baroness Royall

The Steward had previously advised of the apology received from the Office of the Baroness due to her inability to attend the Court. He was directed to invite her to attend the Court in October.

High Sheriff of Gloucestershire

The Steward was directed to invite the High Sheriff and his wife to attend the Court in July.

Chairman of Gloucestershire County Council

The Steward was directed to invite the Chairman to attend the Court in October.

Deputy Gaveler

The Court heard he will attend the next Court.

MINERALS

Mrs Simpson advised the Court that the proposed agreement to permit Bredon Aggregates to work minerals at Clearwell Quarry is in the process of being concluded by the lawyers.

The Court also heard that the planned aerial survey of the Forest had been postponed due to adverse weather conditions

The Deputy Gaveler, Dan Howell, had been holding meetings to provide advise of changes to the Mines and Quarries Act 1954 as the amendments benefit small mines and is good news for the Forest miners.

The Court also heard that Forest of Dean Stone is investigating the possibility of underground quarrying to gain access to the blue stone strata.

The Coal Authority will be capping a shaft at Cannop to enable work to be completed to extend the car parking facilities.

The Deputy Gaveler has provided information to the County Council for the purpose of preparing its minerals safeguarding plan.

There has been one new freeminer appointed since the date of the last Court.

COMMONING

The Deputy Surveyor advised the 'Agreement for Responsible Shepherding' had been completed with the Commoners Association. He explained that Ceri Evans (Chair of the Sheep Liaison Group) and Mick Holder had met and finalised matters. The new Agreement provides proper guidelines for responsible shepherding and terms of reference for the SLG.

The Deputy Surveyor also commented that about 25 sheep carcasses had been in the Forest, with some in Cannop Brook. Investigations concerning this problem continue.

DEER

The Deputy Surveyor had nothing to report on this issue, but he will advise of the cull figures at the next Court

BOAR AND FERAL PIGS

The Deputy Surveyor advised that the cull of 135 animals had been completed to achieve the target 400 population figure.

The Deputy Surveyor added that the thermal imaging survey with high specification equipment had been completed and is expected to show a greatly increased population, so it is envisaged that a much greater cull will be required.

The Court heard that the Parish Councils and the District Council had mandated the Commission to control the feral boar population, but there is continuing opposition from animal rights groups who are extremely vocal and refer to a “slaughter” of the boar.

The Deputy Surveyor is to attend a meeting at the Animal Health Agency as there are concerns about the increasing boar numbers leading to a risk of an outbreak of classic swine flu. The Court were also advised of a severe outbreak of African swine flu in Eastern Europe, resulting in a ban on pork imports from Russia.

The Court also heard that up to £100,000 is to be expended to create a new larder for the boar as the existing deer larder facilities are inadequate. Further funds will be required to purchase smaller cage traps to prevent more than one animal entering a trap, as animal welfare issues arise if two or more are caught in the same trap and have to be shot.

CINDERFORD REGENERATION

The Senior Verderer advised he had been approached by Dean Forest Voice members who had raised a number of questions about the whole scheme and the sale of land by the Commission.

The Deputy Surveyor commented that the decision to sell land had been taken over fifteen years ago under powers contained in the Forestry Act 1981. He accepted this power had been exercised without consultation, but added that such a decision would not now be taken without seeking advice and approval of interested parties such as the Verderers, for example.

Section 39(2)(A) of the Act provides power to sell land in the Forest of Dean in circumstances where the Government decide such land is no longer required for forestry purposes. It was noted there is no actual obligation to obtain exchange land, but the Commission now seek this and treat the discretionary power as mandatory in

such cases, so as to prevent loss of parts of the Forest. He added that the exchange land arrangements had yet to be finalised in relation to the scheme.

Mr Standing commented that while he appreciated it is now impossible to turn the clock back on this particular matter, but there must be no future loss of the Forest.

Mrs Simpson added that a decision on the HCA planning application is expected soon. This is detailed as regards the proposed college and spine road, but outline for the remaining land. If there is a favourable decision, work is expected to commence almost immediately.

DEPUTY SURVEYOR'S REPORT

Royal Visit

The Deputy Surveyor commented that the visit of the Earl and Countess of Wessex to the Forest had been a great pleasure for all Commission staff. Commemorative plaques will be affixed to stone plinths for the dedicated trees.

Heritage Lottery Funding

The revised bid is to be submitted at the end of May.

Tree Diseases

The major tree removal work undertaken in 2012 appears to have been successful as there have been no new outbreaks of phytophthera.

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Cannop Crossroads

Mr Wright asked if any action is to be taken to make the junction safer and was advised there is an ongoing consultation. Remedies including traffic lights or a new roundabout are under review

DATES OF NEXT TWO COURT SITTINGS

The date for the next two Courts will be Friday the 4th July 2014 and Friday the 3rd October 2014.

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Verderers

Deputy Surveyor
Forestry Commission

Steward