

8th April 2016

Dean Forest to wit

At a Special Court of Attachment
of our Sovereign Lady the Queen at
The Speech House on the Eighth day
of April in the Sixty Fourth 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
Sixteen

Before

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

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 the Wildlife Manager, Ian Harvey and Sue Middleton, the Heritage Lottery Fund Programme Manager.

APOLOGIES

Received from Kevin Stannard who requested that Penny Simpson deputise for him.

MINUTES

The Minutes of the Court held on the 15th January 2016 were approved and signed.

MATTERS ARISING

Election of a new Verderer

The Court heard that the Writ had been issued and that £3,000 would be available from the Commission for the Election, to cover the cost of reasonable and previously agreed expenses. Sue Middleton requested permission to film the election and the Steward was directed to ask the High Sheriff's Officer, Nick Tanner if this can be agreed, including interviews, etc.

Speech House

The Verderers approved of the redecoration of the Court Room and heard the cost of restoration of the 2 large painting had been estimated at £4750. It was agreed that various bodies such as Rotary Club would be approached to assist with the cost of restoration, with Mr Bent directed to seek grant aid if available.

MINERALS

Mrs Simpson advised that there was little to add to her report at the previous Court, but it was noted that Tarmac have liaison meetings with the Parish Council every six months to discuss the impact on the local community of the ongoing works and increasing output at Stowfield.

She added that with regard to mining, coal had been found behind a fault seam at Hopewell and there are ongoing works toward this as it is hoped there will be a substantial amount of coal available. In addition, safety fencing had been erected due to the presence of off-road cyclists.

With regard to Heywood Drift Mine, an incline is being excavated to try to remedy a water ingress problem, and at Wallsend Quarry, an old roadway is in the process of being excavated to try to locate a new coal seam.

Finally, the Deputy Gaveler gave a lecture at the Mines Inspectors Conference in Buxton, keeping a high profile for the Forest as it has the largest number of working mines in England.

COMMONING

The Court heard that the Scrutiny Review Group's Report is awaited. Mr Standing commented that the Commoners Association is very concerned about the Report, especially as the nuisance caused by sheep is minimal, except in Bream where the ongoing problems stem from animals owned by someone who is not a member of the Association.

There have been the usual problems in the lambing season, with reports of dogs chasing sheep; RTAs and so forth.

DEER

The Wildlife Manager advised the cull has increased due to numbers of muntjac and roe deer. 44 muntjac had been culled and 447 fallow, including RTAs. An enquiry was made about poaching and Mr Harvey commented this is undoubtedly happening, but numbers are unknown.

BOAR AND FERAL PIGS

The Wildlife Manager advised the cull had been completed and some 543 animals removed. The thermal imaging survey had completed on the 7th April and the data will be reviewed, but a significant increase in the population is expected and the cull will need to increase later in the year. The Verderers congratulated the Wildlife Manager and his staff for the fantastic effort to try to bring numbers under control.

Mr Standing commented on the letter in the press by TV presenter, Chris Packham, calling on local residents to try to stop the cull. He considered this both dangerous and an unwelcome interference.

The Wildlife Manager added that the two trainees will be fully prepared to assist in future culls.

CINDERFORD REGENERATION

Mrs Simpson advised there had been delay in commencing the road construction, with the College construction to follow after the road has been completed and also completion of the land exchange arrangements.

DEPUTY SURVEYOR'S REPORT

Heritage Lottery Funding

Sue Middleton advised there is a great deal of activity involving some 50 projects, with the Stage 2 application to be made by the 30th November. The projects include an ongoing archaeological survey with many enthusiastic volunteers, reviewing LIDAR data and planning a small scale dig at a Roman site near Yorkley.

In addition, both primary and secondary schools are actively supporting the teaching of the heritage of the Forest of Dean. There are habitat improvement works and loss of species surveys; volunteers attending at the Dean Festival on April 24th; a festival of brass and voices and many more activities, including local authors at literature evenings in libraries.

Mr Bent mentioned the Herbert Howells Society and its support for young musicians in the Forest.

The Senior Verderer thanked Sue for providing an update on the activities and was pleased there are so many enthusiastic groups involve in the projects.

Beechenhurst

The extension works are well advanced and should be completed at the end of June, with new tenants operating in July/August. There are various parties interested in the vacant new premises and tenders are awaited.

The Court heard that Tree Top Junior (similar to Go Ape for younger participants) is very popular and that there is a temporary new sculpture at the site, as well as two new sculptures on the Trail.

Mr Bent commented that he was angry the Commission is now charging for disabled parking and considered this should be free of charge.

Tree Diseases

There was nothing to report, but an aerial check is planned in May to check for signs of Phytophthora. In addition, there has been a fair amount of damage caused by wind blow.

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Cyril Hart Arboretum

A centenary celebration for Cyril Hart will be held in September.

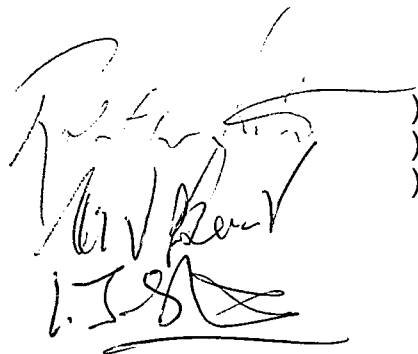
Exmoor Ponies

Ponies have been placed in two of the Heritage enclosures to reduce vegetation so as to enable sheep access.

The Senior Verderer thanked the Wildlife Manager and the Heritage Lottery Fund Programme Manager for attending and for the very helpful and informative reports they had provided.

DATES OF NEXT TWO COURT SITTINGS

The date for the next two Courts will be Friday the 1st July 2016 and Friday 28th October 2016.



Verderers

Deputy Surveyor
Forestry Commission



Steward

