

1st July 2016

Dean Forest to wit

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

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 the High Sheriff, Lady Bathurst and thanked her for making the effort to attend in view of the requirement to elect a new Verderer during her time in office.

## **APOLOGIES**

None.

## **MINUTES**

The Minutes of the Court held on the 8th April 2016 were approved and signed.

## **MATTERS ARISING**

### **Speech House – Court Paintings**

Mr Bent asked if would be possible for the Commission to donate the 2 large paintings, to enable certain bodies to be approached for grants to assist with the cost of restoration. The Deputy Surveyor explained that the paintings are listed as a Forestry Commission asset and leased to the tenant of the hotel, but he would investigate the possibility of a sub-lease of the paintings to the Verderers.

### **Beechenhurst Lodge Refurbishment**

The Court heard that the works are expected to be completed in a few weeks and be fully open for the school holidays.

## **Cyril Hart Arboretum**

The Deputy Surveyor agreed to formally invite the High Sheriff to the centenary celebration in September.

## **MINERALS**

Mrs Simpson advised that there was little to add to her report at the previous Court, but the ongoing works at Hopewell Colliery were proceeding slowly.

With regard to Heywood Drift Mine, the water ingress continues to be a problem, and at Wallsend Quarry, high quality coal has been found in the new coal seam.

The Deputy Surveyor and Mr Standing briefly explained the origins and history of freemining to the High Sheriff.

Mrs Simpson advised that the planned HSE inspection of the Dean mines had been delayed due to the ongoing HSE's investigation of the fatality at the Boulby potash mine in East Cleveland.

With regard to quarrying, she advised that a template model lease is in course of preparation to assist small quarries by keeping costs down..

The Deputy Surveyor added that the Commission had received no applications or correspondence for fracking in the Forest.

The Senior Verderer noted that the 1<sup>st</sup> July was Mrs Simpson's last day at work before departing on maternity leave and all at Court conveyed their best wishes to her.

## **COMMONING**

The Court heard that the District Council's Scrutiny Review Group's Report had restated support for the continuation of commoning on the Forest and responsible shepherding. The Council's Scrutiny Review, however recommended that a Public Space Protection Order be used to restrict grazing areas, The Council is currently undertaking consultation on the use of public space protection order to control sheep in the communities. The Sheep Liaison Group had expressed dismay at the proposed use of such orders and had suggested use of ASBOs against irresponsible commoners.

The Forestry Commission would not be responding to the consultation on the order. The Deputy Surveyor noted that having given evidence to Scrutiny, it was for the elected Council to come to a decision, and to consult the public, which is what they are doing.

The Deputy Surveyor briefly explained the origins and history of commoning to the High Sheriff.

## **DEER and BOAR AND FERAL PIGS**

The Deputy Surveyor advised that RTAs for 2015 -16 were 64 for deer and 116 for boar, with a further 8 deer and 12 boar killed since 1<sup>st</sup> April. The deer RTAs are holding steady, but those for boar are steadily increasing in line with the relative changes in population.

The thermal imaging survey results are awaited, but a significant increase in the population is anticipated, in spite of the record cull in the previous year.

There will six rangers available for the coming year's cull when the cull target is known.

## **CINDERFORD REGENERATION**

Mrs Simpson advised there had been further delay in commencing the road construction, but a compound had been constructed for the contractor's equipment in readiness. Otherwise the development scheme remains unchanged.

## **DEPUTY SURVEYOR'S REPORT**

### **Forest Forum**

The Court heard that the Forum will discuss the possibility of reintroducing both pine martens and beaver into the Forest. The beaver would be located in a 7 hectare enclosure to see if their activities will alleviate the flood risk to Lydbrook.

The Pine Marten releases will be dependent on a study currently being undertaken by the Commission in partnership with the Vincent Wildlife Trust and Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust.

### **Flooding**

The University of Exeter is carrying out some investigations to advise the Commission on a possible hydrological study to review the impacts of wetland habitat creation and improvement as part of the Heritage Lottery Funded scheme on downstream flood risk, as well as the impact on fish stocks and ecological impacts due to low flow in summer months.

A flood defence committee has been established for the Cinderford and Soudley brooks with a view to reducing the potential flash flood problems affecting Ruspidge and Soudley.

## **EU Referendum**

The vote to exit the EU had not affected, and was not expected to impact the Commission and it was anticipated that business as usual would continue in the months and years ahead. However, it is anticipated there will be not be time for legislation to restructure to the Forestry Commission in the present Parliament. The finance for the nation's forest estate had been ring-fenced in the last Budget and that had carried through to a good funding settlement for Forest Enterprise England.

## **Forestry Commission Centenary**

It is anticipated there will be celebrations to mark the centenary of the Commission in May 2019, and the Verderers are invited to suggest ideas to mark the occasion in the Dean.

## **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

### **Election of a new Verderer**

The High Sheriff commented that it would be an honour and privilege to oversee the election and would be planning to arrange this before the October Court. She added that she had not been familiar with the Forest but had been astounded by its beauty and she would do everything in her power to raise the profile of the area during the election process.

The Deputy Surveyor advised that his staff will assist at the election and that the sum of £3,000 is available to help pay for the process, but all claims on this fund must be properly documented and invoiced.

### **Speech House**

The Verderers wished to support the Tenants' application to replace the marquee with a permanent structure and the Steward was directed to liaise with Peter Hands in this regard.

### **Mark Harper MP and Jane Horne**

The Steward was directed to invite Mark Harper MP and Jane Horne, the new Chair of the District Council to a future Court.

### **Cycling**

In response to an enquiry from Mr Standing, the Deputy Surveyor advised there is a national off-road cycling policy encouraging cyclists to remain on hard surfaced tracks and going off such tracks is accepted provided jumps and so forth are not created. It is a matter of behaving responsibly.

**DATES OF NEXT TWO COURT SITTINGS**

The date for the next two Courts will be Friday 28<sup>th</sup> October 2016 and Friday 20<sup>th</sup> January 2017.

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Verderers

Deputy Surveyor  
Forestry Commission

Steward