

28<sup>th</sup> October 2016

Dean Forest to wit

At a Special Court of Attachment  
of our Sovereign Lady the Queen at  
The Speech House on the 28th day  
of October 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

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

Prior to the commencement of the Court, the Senior Verderer welcomed both the local MP, Mark Harper, his assistant Gareth Hughes and 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**

These had been received from Jane Horne, Chair of the Forest of Dean District Council

## **MINUTES**

The Minutes of the Court held on the 1<sup>st</sup> July 2016 were approved and signed.

## **MATTERS ARISING**

### **Cyril Hart Arboretum**

The Senior Verderer commented that the celebration of the centenary of the Arboretum had been successful.

### **Penny Simpson**

The Court was pleased to hear that Penny had had a baby boy soon after the last Court and both were doing well.

## **Forest Forum**

The Senior Verderer requested that items discussed at the Forum and within the purview of the Court's duties should be brought to the Court first. The DS noted the role of the Forest Forum as a discussion forum for a wider network of stakeholders, including the Parish & District Council, as well as woodland user groups. He noted most items would have been raised at the Court beforehand, for example boar is regularly raised at both Court and Forums. However, the Forum also presented an opportunity to run through subjects in far greater depth than is possible within the Court. Mr Standing recommended attendance at the Forum for this reason. Subsequent discussion highlighted that Cyril Hart had advocated the Verderers did not attend the Forum, but both the role and content of the Forum had moved on since those early days.

## **Election of a New Verderer**

The date for the election had been set at 15<sup>th</sup> February 2017 at Gloucester Cathedral.

## **MINERALS**

The Deputy Surveyor advised there was nothing new to report.

Mr Harper advised the Court of the ongoing consultation regarding the minerals local plan, with a view to a full inspector's report in 2018.

The Court also heard that the two licences granted nationally for methane extraction would, apparently, not be proceeding as the Company concerned had decided it was not a viable venture. Mr Standing commented this was well known as the miners had used naked lights underground as there was no gas in the coal field..

## **COMMONING**

The Court heard from The Deputy Surveyor that the District Council had discussed the use of Public Space Protection Orders to restrict grazing areas in order to control sheep in the communities, but their proposed use was narrowly voted down.

The Sheep Liaison Group continue to meet and will continue to seek consensus to tackle localised nuisance caused by sheep.

The High Sheriff asked about sheep welfare issues and the Deputy Surveyor explained that GCC Trading Standards handle such matters and can prosecute (and have done in the recent past). He added that the Commoners Association self-police and that concerned members of the public tend to contact the RSPCA who will investigate themselves and liaise with Trading Standards.

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

The Deputy Surveyor advised there was nothing to report regarding deer, but the thermal imaging survey results had been received and had identified a population of boar exceeding 1,500, despite the record cull of over 500 in the previous year. The present cull would have to increase to at least 722 according to Forest Research to keep numbers under control.

There are six rangers available for this year's cull which is in progress, having commenced as usual in September.

The Court heard and deplored the fact that animal rights activists had used social media to threaten Forestry Commission staff and had published personal details on Facebook.

It was also noted there have been increasing and very vociferous demands from the local population about keeping numbers under control.

The local Boar Management Group continues to meet, and has contacted all local farmers to advise on the boar and recommended contractors to deal with any control required.

The Deputy Surveyor commented that the biggest problem is educating the public not to feed the boar as this would help keep them out of the communities.

Mr Harper commented that most people want the boar numbers to be kept in check and he thanked the Deputy Surveyor and his staff for all their efforts and hoped the police will act against those who abuse the Commission's staff.

After some discussion, it was suggested the Verderers publish an article to highlight the message about feeding the boar and requesting the public cease this practice.

The Court also heard the Rotary Club are assisting with the cost of fencing the Speech House Field.

## **CINDERFORD REGENERATION**

The Deputy Surveyor advised there had a start made on the construction of the spine road, and this should allow the College construction to commence. He added that the land swap had yet to be completed and the Linear Park remains in the ownership of the District Council.

## **DEPUTY SURVEYOR'S REPORT**

### **Tax Audit**

The Court heard that the funding of the Court had been questioned in a recent audit of the Forestry Commission. The difficulty arises due the 'status' of the Court, and Mr Harper noted the difficulty in managing bodies created by Prerogative Powers in the modern day, but that didn't mean change was either necessary or beneficial.

This issue links to the difficulty of the Forestry Commission transferring ownership of the Court paintings from the Hotel / Commission to the Verderers. The High Sheriff commented that the Verderers could establish a trust with the Verderers holding the Court's paintings for the benefit of the Forest.

### **Flooding**

Lydbrook Parish Council had been advised about the proposed introduction of beaver to assist with surface water management. The Forestry Commission are still looking to secure funding from the District Council, as Environment Agency had lodged some funds for a sustainable flood management scheme above Lydbrook with them,

### **Heritage Lottery Funding**

The second round bid is to be submitted by the 4<sup>th</sup> November, with funding of £3 million available if successful.

### **Forestry Commission Centenary**

There will be celebrations to mark the centenary of the Commission and details will be supplied.

## **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

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

The High Sheriff commented she is to liaise with Cotswold Life to publish an article about the Verderers and the election and to raise the profile of the Forest in the wider Gloucestershire community.

It was agreed the advertisements for the election should be published at the end of November.

### **Select Committee on Forestry**

In response to an enquiry by Mr Standing, Mark Harper advised he believed this to be a DEFRA subcommittee established to look at private forestry.

**DATES OF NEXT TWO COURT SITTINGS**

The date for the next two Courts will be Friday 20<sup>th</sup> January 2017 and Friday 31<sup>st</sup> March 2017.

The Senior Verderer thanked Countess Bathurst for attending the Court and for all her efforts regarding the election. He invited her to attend the next two Courts as these would sit during her period in office. He also thanked Mark Harper and his assistant for attending and for his extremely useful and informative comments.

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Verderers

Deputy Surveyor  
Forestry Commission

Steward