

20th January 2017

Dean Forest to wit

At a Special Court of Attachment
of our Sovereign Lady the Queen at
The Speech House on the 20th day
of January in the Sixty Fifth 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
Seventeen

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

Lewis James Esq., M.R.I.C.S., Deputy Area
Land Agent, Forestry Commission

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

Prior to the commencement of the Court, the Senior Verderer welcomed both the Chair of the Forest of Dean District Council, Jane Horne and the High Sheriff, Lady Bathurst and her husband, Lord Bathurst and thanked all for making the effort to attend the Court.

APOLOGIES

None.

MINUTES

The Minutes of the Court held on the 28th October 2016 were approved and signed.

MATTERS ARISING

None.

days.

Election of a New Verderer

The Sheriff has called a County Court for the election of a Verderer on the 15th February 2017 at Gloucester Cathedral.

MINERALS

Mr Lewis commented there was nothing new of substance to report, but advised that

royalty returns for the various stone quarries had been agreed. He added there are 12 quarries in total, of which only 5 produce a significant quantity of stone. The largest of the quarries is Stowfield, producing a vast quantity of crushed stone for the construction industry.

At Clearwell Quarry, part of the mineral rights are owned by the Crown Estates and part by the Forestry Commission. Future working will see the quarry move into Commission minerals again, increasing the royalty payments due to the Commission.

COMMONING

The Court heard from the Deputy Surveyor that the Commoners Association has a new Chair, Mr O'Neill who has advised he is planning to revise the organisation and terms and conditions of membership.

Following the District Council's narrow rejection of the Public Space Protection Order for Bream, the Sheep Liaison Group has established an independent review group to revisit the terms of the 2014 shepherding agreement. Ceri Evans will chair this group and it comprises former Queen's Remembrancer, Robert Turner, Mr O'Neill and Mr Priest from the CA and Mr Garbett, formerly of the District Council's Environmental Health team. The Deputy Surveyor added that the Review Group will most likely liaise with the Court in due course.

The Court also heard that Mrs Turpin-West has left the CA and Mr Hancocks is in danger of being expelled from the Association for repeated failure to abide by the 2014 Responsible Shepherding Agreement.

Problems continue at the Redrow development at Whitecroft with more than 20 sheep being left on the estate overnight and some residents' doorbells allegedly being rung in the early hours by persons unknown. All attempts to lift sheep found out of bounds in that location had failed and now not possible until May, due to the lambing season.

The Senior Verderer commented that Mr Awdry is not a member of the CA and he and Mr Hancocks are the largest sheep owners by far and he could foresee further problems if neither of them are under the control of the CA.

Mrs Horne commented that the proposed use of Public Space Protection Orders by the Council had not been agreed as considered unworkable.

DEER and BOAR AND FERAL PIGS

The Deputy Surveyor advised there was nothing to report regarding deer.

Regarding boar, the Court heard there had been a meeting between DEFRA and the DEFRA Agencies, namely the Forestry Commission, Natural England and Animal & Plant Health Agency. The purpose of the meeting had been to ensure that all present

had an up to date understanding of the current issues concerning feral wild boar in the Forest. Cllr Terry Hale from the Forest of Dean District Council attended to provide a local community perspective. DEFRA reiterated the boar issue is a local and not a national issue, and that the 2009 Action Plan remained relevant.

The Deputy Surveyor advised that a one day workshop had been proposed with all interested parties to attend and to discuss a framework for living with the boar. Mark Harper had agreed to chair the meeting.

The Deputy Surveyor commented that whilst the cull is on course to be the highest yet, it is unlikely to achieve the minimum target of 722 set by Forest Research As the number required to stop the upward growth in numbers.

Lord Bathurst commented that the boar issue should really be treated as a matter of national concern and not merely a local issue, despite DEFRA's stated position. He suggested interested parties outside the Forest should be consulted. The Deputy Surveyor commented that the Deer Initiative had established a boar group involving land owners and land managers in the area.

The Court referred to the Steward's letter to the local press about the Court's involvement, resulting in a letter from a member of the public in the Forest Review that was wholly incorrect but not worthy of a written response.

Mrs Horne commented she had seen three dead boar on her journey from Newent to the Forest, indicating the population had spread some distance from the Dean itself.

The Deputy Surveyor commented that the Commission's website contained all details on the boar and the cull.

CINDERFORD REGENERATION

Mr Lewis advised that the construction of the spine road was proceeding apace and this should allow the College construction to commence, although an issue remained on the funding for the construction. Mrs Horne commented that the Council was doing everything possible to ensure the availability of funding. Mr Lewis added that the land swap had yet to be completed and the Linear Park remains in the ownership of the District Council, but the matters were in the hands of the solicitors for the parties.

DEPUTY SURVEYOR'S REPORT

Foresters Forest – The Heritage Lottery Fund Landscape Partnership Programme for the Forest of Dean.

A rare species of moss, sphagnum moss, had been found and thriving in remnant boggy areas. The location of the sphagnum was therefore guiding plans for targeted mire restoration work under the Foresters Forest programme.

The beaver reintroduction programme is progressing, with a family expected to be introduced in a six-hectare enclosure this summer. It is expected that the beavers will reduce the risk of flooding in Lydbrook.

The team was expecting to host a visit from the HLF Officers and a Trustees in February, a head of the Trustees' meeting at which a decision as to whether to fund the delivery phase of the programme would be made.

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Election of a new Verderer

The High Sheriff confirmed the advertisements for the election had been published, although somewhat delayed. She hoped as many individuals as possible will stand.

Kieron O'Mahony

The Steward was instructed to invite him to a future Court.

Court Paintings

The Steward was asked to investigate the possibility of a trust for the Verderers to hold the two paintings in a trust arrangement.

DATES OF NEXT TWO COURT SITTINGS

The date for the next two Courts will be Friday 31st March 2017 and Friday 30th June 2017.

The Senior Verderer thanked Countess Bathurst and her husband Lord Bathurst for attending the Court and thanked Janet Horne for attending. Councillor Horne responded that she had enjoyed the Court and found it very enlightening and that she was delighted the Verderers continued the very important task of monitoring the affairs of the Forest. Lord Bathurst added that he had been delighted to be invited and had enjoyed the proceedings. He commented that the Court and the Commission should investigate all possible sources of information to deal with the boar issue.

)
)
)

Verderers

Deputy Surveyor
Forestry Commission

Steward

