

26th January 2018

Dean Forest to wit

Before

At a Special Court of Attachment
of our Sovereign Lady the Queen at
The Speech House on the 26th day of
January in the Sixty Sixth 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
Eighteen

R.W. Jenkins Esq., J.P.
M.V. Bent Esq.
R.G. Daniels Esq., MBE.

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 the High Sheriff, Mr Andrew Tabor and his wife to the Court.

APOLOGIES

Received from Mr Standing who had not noted the correction of the January Court date.

MINUTES

The Minutes of the Court held on the 6th October 2017 were approved and signed.

MATTERS ARISING

Verderers Election

The Steward was directed to advise the Under Sheriff of the agreed new election procedures.

The Dilke Hospital

It had been reported that the hospitals at The Dilke and Lydney are to close and a replacement hospital is to be constructed. The Deputy Surveyor confirmed there is no special covenant affecting the Dilke hospital site.

Professor Robinson

The Court heard that the Professor had prepared a paper on the 800th Anniversary of the Forest Charter and the workings of the Court following his attendance in October and he had sent copy documentation for the Verderers via the Steward.

MINERALS

Mr James advised there was little to report other than the huge quantities of stone being quarried at Stowfield.

The Deputy Surveyor added that the Council's Listed Buildings Officer had adjudged that local Forest stone could not be used in the works at Speech House as it was considered to be the wrong colour, so stone had to be sourced from Cheltenham. The Court was very disappointed and agreed this was a ridiculous decision as the building had been constructed using local stone.

COMMONING

The Deputy Surveyor advised that Henry Boughton, the new Chair of the SLG had chaired his first meeting and had become very much aware of the complex situation.

The Court also heard that the Police, the Local Authority and the Commission are defending a case brought by Mr Awdry in relation to an alleged illegal sheep lift and subsequent sale of the unclaimed sheep in 2014. The next SLG Meeting will be postponed until the case has been decided.

DEER AND BOAR AND FERAL WILD PIGS

The Deputy Surveyor advised that the boar cull was proceeding very well, with 375 animals culled and on course for 420 to 430 by the end of March.

The Court also heard that a local person had received an official warning from the Police about aggressive behaviour towards Commission staff

The Steward provided minutes of the West Dean Parish Council's Boar Action Group and the Deputy Surveyor commented that the Council should be applauded for its efforts to get a community strategy going but added that a lot of work would be required before an approach could be made to DEFRA. Mark Harper had expressed his willingness to assist as soon as a comprehensive strategy has been prepared but could not approach the Minister until there is something concrete to propose.

The Senior Verderer added that Mr Bent had been appointed as the Court's representative to assist the Group and the Steward was directed to ensure the council is aware of this.

Mr Daniels asked about meshing and the Deputy Surveyor advised that the placing of steel mesh panels on the land outside individual properties seemed to deter the boar from churning the ground, but this would not be practical on a large scale.

CINDERFORD REGENERATION

Mr James advised the first phase of the spine road had been completed and is due to be adopted as a public highway and the College construction is on track to be

completed on time and on budget. He added that there is a video presentation available on the Gloscol website.

The Deputy Surveyor explained the chequered history of the Cinderford Northern Quarter regeneration to the High Sheriff,

DEPUTY SURVEYOR'S REPORT

Mallards Pike

An operator for the proposed small café on site had been chosen and there will be a planning application in the near future.

Biblins Campsite

Woodcraft People, a charity for youth camping had taken on the lease and the Commission was highly delighted with this outcome.

Pine Martens

A decision to reintroduce the animals is awaited, following meetings to decide if they can and should be reintroduced. If shown to be a good idea and funding is made available, the animals will be introduced and hopefully in 2019.

Beaver

A decision by DEFRA to progress the project has been made and endorsed by both the Secretary of State and the Prime Minister! The animals will be on site in a few months.

In response to a question from the High Sheriff's wife, the Court heard that the animals would come from Devon.

Forest Forum

There will be a meeting on the 21st February at Whitemead Park when the Commission will unveil plans to redraft the Forestry Management Plans with new strategies for recreation, tree species and so forth. There will be full consultation with all interested parties, leading to a new plan by 2020.

Following discussion, it was agreed the Verderers would attend and would be officially represented by the Senior Verderer.

Mr Daniels asked if there are any plans to Forest of Dean's public forest estate and was advised that although the Commission actively seeks additional land, it does depend on the availability of funding.

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Ruardean Hill

In response to a query from Mr Bent, The Deputy Surveyor commented that the ongoing work involved thinning and the removal of diseased trees, especially the Corsican Pine affected by red band needle blight.

Dame Janet Trotter

The Steward was directed to give details of the dates of future Courts before her retirement as Lord Lieutenant in October and it is hoped she will be able to attend.

Public Perception of the Commission

Mr Daniels commented that the public perception is that the Commission is “destroying the Forest” and asked if the Commission could be more proactive in explaining tree removal activities.

The Deputy Surveyor commented this is an issue to be discussed at the Forest Forum but added that no more timber has been removed than in previous years.

Forestry Commission

In response to a query from Mr Daniels, the Deputy Surveyor commented that Forest Enterprise England will be renamed Forestry England in April 2019 when Scotland leaves the Commission.

DATES OF THE NEXT COURT SITTINGS

These were agreed as the 13th April and the 22nd June 2018.

The High Sheriff thanked the Verderers for permitting him and his wife to attend the Court and commented that he had found the work of the Verderers to be fascinating and both their enthusiasm and love of the Forest had been apparent.

Verderers

Deputy Surveyor

Steward

