

22nd June 2018

Dean Forest to wit

Before

At a Special Court of Attachment
of our Sovereign Lady the Queen at
The Speech House on the 22nd day of
June 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.
I.J. Standing Esq., BDS, M.A. MUSMS Dip.
R.G. Daniels Esq., MBE.

K.G. Stannard Esq., Deputy Surveyor,
Forestry Commission
D.L. Howell CSM, IMMM Deputy Gaveler
Forestry Commission

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

APOLOGIES

These were received from Mick Holder from the Commoners Association.

MINUTES

The Minutes of the Court held on the 13th April 2018 were approved and signed.

MATTERS ARISING

None.

IMPORTANT NEW MATTERS

Plaques

Two plaques had been presented to the Verderers by Peter Hands and it was agreed to display them in the Courtroom.

New Fancy

Mr Standing requested that the trees at the viewpoint be trimmed back to reinstate the view.

DEVELOPMENTS AFFECTING THE STATUTORY FOREST

Dilke Hospital

The Deputy Surveyor reported he had spoken to Senior Planning Officer and Head of Regeneration at the District Council regarding the future of the Hospital, but

neither were aware of the NHS plans for the Dilke site and its future is uncertain. Mr Bent commented that Mark Harper had been presented with a petition regarding this Hospital and the one at Lydney.

Cinderford Northern

The Court heard that Homes England is keen to have plots developed but no developers have come forward and the Council has no funding to develop either this site or Five Acres.

COMMONING

The Deputy Surveyor advised that the former senior environmental health officer at the District Council, Roger Garbett had agreed to become the new Chair of the SLG and David Kent from West Dean PC had agreed to become the Secretary at the meeting of the SLG in May and the next meeting will take place at the Cannop Highways Depot.

The Court also heard that the hearing of the case brought by Mr Awdry in relation to an alleged illegal sheep lift and subsequent sale of the unclaimed sheep will now take place in November in Cardiff.

The Court was also advised that sheep markings are to be checked and sheep will be lifted if there remain unmarked.

DEER AND BOAR AND FERAL WILD PIGS

The Court discussed a letter from one Mr Beard requesting further fencing in the Forest to prevent boar damage. The Deputy Surveyor commented that there are no plans to fence the Forest except at the community grazing sites.

The Court also heard that Zoe Davis, the CEO of the National Pig Breeders Association has agreed to look at funding the secretariat for the boar management group after an intervention by Mark Harper MP.

Ben Goldsmith, non-executive director at DEFRA visited the Dean and is a staunch supporter of rewilding programmes and very enthusiastic about the beaver and pine marten projects but did not see a problem with the boar in the Forest, in spite of seeing the damage to roadside verges and so forth.

The Deputy Surveyor advised that the training session for the Police on the subject of poaching had been very well attended and the Police had made it clear they are committed to crack down on the problem.

With regard to deer numbers, it is believed to be at least 300 over the target population of 800, but the result of the thermal imaging survey is awaited. Muntjac are an increasing problem.

Two wildlife rangers are being recruited to bring numbers to four and it is also planned to recruit two trainees.

STRATEGIC APPROACH

The Deputy Surveyor advised that the Built Heritage, Communications and Forest Strategies had commenced and although in the early stages, a programme manager for the strategies will be available and there will be full consultation with all interested parties.

DEPUTY SURVEYOR'S REPORT

Beaver

The Court heard that Michael Gove will officiate at the release of the animals at an opening ceremony on 24th July.

Pine Martens

The Pine Marten Feasibility Study has been completed and approved, with a planned release of the animals in 2019.

Conservation Grazing

The programme is progressing, but more animals are required and the Wildlife Trust are making the necessary arrangements.

Centenary

The Commission will be 100 years old in 2019 and events are being planned and the new strategic approach will be launched. In addition, 2024 will mark the centenary of the Commission's presence in the Forest. After some discussion, it was agreed the Verderers would plant trees in both years to celebrate the two centenaries.

MINERALS

The Deputy Gaveller presented his written report and a copy is attached to these Minutes.

Mr Standing commented that on the substantial growth of the Bixslade Quarry in recent years and asked if there are any limits to its future growth. The Deputy Gaveller responded that there are physical barriers, but plans are underway to carry out underground extraction of the blue pennant stone.

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Royal Forest

Mr Bent commented that it is hoped an application to the Privy Council will be made to regain the title as a Royal forest.

Forest Holidays

The Court discussed an email to the Steward from Christopher McFarling and regarding his disquiet that the partnership between the Commission and Forest Holidays amounted to a form of privatisation of part of the Forest.

The Deputy Surveyor commented that he was aware of the comments and had spoken to Mr McFarling but added that the arrangements are protected by strict landlord and tenant controls with many safeguards.

Mr Daniels commented that the long leases granted amounted to a sale with the private equity involvement looking to make a profit and adversely affecting the Forest estate.

In response to a query from Mr Standing, the Deputy Surveyor advised that the two sites developed were former caravan sites and there is a rigorous selection process in place for any further developments. Indeed, it would be difficult to locate another site. For example, the Worcester Lodge site is a former caravan site, but would not be eligible for development due to its historical importance.

The Deputy Gaveler commented that in any event, the Forest Holiday sites are in fact outside the Statutory Forest and not within the purview of the Court.

After some further discussion, it was agreed to invite Mr McFarling to a future Court.

DATES OF THE NEXT COURT SITTINGS

These dates were agreed as the 5th October 2018, commencing at 1.30 for this Court and 18th January 2019 at 2.45pm.

Verderers

Deputy Surveyor

Steward

