

5th October 2018

Dean Forest to wit

At a Special Court of Attachment
of our Sovereign Lady the Queen at
The Speech House on the 5th day of
October 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

Before

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 Gaveller
Forestry Commission

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

The Senior Verderer welcomed Councillor Christopher McFarling to the Court.

APOLOGIES

None.

MINUTES

The Minutes of the Court held on the 22nd June 2018 were approved and signed, although Mr Daniels noted an item had been missed and this related to the newly surfaced road to Woodgate Sawmills. It was confirmed there had been no sale of land involved, but merely the creation of a road surface where a right of access already exists.

MATTERS ARISING

With regard to the New Fancy viewpoint, the Deputy Surveyor commented that the work required would be undertaken as part of the operational planning.

IMPORTANT NEW MATTERS

Instagram

The Forest had come second to the New Forest for hits on the site.

Bream

Mr Standing commented that there are more sheep in the village and creating a nuisance. The Deputy Surveyor commented he had not received any complaints

other than in relation to the Redrow estate, but any sheep would belong to either Mr Hancocks or Mr Awdry.

Freemining

Mr Daniels expressed concern at the ongoing consultation to stop the burning of coal on domestic fires and that the Forest would become a restricted area under any new rules imposed. The Deputy Surveyor commented that this would have a serious effect and suggested applying for a heritage exemption for the Forest in view of the long history of freemining. The Deputy Gaveler added that there would indeed need to be a heritage exemption to prevent a ban and after some discussion, the Verderers agreed to write to the Secretary of State to support an application for an exemption.

DEVELOPMENTS AFFECTING THE STATUTORY FOREST

Mallards Pike

The Deputy Surveyor reported the small new café had opened and a 5 year lease had been granted to the operators.

Cinderford Northern Quarter

The Deputy Surveyor reported that the new College had opened.

Symonds Yat

The lease for the café is out to tender and a number of bids had been received.

COMMONING

The Deputy Surveyor advised that at the last SLG meeting, Roger Garbett had stated he would step down as the Chair of the SLG and David Kent from West Dean PC who had agreed to become the Secretary at the previous meeting of the SLG resigned from the post and the Commoners Association appointed Richard Cowerm to replace him. Claire Harvey, the Deputy Chair was appointed to replace Mr Garbutt, but in her absence from the meeting so it is not known if she will accept the post.

The Court also heard that the person making a noise in the early hours on the Redrow estate was in fact a resident who had been trying to drive the sheep off the development. The highway authority had conceded that a sub-standard cattle grid could be fitted at the entrance to the estate (i.e. one without a side gate for horses), but the residents do not support this proposed solution.

The Deputy Surveyor added that there is a sum of £20,000 available in the HLF to be used to educate people about communing and there are ongoing discussions as to how this fund should be used.

The Senior Verderer why there are so few sheep in the Forest as there are only a few hundred at present. The Deputy Surveyor commented that although fourteen different marks are registered, only a few are used. He added that the Commoners Association's view is that the behaviour of one or two rogue sheep owners had brought the practice into disrepute and had stopped people from putting animal in the Forest and no new members are being recruited. The Commission has advised the Association there are paddocks available, but there has been no response and accordingly, these will be offered to the GWT.

Mr Standing commented that the Verderers greatly support the efforts made by the Deputy Surveyor to try to keep the tradition alive and Mr Daniels commented that the foot and mouth outbreak some years ago had caused the animals to be removed and not replaced and the Commoners are generally disheartened by the public attitude to the tradition.

DEER AND BOAR AND FERAL WILD PIGS

The Deputy Surveyor advised that the results of the thermal imaging survey had revealed the population had increased to approximately 1,600 and two new rangers had been appointed to bring numbers up to four to cope with the increase.

He also reported that there had been two cases of African Swine Flu reported in Belgium and one theory is that the likely route of infection is the discarding of infected meat by truck drivers from Eastern Europe. The Animal and Plant Health Agency has become very concerned and wants notices placed to advise that the boar should not be fed by the public. A photograph of a sign in various languages and used in Sweden and advising the public to bin any unwanted pork products and not to discard them has been sent to the Agency for comment.

The Court also heard that the new Chair of the Der Initiative has advised that it does not have the human resources to support the boar management group, in spite of Mark Harper's letter that had led to an agreement by the National Pig Association to fund the secretariat, so unfortunately this process had stalled at present.

STRATEGIC APPROACH

There was nothing to report on this issue.

DEPUTY SURVEYOR'S REPORT

Our Shared Forest

The Court heard that introductory workshops and public consultation on the future management of the Forest are to be completed by April.

MINERALS

The Deputy Gaveler presented his written Report and a copy is attached to these Minutes.

He commented that he now had the details of the stone removed from the Stowfield Quarry for the past few years. In 2016-17, some 680,000 tonnes had been quarried and that had increased to an exceptional amount of 837,000 tonnes in 2017-18. The projected tonnage for the current period is 710,000.

The Senior Verderer mentioned the Robin Hood Iron Mine and asked about its future as he believed it had not been worked since the Second World War. The Deputy Gaveler confirmed this was correct and added that he had recently been down the main shaft that is some 86 metres deep and that it would be conserved as a heritage feature.

Mr McFarling commented that Glaxo Smith Kline no longer owns the site referred to in the Report as it had been taken over by the Japanese company, Suntory.

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Forest Holidays

The Senior Verderer invited Councillor Christopher McFarling to address the Court regarding his disquiet that the partnership between the Commission and Forest Holidays amounted to a form of privatisation of part of the Forest.

Mr McFarling commented that Forest Holidays is very popular throughout the United Kingdom and has expanded its operations greatly in recent years and any expansion in the Forest would adversely affect the area. He added that people of average means who formerly camped or caravanned had been priced out due to the high cost of hiring the cabins

Mr Standing commented that Mr McFarling was very correct to express these concerns and that the Forest is under great stress from many interested parties, but it was a question of balancing opposing interests as he was worried that the nature of the Forest could be lost in the future.

The Deputy Surveyor agreed it was always a question of balance but commented that "green tourism" is a big employer and does bring economic benefits and employment to local people.

The Senior Verderer thanked Councillor McFarling for attending the Court.

Car Parking

Mr Bent raised the issue of the high cost of car parking in The Forest and the adverse effect on local people using the facilities such as Mallards Pike and Beechenhurst.

The Deputy Surveyor responded that locals would benefit by obtaining an annual Discovery Pass that costs £32 and would provide a substantial discount for regular visitors to the amenities.

DATES OF THE NEXT COURT SITTINGS

These dates were agreed as 18th January 2019 at 1 pm at Speech House with a trip to view the beaver enclosure before the Court at 2.45pm. Councillor McFarling was invited to attend. The following Court will be on the 26th April 2019 at 2.45pm.

Verderers

Deputy Surveyor

Steward