

18<sup>th</sup> January 2019

Dean Forest to wit

At a Special Court of Attachment  
of our Sovereign Lady the Queen at  
The Speech House on the 18th day of  
January in the Sixty Seventh 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  
Nineteen

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

Prior to the Court, the Verderers and their guests, the High Sheriff, Mr Charles Martell and Councillor Christopher McFarling visited the beaver enclosure above Lydbrook and the Senior Verderer welcomed both to the day's Court sitting.

## **APOLOGIES**

None.

## **MINUTES**

The Minutes of the Court held on the 5<sup>th</sup> October 2018 were approved as slightly amended and signed.

## **MATTERS ARISING**

### **Freemining**

The Steward advised he had written to the Secretary of State as directed at the previous Court and had received a response and copies were circulated. The response advised that the request for an exception for the Forest had been noted and the Government intends to publish its response to the consultation on its proposals shortly.

Mr Daniels advised that representatives of the Freeminers and the Deputy Gaveller had visited DEFRA and had a useful meeting with officials there.

In discussion it was suggested the Verderers ought to urgently contact Mark Harper MP to ask for support for an exemption to permit coal to be extracted from, and burnt within the Hundred of St Briavels.

## **IMPORTANT NEW MATTERS**

### **Speed Limits**

Mr Daniels commented that he was concerned the number of RTAs in the Forest, involving both people and wild animals could lead to increasing urbanisation of the area, with traffic lights at Cannop Crossroads, for example, resulting from a recent fatal accident.

He suggested the Verderers should campaign for a reduction of speed limits on Forest to 40mph. He considered this would have a number of advantages, such as increased safety, noise and pollution reduction and the roads representing the gateway to somewhere very special.

The Senior Verderer commented that the Verderers had made an approach to the County Council and the Police about 20 years ago without success.

Councillor McFarling added that the Police view is that any speed reduction would be difficult to enforce with scant resources available, but all interested parties had repeatedly requested a reduction without any success. However, he considered there to be a momentum to have limits reduced and special gateways to the Forest and warning signs about sheep and wild animals would help.

Mr Standing and Mr Bent wholeheartedly supported the views expressed by Mr Daniels and Mr Bent added that he was attempting to have the "Royal" prefix to the Forest of Dean reinstated to make the public aware of the special character of the Dean.

The Deputy Surveyor commented that the Forest Road Safety Partnership had been campaigning to have the speed limits reduced and he had spoken to the highways engineer, Brian Watkins who had advised it would be possible to avoid increased roadside furniture by having road markings instead. He added that it is more of a social issue and the emergency services would welcome and support any campaign to reduce the number of accidents caused by excess speed and affecting both people and wild animals such as the boar. Indeed, gateways had been discussed and even the introduction of cattle grids at strategic points on highways into the Forest.

Councillor McFarling commented that there are many agencies involved and suggested letters to the leaders of both County and District Councils, as well as the Chief Constable, perhaps not suggesting a blanket approach but limiting the change to certain roads such as Speech House Road.

It was noted that the speed limit of 30mph in the New Forest is widely observed without the need for enforcement as the general public accept the need for this.

The Steward was directed to write to the various bodies and also to ask why no action had been taken in the past.

The Deputy Gaveller commented that the Commission owned the land itself, but the County Council is responsible for the roads and the verges.

## **DEVELOPMENTS AFFECTING THE STATUTORY FOREST**

### **New Hospital**

The Deputy Surveyor reported the Commission is to have a meeting with consultants concerning the location of the proposed new hospital and that there are two sites under consideration.

### **COMMONING**

The Deputy Surveyor advised he had responded in detail to a document produced by Dean Forest Voice and circulated by the Steward. He commented that much of the detail in the document was incorrect and added that the allegation that he is attempting to eradicate commoning was wholly untrue. In fact, he would welcome more sheep in the Forest but was campaigning for responsible shepherding.

A further letter from Dean Forest Voice and concerning conservation grazing was discussed and it was agreed the suggestion that the fencing of the areas for grazing was not a matter for the Inclosure Commissioners at all as the areas concerned were not for the growing of timber and the project was to improve the grazing potential.

Mr Standing added he had exchanged emails with Ivor Ellis at Dean Forest Voice to make similar observations.

### **DEER AND BOAR AND FERAL WILD PIGS**

The Deputy Surveyor advised that a UK feral wild boar group had been set up in view of the threat of African Swine Fever. He added that it is likely contaminated meat is already in the UK, but there are no signs of an outbreak. The authorities have however increased the risk from low to medium in view of the outbreaks in Europe and in China. Medium risk is in fact very significant, as the term "high" would only be used in the event of an actual outbreak of the disease.

Following a meeting with the Animal and Plant Health team to seek advice, it would seem that an outbreak affecting the wild boar would be tackled by stopping the animals from leaving the Forest and it would take between 5 and 7 years for the disease to completely work through the population in the Dean.

The Deputy Surveyor added that it is categorically illegal to feed the boar with anything other than specified pig food and although the animals can feed on windfall apples, for example, these must not be moved from where they have fallen to give to the boar.

Two wildlife rangers recruited to bring numbers to four are both ex-military and very effective and it is also planned to recruit two further rangers in 2020.

## **STRATEGIC APPROACH**

The Deputy Surveyor advised that “Our Shared Forest” has now been launched online and he invited everyone to engage with the website: [www.forestryengland.uk](http://www.forestryengland.uk)

## **DEPUTY SURVEYOR’S REPORT**

### **Centenary**

The Commission is 100 years old this year and celebrations have started with, for example, new sculptures planned and a 10k run at Mallards Pike.

More events are being planned and the FC Retirement Association are to hold a function in the Forest.

There will be Centenary tree planting events in November and December, principally in the Cyril Hart Arboretum.

Nationally, the Commission is to have a garden at the Chelsea Flower Show and there will be many more events throughout the year, but to be announced by the Commission’s national partners in each case.

## **MINERALS**

The Deputy Gaveler presented his written report and a copy is attached to these Minutes. He added that Wardell Armstrong are increasingly dealing with leases for the Commission and that the Coal Authority is showing an increased interest in the mining activities in the Forest.

## **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

### **Travellers Sites**

In response to a query, the Deputy Surveyor commented the Commission’s policy is not to act to obtain a possession order from the Court unless there are complaints about nuisance that would constitute sufficient evidence

### **Complaints**

Mr Standing mentioned that individuals had approached him to advise their complaints to the Commission had received no response, both in relation to the work required at New Fancy and the fact that a Statutory Boundary Stone is missing.

The Deputy Gaveler commented he was aware of the boundary stone issue but it is the responsibility of the land owner, not the Commission. The Deputy Surveyor added that this should be communicated to the complainant.

## **Rotary Club Half Marathon**

The Senior Verderer mentioned that the Rotary Club have experienced difficulty in obtaining a date for the event. The Deputy Surveyor commented that this was an increasingly common problem. The number of organisations and individuals who were arranging events has risen significantly in recent years, leading to multiple events being arranged for the same weekends. This has led to more event organisers being refused permission for events, the sooner the event organiser can submit a formal application, the sooner the FC will be able to confirm (or deny) a date.

## **DATES OF THE NEXT COURT SITTINGS**

These dates were agreed as the 26<sup>th</sup> April 2019 and 19<sup>th</sup> July 2019, commencing at 2.45pm.

Both the High Sheriff and Councillor McFarling thanked the Verderers for their attendance at Court. The High Sheriff had found the discussions to be both fascinating and well informed, with all members given an opportunity to make observations. Councillor McFarling echoed the High Sheriff's comments and considered the Court to be very well managed to permit proper discussion about extremely important issues affecting the Forest. He added that the Verderers could have more influence by liaising with other groups to progress these issues.

Verderers

Deputy Surveyor

Steward

