

19<sup>th</sup> July 2019

Dean Forest to wit

Before

At a Special Court of Attachment  
of our Sovereign Lady the Queen at  
The Speech House on the 19th day of  
July 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

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M.V. Bent Esq.  
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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**

None.

## **MINUTES**

The Minutes of the Court held on the 26<sup>th</sup> April 2019 were approved as slightly amended and signed.

## **MATTERS ARISING**

### **High Sheriff**

The Steward reported that the new High Sheriff was unable to attend any Court in 2019, but it was agreed he should be invited to the first Court in 2020 when a date is set for this.

## **IMPORTANT NEW MATTERS**

### **Speed Limits**

It was agreed that two Verderers should meet with the District Council to discuss the idea of a Forest Gateway with a view to controlling speed limits without mandatory signage. The Steward was tasked to contact the Council to arrange a meeting and Ian Standing and Richard Daniels agreed to attend.

## **Yellow Lines**

Mr Daniels expressed dismay that yellow lines had been introduced at various places such as the entry to Mallards Pike and considered this to be another sign of increasing urbanisation of the Forest. Mr Standing commented this was probably work carried out by the County Council's Highways Department to stop dangerous parking at the entrances to sites and as an accident prevention measure. The Deputy Surveyor commented that he would investigate as he was unaware of this issue.

## **DEVELOPMENTS AFFECTING THE STATUTORY FOREST**

### **Forest Forum**

The Senior Verderer requested the Deputy Surveyor to provide further information on his proposal for the Verderers to take oversight of the Forum. The Deputy Surveyor explained the Forum runs twice each year and all stakeholders are invited to attend and hold Forestry England to account on Dean heritage and this was logically an extension of the Court's responsibilities. He considered this should be independently managed and after some discussion it was agreed that two Verderers should attend and one should be nominated as Chair and report back to the Court.

### **COMMONING**

The Deputy Surveyor advised that the most recent meeting of the SLG had been very disappointing as further revision of the 2014 Responsible Shepherding Agreement is needed, this could not be agreed. He was most concerned that Forestry England is seen as opposed to the continuation of communing, but this view is completely incorrect as the policy is to increase sheep numbers but encourage responsible shepherding in view of the constant stream of complaints about sheep smell and faeces in various communities. He added that the number of animals in the Forest is very low and the majority are owned by two or three people who are not members of the Association.

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

The Deputy Surveyor advised that the thermal imaging survey results had been received and indicated that deer numbers had fallen, but the numbers of muntjac had increased. The survey also noted that boar numbers had not increased substantially but had in fact fallen from about 1,600 to about 1,200. However, this figure had to be seen against a background of a change in behaviour as the animals are no longer concentrated in certain areas but spread throughout the Forest and out into the surrounding areas.

The Court heard that two new and experienced Rangers had been employed and it is planned to recruit two more to increase the number to eight, with a new manager to both oversee the cull and also actively be involved in the control of numbers.

Mr Daniels enquired about the Boar Management Group and the Deputy Surveyor explained that the Deer Initiative is in the process of winding up and as BMG is an offshoot of the deer management, it exists in name only. However, there are moves to obtain DEFRA funding for the BMG secretariat and it is hoped this will be forthcoming. He added that local farmers and landowners outside the Forest have nevertheless been very active in boar management and although no data has been obtained, there is no doubt that substantial numbers have been shot.

It is hoped that DEFRA will also fund an aerial thermal imaging survey for three years and a ministerial decision is awaited on this matter.

## **STRATEGIC APPROACH**

### **Our Shared Forest**

The Deputy Surveyor commented that the plan had been finalised, published and could be viewed on the website. With regard to detailed forestry planning, he added that the South East area of the Forest is being reviewed

## **DEPUTY SURVEYOR'S REPORT**

### **Centenary**

On the 8th September there will be a 10k run at Mallards Pike. Centenary trees will be planted in the Autumn in the Cyril Hart Arboretum. All trees to be planted throughout England will be marked with stones provided by a Forest of Dean stone quarry and special thanks should be given to Nick Haughton for all his hard work in this regard.

### **Plant Diseases**

There is one stand of larch where there is phytophthora is suspected and although chalara is not significant in the Forest, it will nevertheless kill all the ash trees in due course. Dead and dying trees are a major road hazard and new heavy equipment is to be used to deal with this problem.

## **MINERALS**

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

Mr Daniels advised that he had spoken to Mark Harper about the proposed cleaner air legislation and was told that he had had a meeting with the Minister and developments are awaited.

The Deputy Surveyor commented that the civil service is very well aware of the heritage issue in the Dean in relation to the proposed legislation.

## **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

### **Court Minutes**

The Steward advised that the signed Minutes of the Verderers Court for the previous two years had been lodged with the County Archivist's office.

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

These dates were agreed as the 18<sup>th</sup> October 2019 and the 17<sup>th</sup> January 2020, both commencing at 2.45pm.

Verderers

Deputy Surveyor

Steward