

28<sup>th</sup> January 2022

Dean Forest to wit

Before

At a Special Court of Attachment  
Of our Sovereign Lady the Queen at  
The Speech House on the twenty eighth  
day of January in the Seventieth 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  
Twenty Two

R.W. Jenkins Esq., J.P.  
I.J. Standing Esq., BDS, M.A. MUSMS Dip.  
R.G. Daniels Esq., MBE.

K.G. Stannard Esq., Deputy Surveyor,  
Forestry England.

K.P. Griffin B.A. Solicitor, Steward to the Court.

Prior to the commencement of the Court, the Senior Verderer welcomed Mrs Rosina Jane Tufnell, the High Sheriff of Gloucestershire; Mr Julian Archand, the Under Sheriff and Mr Richard Stanford, Chief Executive of the Forestry Commission. He also thanked Mr Daniels for kindly organising a visit to Hopewell Colliery form the guests.

## **APOLOGIES**

These were received from the Deputy Gaveller who was unable to attend.

## **MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS COURT**

Approved and signed.

## **MATTERS ARISING**

### **Five Acres Site**

The Deputy Surveyor advised the sale to the District Council for a nominal sum had been completed and the Council will be developing plans to create a sports and recreation complex on the old college site.

### **Cinderford Northern Quarter**

The Steward reported he had been invited to present evidence to the Scrutiny Committee but had declined as he had explained his role required impartiality and he would not be in a position to give an independent view or comment. The Deputy Surveyor commented that Forestry England had declined invitations to attend. Messrs Standing and Daniels had attended and had reported back at the last Court in November, as minuted. The Senior

Verderer added that the Statutory Forest should never be used for development and the whole project had been a huge waste of resources and money.

## **IMPORTANT NEW MATTERS**

### **Election of a New Verderer**

The High Sheriff confirmed she held the Writ and had provisionally booked Gloucester Cathedral for the election for the 1<sup>st</sup> March. Voting and candidate eligibility were discussed, together with costs, due diligence and notice arrangements. It was agreed that nominations had to be in by 18<sup>th</sup> February and the Under Sheriff would undertake due diligence. He also agreed to draft all necessary documentation for approval with all haste in view of the timeline.

### **Queen's Green Canopy**

Mr Standing referred to a Platinum Jubilee project to designate 70 ancient trees and woodland as a valuable part of the United Kingdom's heritage and history. He considered Speech House Woods to be an appropriate candidate and sought permission to propose this in view of the large number of veteran trees. The Deputy Surveyor commented that there would be no objection to this and suggested the Cyril Hart Arboretum be included.

## **DEVELOPMENTS AFFECTING THE STATUTORY FOREST**

### **Paul Morgan**

The Court heard that at 90, he has retired from duties after many years of mine inspection for the small mines in the Forest, a service he had provided free of charge. It was agreed the Steward would write to him to thank him for his valuable services and to wish him a happy retirement.

## **COMMONING**

The Deputy Surveyor commented that the whole issue remains very difficult with the latest meeting of the Sheep Liaison Group cancelled due to Covid and no further meeting planned. Relations with the Commoners Association are at a very low ebb and there have been problems with sheep owners who are not members. Jeremy Awdry has been banned from keeping dogs and so unable to control sheep that are causing a major nuisance in Bream; unknown members of the public have taken to driving off Mrs Turpin-West's sheep and there have been tagging breaches by Kevin Hancock and some of his sheep were found to have trenchfoot.

A lady had applied to join the Association, but her application had been rejected as she is running sheep in one of the enclosures and the Association have opposed these.

Following some discussion, it was agreed that if the Association could be persuaded to enter into a new responsible shepherding agreement, then an officer could be invited to report to the Verderers at each Court in place of the Deputy Surveyor.

## **DEER AND BOAR**

The Deputy Surveyor advised there was nothing new to report on deer, but there remains great concern about the illegal feeding of the boar, especially in an area of Cinderford. Forestry England are encouraging the Police and Local Authority to deal with culling the animals concerned as out of its jurisdiction.

The Court was advised the cull has been very successful and over 500 animals have been removed already. The population is probably under 1,000 and although this is above the target of 400, it is considered the problem is under control.

The number of Rangers has reduced to five, but it is planned to employ two new trainees in order to get the number of Rangers back to seven overall.

## **STRATEGIC APPROACH – OUR SHARED FOREST**

There was nothing new to report, other than the new Operations Manager had commenced his duties.

## **DEPUTY SURVEYOR'S REPORT**

### **Diseases**

Ash dieback has resulted in large number of infected trees being removed and the work continues apace for safety reasons.

### **Beavers**

The Deputy Surveyor advised the beavers are doing well and their efforts certainly mitigated the flooding at Lydbrook by reducing the amount of water reaching the village. Although there was flooding, this was from a source other than where the beaver had been working

### **Pine Martens**

All reintroduction has been completed and some 36 animals had been released, although two males had been found dead from RTAs a long distance from the Forest. However, some kits had been born, so the population is becoming established and now being monitored to discover if the grey squirrel population is being reduced. It is too early to say if this is the case.

### **Cannop Dams**

Remedial work undertaken was a temporary measure and significant work will be required to ensure the dams remain fully operational.

## **MINERALS**

The Deputy Gaveller was absent and therefore unable to present his Report, but a copy of the written Report is appended to these Minutes.

## **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

### **National Tree Planting**

In response to a query from Mr Standing, Mr Stanford advised the Government is seeking to have tree planting tripled and has provided significant funds for this purpose. The reasons are that the UK imports 80% of its timber requirements and also for climate change measures. Land is required for permanent planting and both saplings and labour to carry out the work are needed. There are very strict rules about where trees are to be grown and a wide species mix is required. This palette of trees must withstand disease and be able to cope with climate change, so will not solely be native trees.

With regard to climate sequestration, fast growing conifers will hold more carbon over a fifty-year period and will help meet timber needs and reduce imports.

Broadleaves amount to about 70% of the standing timber at present.

Mr Daniels asked if the public forest estate is to be extended and was advised there are no plans to buy land. Existing land is fully stocked and the policy is to lease land to increase timber growth.

Mr Daniels enquired if the policy is for the public forest estate to be used predominantly for recreation or for income production from timber sales. Mr Sanford explained Forestry England's income includes about 18% Government grant and the balance from both recreation and timber sales. Mr Daniels commented that increasing recreational use has led to friction and although getting people active is so important for mental and physical health, there has to be a balance.

The Deputy Surveyor commented that the appointed Operations Manager's brief is to galvanise delivery of the Our Shared Forest commitments, involving the creation of a series of zones for recreation and for quiet enjoyment of the forest, where events will not be permitted. A further zone will be forest nature reserves where activities such as mountain biking and wild trails will not be tolerated due to the biodiversity crisis. He added that communication by such means as social media will be extremely important to ensure the Forest is protected.

He also mentioned the Severn Treescapes project, supported by the Wildlife Trust and the County Council. The aim is to create an unbroken afforested corridor between the Dean and Birmingham. This would provide not only a great improvement to the ecological state of affairs but also provide quality green space for the public and take pressure off the Forest itself.

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

These dates were agreed as 29<sup>th</sup> April and 1<sup>st</sup> July 2022, both commencing at 2.45pm.

The Senior Verderer thanked everyone for attending and was pleased to have the election process agreed with the High Sheriff and the Under Sheriff. In addition, the contribution of Mr Stanford had been of great interest.

Verderers

Deputy Surveyor

Steward