



**HIS MAJESTY'S FOREST OF DEAN
GLOUCESTERSHIRE
VERDERERS COURT**

Date: 28th March 2025

At a Special Court of Attachment
of our Sovereign Lord the King at
The Speech House on the
28th day of **March** in the Third Year of the
Reign of our Lord King Charles the
Third by the Grace of God, etc. in the
Year of our Lord Two Thousand
and Twenty Five

Before

I. J. Standing Esq., BDS, M.A. MUSMS Dip.
R. W. Jenkins Esq., J. P.
R. G. Daniels Esq., MBE.
Mrs S Middleton B.SC. MBE.

K. G. Stannard Esq., Deputy Surveyor, Forestry
England.
N. L. Boon LLB. LLM. Solicitor, Steward to the Court.

COURT MINUTES AND MATTERS ARISING

Minutes of the Court held on 13th December 2024 were approved and signed

Ian Standing advised the Steward that the management of the website should be handed over in due course. This will allow the Steward to upload all minutes following the meeting.

Special thank you to Francis Raymond-Barker for the very helpful and detailed document containing the forest plans and all of the work which went into this.

NEW OR URGENT MATTERS AFFECTING THE STATUTORY FOREST

It was announced that Daniel Howell has left his previous position and his role as Deputy Gaveller. Ian Standing stated that the Verderers were very fortunate to have Mr Howell work with them. It was agreed by all that a letter to Mr Howell, expressing thanks from the Verderers is to be prepared and sent.

Kevin Stannard confirmed that there has been no great interest in the post to date, but the closing date is not until 18 April 2025, so a further update will be provided in due course.

Sue Middleton commented that the Western Forest (also known as a new 'National Forest') appeared to be a good new development, with Kevin Stannard commenting that the Avon Community Forest has been in existence for over 30 years, with two current locations being Avon Valley and Great Western Community Forest in Swindon. The Community Forest is currently looking to increase the woodland cover. The Great Western Community Forest covers a big section of countryside but its focus is urban centres, such as Bristol, Gloucester, Cheltenham and the M4 corridor, near Swindon. Kevin Stannard confirmed that it is unlikely that the Forest of Dean would be included, although the Forest of Dean are engaged with them. Kevin Stannard confirmed that the funding received is to be spread over five years and to cover all aspects of running the Community Forest, rather than this being solely for one aspect of the forest.

Sue Middleton asked if this means there will be large areas of planted forest, to which Kevin Stannard confirmed that it could mean this, or it could mean smaller groups of trees or individual trees in more urban areas. It was agreed by all that this is good news for both trees and urban authorities and that the Verderers could reach out if appropriate.

DEPUTY SURVEYOR'S REPORT INCLUDING COMMONING, DEER AND BOAR

Kevin Stannard confirmed that Daniel Howell has moved to a new position as His Majesty's Principal Inspector of Mines, and well wishes were repeated by all. Kevin Stannard confirmed that there are adverts in professional journals for the role of Deputy Gaveller and that applications will be considered after the closing date in April. Richard Daniels did ask why the position has only been advertised recently, rather than when notice was previously given and it was confirmed that Forestry England needed to be sure that there was a vacancy.

Kevin Stannard explained that there are two consultations coming up:

Hawthorns Farm, with the consultation focussing on engagement for design of planting, which is going live in May and June ahead of first tree planting this winter.

Cannop Ponds, with engagement being in June and July to showcase more detailed plans that are coming forward to delivery. The options had previously been narrowed down, but this consultation is to discuss these narrowed down options in more detail.
Beechenhurst

In respect of funding, Kevin Stannard confirmed that changing places facilities at Beechenhurst is now up and running. Kevin Stannard was able to confirm that Forestry England has around £1million in funding from DEFRA for the Symonds Yat Rockfall Mitigation project on the site, which has been closed since September 2023 due to rocks falling. Kevin Stannard confirmed that a full business case must be prepared, including accurate costings and the work must be completed by March 2026.

In respect of Wild Boar, Kevin Stannard confirmed that the annual survey is underway. DEFRA are interested in wild boar and the recent wild boar working group, as they are looking at matters from a disease management point of view. Kevin Stannard confirmed that the country is currently on medium risk of foot and mouth disease, as well as African swine

fever. It was confirmed that this is the highest rating without the disease actually being present in the country. It was confirmed that there have been two outbreaks, one in Hungary and one in Germany of different strains of foot and mouth. It is believed that the German outbreak is already contained, whilst further investigations are being undertaken in Hungary. Kevin Stannard has confirmed that should the disease reach the Forest of Dean, plans are already in place for this, with desk based exercises having already taken place. The threat of African Swine Fever remains the same.

Kevin Stannard confirmed that whilst there are wild boar, there has been no practical action by DEFRA to date to eradicate them. Kevin Stannard confirmed that should there be an outbreak, DEFRA will bring in someone to control this, for which Forestry England will assist. This will also apply to wild deer, however, they are seen as lower risk factor, although the number of deer has increased since 2000. Kevin Stannard confirmed that there are still many locals getting damage of their property from wild boar, but this could be down to just one boar, rather than multiple, so it can be hard to judge the numbers involved.

In respect of commoning, Kevin Stannard confirmed that there are some sheep out, but this has decreased in time, as skills have not been passed down through the generations in families. Kevin Stannard commented that times have changed.

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

The Steward confirmed that various letters and emails had been received since the last Court, for which the Steward will respond accordingly.

A letter was received from one resident, who raised serious concerns about the Green and Blaize Bailey. The Steward read out the contents of the letter to the Verderers and Kevin Stannard confirmed that he was unable to provide any detailed comment on this, as he would need to speak with his colleagues and potentially undertake a site visit. The Steward confirmed that she would forward a copy of the correspondence on to Kevin Stannard, so that he could report back at the next meeting, if not before.

In respect of speed limits, Councillor Hoyland has written to the relevant body for an update, but it may be worth correspondence being sent to the Police Commissioner instead of the council. This is a matter to discuss at the next Court.

Sue Middleton commented that she has recently visited Bixslade as Tom Brockington commented that there would be updates, which will be interesting.

It was commented that Rob Cullen has agreed to have a visit to the beaver enclosure, which Richard Daniels and Sue Middleton have agreed to undertake.

Ian Standing commented that it is the right time for him to step down as chair, and with agreement from all of the other Verderers, this position is passing to Richard Daniels. Thanks were given to Ian Standing for his work to date.

Robert Jenkins asked whether it would be prudent for him to step down, however it was agreed that Robert Jenkins provided a lot of key history and he should continue whilst he feels able to.

VERDERERS REVIEW

Ian Standing started by providing all those in attendance with a summary of points on which his submission is based.

1. Future of the Verderers:

The Traditional role of the Verderers has carried on for many years and it is to protect the vert and the venison. Ian Standing provided the Court with a summary of the historical aspects of the Verderers and how they were established. Ian Standing confirmed that the Forest of Dean Verderers lost their judicial powers at the end of the 19th Century, with the Forestry Commission being set up in 1919, with the Verderers Court being made up of landed gentry and other land owners. The Verderers Court developed over the next 20 years or so, with the Verderers eventually being made up of local business people.

Ian Standing confirmed that the Verderers Court has assisted with useful matters in the past, including arranging visits for the Minister of Agriculture to visit the Forest of Dean to look at the removal of hardwoods, with Kevin Stannard confirming that 2/3 of the forest is broadleaf and one third is conifer at present. The Verderers Court has also assisted in appeals to protect the land from being sold.

Ian Standing confirmed that vigilance, action and education is necessary to show how the Verderers Court can help the local community.

Ian Standing commented that the Verderers Court needed to be more certain about its relationship with Forestry England, but also remaining independent for the public to come to them to raise issues or provide their comments. A good working relationship with Forestry England is important.

2. Verderers and the local community:

Ian Standing commented that the Verderers Court was there to protect the forest, the vert and the venison. Ian Standing suggested producing an annual report to be published and possibly advertised in newspapers or other local outlets.

Ian Standing confirmed that the public should be educated on this, with Sue Middleton confirmed that she would be happy to participate in the education in schools or other facilities. Sue Middleton commented that she is very keen to encourage others to have more interest in the Forest.

3. Re-definition of the Vert:

Ian Standing commented that we may need to look into this, as it may encourage the Verderers Court to look beyond the statutory boundary.

The Court then moved onto Richard Daniels' submissions, who confirmed that we should be more vocal with praise, as well as criticism. Richard Daniels confirmed that he believes that should the public raise any questions in the Court, then this should be responded to. It was agreed by all that the Verderers Court carries a valuable role.

Richard Daniels agreed that it is important for us to enlighten people on the Forest of Dean and the issues within. There must be communication out, in order to receive communication in. This would also take some pressure off Forestry England, as the Verderers Court would be able to act as a middle ground for communication.

Richard Daniels commented that the Verderers Court needs to be vigilant about danger, particularly with budget cuts. Richard Daniels commented that the Verderers Court needs to be more confident in stating if there is a possible danger, so that it can be looked into. Ian Standing agreed with updating posted notices and pictures in the Court room, as well as having leaflets locally about the Verderers, with possible topical subjects being highlighted.

Richard Daniels did comment that the main weakness is that the Forest of Dean does not have powers in comparison to the New Forest. Richard Daniels said that it would be good if we can show that there has been positive movement with the Verderers Court and its communication with Forestry England. Ian Standing agreed that it is important for us to

respond to locals rapidly. Kevin Stannard confirmed that it can be difficult to respond to some queries, as there is not enough time to look into matters to provide answer.

Sue Middleton commented that the agenda should be sent two weeks before the Court, and any points should be raised. Kevin Stannard agreed that this would allow him time to look into any points, should they be raised once the agenda had been sent out.

Sue Middleton commented that it is good for two Verderers (both Richard Daniels and herself) to be involved in the Our Forest Forum. Richard Daniels agreed with this and commented that he was taken aback by some of the comments but this is a good route forward. The next Our Forest Forum will be on Sunday 18 May about "Working Together in Our Forest".

Kevin Stannard commented that Forestry England assists with a lot of matters which are not necessarily vocalised, and often attendants at Court can leave without matters having been finalised. Kevin Stannard confirmed again that it is important for points to be raised prior to the meeting, so that he is able to look into these points and provide responses to these points.

In respect of the Biosphere, Kevin Stannard confirmed that this presents everyone and the whole forest with a good opportunity to bring understanding of what the forest is and where it should go. Kevin Stannard said that the younger generation coming through will be the next Verderers and we need to make sure that we engage with this generation.

Sue Middleton confirmed that education is key, as well as site visits. Sue Middleton commented that the recent site visit with Rob Cullen was very good and provided a lot of understanding about the works in the Cannop brook and Cannop Lido.

DATES OF THE NEXT COURT SITTINGS

These dates were agreed as follows:

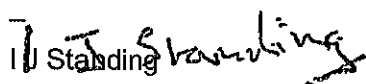
Friday 20th June 2025

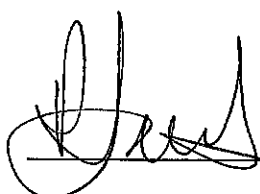
Friday 19th September 2025

Friday 12th December 2025

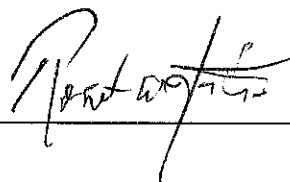
All meetings are to commence at 2.45pm.

END OF MEETING

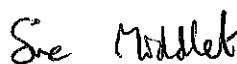

Kevin Stannard


R G Daniels

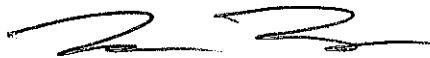
R G Daniels


R W Jenkins


R W Jenkins


Sue Middleton

S Middleton

 K Stannard

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Deputy Surveyor - K Stannard



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Steward - N Boon