

23 April 2015

FORESTRY COMMISSION APPOINTED NEW FOREST VERDERER

Purpose

1. To seek the National Committee's approval for the re-appointment of Alan Barry Dowsett as the Forestry Commission appointed Verderer of the New Forest for a second 3 year term.

Background

2. The Verderers of the New Forest derive their offices, powers and responsibilities from the various New Forest Acts. They consist of the Official Verderer who is Chairman, five elected Verderers who represent the commoners and four appointed Verderers (one each appointed by the Forestry Commission, Defra, Natural England and New Forest National Park Authority).
3. The Verderers responsibilities extend to the commonable lands of the New Forest. Within that area the Verderers main task is to ensure that the owners of the animals out on the forest exercise their rights in a responsible and proper manner, and in keeping with the highest standards of animal welfare.
4. In addition to administration of Common rights, the Verderers have powers to determine certain activities that may take place on the commonable lands. Typically these activities will include requests from the Forestry Commission which involve interference with the common grazing, for example, gas connections to private households, major works on the Open Forest or certain recreation activities.
5. They also have certain magisterial functions as a Court in connection with offences against the Verderers' byelaws. The Verderers meet in session about ten times a year. The appointed Verderers, who are unpaid, perform an independent role and are not required to represent their appointing organisation.

Appointment Process

6. The current FC appointed Verderer, Alan Dowsett, was appointed after an open competition and will have served one 3 year term at the end of July 2015.
7. The appointment is an unregulated position (i.e. not a ministerial appointment) and the National Committee can approve the re-appointment for a further 3 year term if it is satisfied that the incumbent has performed well and contributed positively to the role. A brief report on Mr Dowsett's performance is provided at Annex A.

8. Alan Dowsett has expressed his willingness to be considered for re-appointment for a further term.

Communications

9. If the Committee agree to the recommendation we will formally approach Alan Dowsett and the Official Verderer to consider how best to announce his re-appointment.

Recommendations

10. That the National Committee approve the re-appointment Mr Alan Barry Dowsett for a further term of three years from August 2015 until the end of July 2018.

Richard Barker
Executive Office
15 April 2015

Forestry Commission Appointed Verderer for the New Forest

Alan Barry Dowsett - Background and Performance

Mr Dowsett has lived in the New Forest area for some 50 years. He has a clear love of the Forest and has accumulated a good knowledge of its historical and current management.

He has had a strong desire to “give back” to the Forest and has worked as a FC volunteer ranger for 13 years. This experience provides a very practical understanding of the Forest and the interactions between commoning and the public who use the Forest for recreation. He has engaged with FC staff in the field and has grown into a strong advocate for their work and professionalism.

He is now retired but had a long career with the MOD and Department of Health as a research scientist. This scientific background is reflected well in his very measured and thoughtful approach to issues and he applies evidence well to his decision making.

Since appointment as FC Verderer he has shown strong commitment to the role, willing to represent the Verderers at site consultation meetings and invest his own time to see issues first hand in the field. He has provided rational and well-rounded arguments during discussions within the Verderer’s Committee, encouraging an appropriate balance between the interests of commoners and others who live and use the Forest. He is willing, on a regular basis, to meet informally with the Deputy Surveyor to discuss topics of mutual interest.

The Official Verderer (Chair of the Verderers) has confirmed that he would support the continuity of a re-appointment as Mr Dowsett has been very willing to represent the Verderers at a wide range of meetings and site-based discussions.

The Forestry Commission’s Deputy Surveyor strongly supports his re-appointment and his continuity into a longer term will be very valuable as the FE adapts to its new role.

Bruce Rothnie
Deputy Surveyor, New Forest