

# **Official Verderer of the New Forest**

## **Information for Applicants**

### **Introduction**

Thank you for your interest in the position of Official Verderer of the New Forest. We hope that the information in this pack will help you to decide whether to apply for this position and, if so, how to do so.

Information in the pack includes details of:

- The Verderers organisation and responsibilities
- The recruitment process
- The qualities required for the role of Official Verderer

We hope you will be excited by the challenge this opportunity represents and will be inspired to apply.

## **The Verderers of the New Forest**

### **Background**

The Verderers of the New Forest are a statutory organisation constituted by the New Forest Act 1877. They are one of the main organisations operating in the New Forest area and working to secure its future. The Verderers have particular responsibilities for the administration of the areas common rights.

### **Composition of the Verderers**

The New Forest Act 1949 determines the composition of the Court of Verderers, which is five members elected from the commoning community; four members appointed by other statutory organisations (currently Defra, Forestry Commission, Natural England and New Forest National Park Authority), and the Official Verderer.

### **The role and responsibilities of the Verderers**

The Verderers responsibilities extend to the commonable lands of the New Forest – that is land which is either now or will be at some time in the future, subject to common rights. 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.

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.

The Verderers employ five Agisters who assist in the day to day management of the Commoner's stock. They also employ a Clerk and Assistant Clerk to administer the Verderers business.

Since early 2010, the The Verderers have formed a partnership with the New Forest National Park Authority and the Forestry Commission to manage a Higher Level Stewardship Scheme for the unenclosed Crown Lands of the New Forest. The Scheme will provide in excess of £1.6 million per year for the New Forest and will last for up to 10 years. The Verderers directly manage some £750,000 of the Scheme funds and employ a Grazing Scheme Manager to do this on their behalf.

### **How the Verderers work**

The Verderers Court meets in public at the Verderers Hall in Lyndhurst and subsequently in Committee, to which the public are not admitted. Meetings are currently held at 10am on the third Wednesday of each month except August.

### **Further information**

Further information about the Verderers is available at [www.verderers.org.uk](http://www.verderers.org.uk)

### **The recruitment process in brief**

After the closing date, a shortlist of candidates will be made by the sift panel. Successfully sifted candidates will then be called forward for interview in the New Forest on 25 March 2011.

On completion of the candidate interviews, a recommendation for appointment will be provided to the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, which if agreed will pass onwards to the Prime Minister to put before Her Majesty.

This entire process can take time. However, we will keep you informed of progress and we aim to complete the appointment process by early April 2011.

### **Qualities required for the role of Official Verderer**

To help you decide if you wish to be considered for appointment, we have listed below the criteria that will be applied when assessing candidates. To be considered, you must be able to demonstrate that you have the qualities, skills and experience to meet all the criteria.

Knowledge	An understanding of the New Forest, the countryside, commoning and associated issues.
Strategic direction	The ability to think clearly and plan ahead, balancing needs and constraints.
Effective influencing and communication	A high level of ability to gain support and influence; political acumen with a variety of stakeholders.
Team working	The ability to take on a personal leadership role, chair public meetings and be committed to working as part of a team and in partnerships.
Self belief and drive	The motivation to improve the situation of the New Forest and commoning and to take on challenges.

In addition, because the Official Verderer is the Chair of the Verderers with responsibilities equivalent to organisational Chief Executive, the panel will be looking for evidence that you have a portfolio of high level governance and organisational skills including financial management, risk management, organisation performance management and service development.

### **Remuneration**

The role of Official Verderer is a voluntary one with no remuneration or expenses payable.

### **Time commitment**

Time involvement is a minimum of 40 hours each month. You will need to allow sufficient time to help set the direction for the Verderers organisation and its work, help set meeting agendas, read papers, chair monthly meetings of the Verderers Court, and represent the Verderers in other external fora.

As the appointment by Royal Warrant is "at pleasure", it is usual for acceptance of the offer of the role to be on the understanding that it be placed back at the disposal of the Crown after 3 years.

### **Training**

The current Official Verderer has indicated his willingness to pass on his knowledge. In addition we hope to complete the appointment in sufficient time to allow the incoming Official Verderer to shadow the April meeting of the Verderers Court.

### **Standards in public life**

You will be expected to demonstrate high standards of corporate and personal conduct. Applicants must confirm that they understand the standards of probity required by public appointees outlined in the "Seven Principles of Public Life" set out by the Committee on Standards in Public Life (see Appendix 1).

### **Diversity and equality of opportunity**

We welcome applications from all sections of the community and from people of diverse experience and backgrounds. All appointments are made on merit.

### **How to apply**

Please submit your CV and a covering letter setting out how you meet the essential experience laid out in "Qualities required" for the post, to [Stephen.stafford@forestry.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:Stephen.stafford@forestry.gsi.gov.uk) by 25 February 2011.

### **How we will handle your application**

You will receive an acknowledgement of receipt of your application when you apply.

All applications will be passed to the Selection Panel who will then assess it to see the extent to which you have the qualities and expertise specified for the post.

The selection panel will comprise 4 people, Chaired by a senior Forestry Commission official (from outside the New Forest) and includes an accredited Independent Public Appointment Assessor.

If 20 or more applications are received, it is likely that your application will be "pre-assessed" before it is passed to the short listing panel for consideration. You should be aware that in this situation, your application might not be considered in full by all the panel;

By the 11 March 2011, the panel will have decided the candidates who will be invited for interview, taking account of the evidence provided on your application;

In selecting the best people for interview, the panel will ensure that all the applicants demonstrate the essential experience laid out in "Qualities required" for the post. We will write to let you know whether or not you will be interviewed. Interviews will take place on 25 March 2011. Another

date may also be required and candidates will be notified if this is the case;

If invited to interview, the panel will question you about your experience and expertise and ask specific questions to find whether you meet the specified qualities;

Candidates who best fit the criteria will be recommended to the Secretary of State for Environment Food and Rural Affairs;

If you are successful, you will receive a letter from the Appointments Secretary at 10 Downing Street.

If you are unsuccessful, you will be notified by us in writing.

If your application is unsuccessful and you would like feedback, please contact:

Richard Barker, Forestry Commission England, 620 Bristol Business Park, Coldharbour Lane, Bristol BS16 1EJ.

Tel: 0117 372 1068 or email: [richard.barker@forestry.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:richard.barker@forestry.gsi.gov.uk)

### **Regulation and Complaints Procedure**

Although this appointment does not come within the remit of the Commissioner for Public Appointments, it is being made using a process which takes into account the Commissioner's Code of Practice as best practice. This recruitment is being administered by the Forestry Commission on behalf of the Secretary of State for the Department of Food, Environment and Rural Affairs [Defra].

If you wish to raise a complaint about how your application has been dealt with, please set this out in writing to:

David Henderson-Howat, Director England, Forestry Commission, 620 Bristol Business Park, Coldharbour Lane, Bristol, BS16 1EJ.

Tel: 0117 372 1067 or email [david.howat@forestry.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:david.howat@forestry.gsi.gov.uk)

## **Appendix 1**

### **The seven principles of public life**

All applicants for public appointments are expected to demonstrate a commitment to, and an understanding of, the value and importance of the principles of public service. The seven principles of public life are:

#### **Selflessness**

Holders of public office should act solely in terms of the public interest. They should not do so in order to gain financial or other benefits for themselves, their family or their friends.

#### **Integrity**

Holders of public office should not place themselves under any financial or other obligation to outside individuals or organisations that might seek to influence them in the performance of their official duties.

#### **Objectivity**

In carrying out public business, including making public appointments, awarding contracts, or recommending individuals for rewards and benefits, holders of public office should make choices on merit.

#### **Accountability**

Holders of public office are accountable for their decisions and actions to the public and must submit themselves to whatever scrutiny is appropriate to their office.

#### **Openness**

Holders of public office should be as open as possible about all the decisions and actions that they take. They should give reasons for their decisions and restrict information only when the wider public interest clearly demands it.

#### **Honesty**

Holders of public office have a duty to declare any private interests relating to their public duties and to take steps to resolve any conflicts arising in a way that protects the public interest.

#### **Leadership**

Holders of public office should promote and support these principles by leadership and example