

**New Forest Commoners Defence Association (CDA)
Presentment, Verderers Court, 16 May 2018**

I would like to make a presentment on grazing levels¹.

The CDA warmly welcomes the initiative taken by the Official Verderer and Deputy Surveyor to write to all those on the marking register to encourage individual responsibility for stock numbers.

I have also written to CDA members, on behalf of our committee, emphasising the importance that the Association attaches to personal responsibility on stocking decisions; so that grazing continues to deliver the high levels of environmental benefits for which the Forest is renowned, and to protect the welfare of all commoners' stock. It is imperative that the reputation of commoning is not put at risk by the actions of a tiny minority. Mutual responsibility is the lifeblood of commoning: The CDA's own rules require that no member acts in ways that prejudice the interests of all commoners.

We look forward to the day when, after Brexit, the financial support that commoning so desperately needs is tailored to the Forest; locally-designed and locally-led; building on the best of the Verderers' Grazing Scheme. The Brexit transition, however, looks set to last several years. During these years, before a new scheme can be put in place, we must all do our utmost to ensure that the EU-designed Basic Payments Scheme works to the benefit of the Forest, whilst we plan for a bespoke scheme for the future.

The CDA, therefore, asks the Court to take the following three steps:

- Firstly, as soon as possible, to reconvene the Verderers Grazing Scheme Advisory Group, which last met in 2014.
- Secondly, to develop and share improved data on depastured stock numbers
- Thirdly, to be seen, alongside the Forestry Commission and National Trust, to act on the byelaws, HLS conditions, and other legal tools at your disposal to protect the common grazing.

¹ Tony Hockley, Chair, CDA