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**Presentment - Court of Verderers April 2022**

**Mike Eccles on behalf of The New Forest Commoners Defence Association**

We are aware that local communities across The New Forest would like to mark The Queens Jubilee in some way. The recent presentment by Burley Parish council requesting permission to plant 12 trees is one example. However, whilst at first sight this appears to be an admirable gesture, this Association believes the number of trees and the location to be inappropriate.

In support of their request, Burley Parish claimed to have lost 126 village trees during recent storms. We would like to point out that about 100 of those were Holly, Birch and Willow. None of which are in short supply or scarce, either locally to Burley or across the wider Forest as a whole. Only a small proportion of that number were trees of note.

In the mid 19th century our Commoning forebears fought a battle against the Office of Woods, who were intent upon using the legislation current at that time, to plant tree inclosures over the most productive soils of the New Forest. The commoning interests won the day, leading to the New Forest Act of 1877, which still influences much of what we do today. Planting stands of trees on the Open Forest would be a betrayal of their endeavours, and also flout the intent of the 1877 act.

Her Majesty The Queen has met with Verderers and Commoners on notable occasions in the past, and has always appeared to be both knowledgeable and interested, and clearly understands countryside matters. We would respectfully suggest that she would probably not wish that her extraordinary achievement to be marked in a way which involves conservation controversy. We feel that a prolonged public debate related to something which is intended as a tribute, would tarnish the very thing Burley is wanting to celebrate. We ask that Burley Parish Council withdraw their request and find an alternative to their proposal, which is much less controversial, and more fit for purpose.

We support the Verderers policy and their initial response, and recognise the need and importance of a consistent approach to these types of requests which will inevitably come from more Parishes.

On a more general note, this subject concerns the management of the Open Forest. Matters concerning the Open Forest are usually reviewed by an established multi- agency partnership, including Forestry England, Natural England, NFCDA, and The Verderers. Could you please bear this in mind in future.

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