



## Presentment by the New Forest Commoners Defence Association to the Court of Verderers July 2022

### **Re: Forest campsites**

We welcome the recent news that control of campsites in the New Forest has been returned to Forestry England. The New Forest Commoners' Defence Association (NFCDA) feel that this is an opportune time to work collaboratively on developing a future management plan for these sites, including looking at their longer-term viability.

Given the issues caused by having the campsites on the open forest and the damage seen to this fragile habitat (Protected Landscape), it is highly unlikely that the statutory authorities tasked with protecting the forest would ever give such permissions now, indeed the SAC plan recognised the consequences of the campsites in 2001 and recommended closure.

Within the areas of the campsites there is a huge detrimental impact on the grazing and an increasing urbanisation of these campsites is changing the very fabric of the forest.

This is reflected in the New Forest SAC plan 2001 which states the campsites impact on specific conservation features of the forest. SAC Plan Part 4, 05b Enjoying the Forest, Access and recreation [A24]: 'We will explore the possibility of re-locating campsites within the Forest and restoring the vacated sites where this becomes necessary due to the decline of habitats within the SAC. The requirement was to implement this by 2003.'

Our biggest concern is the conflict between campers and our animals, in recent times the seriousness and number of incidents appears to be increasing. These incidents have the potential to threaten the continuing practice of commoning in the New Forest.

One of the options we would like to explore with the authorities is whether it would be possible to make the campsites smaller and install fencing to limit the interaction between campers and our animals when the season is open. During the closed season the animals would be allowed to have accesses and graze the campsites as normal. We would also like to understand if the camping season can be made shorter.

We feel that we, as commoners with animals grazing over much of the land occupied by the campsites should be informed and consulted on the following points:

1. THAT Forestry England is in the process of inviting tenders for the management of 10 camp sites in the New Forest

2. THAT the said camp sites are on land over which the commoners have rights and the Verderers have jurisdiction under the various New Forest Acts.
3. THAT the Minister has the power to authorise the provision of camp sites on the open wastelands of the forest but only with the agreement of the Verderers as provided for by S.18 of the New Forest Act 1949. The intent of the section is the protection of the rights of the commoners
4. THAT in the event that the Verderers are asked to agree to the grant of a license to manage a camp site on the open wastelands of the forest, the Verderers should deal with the request in open session and consult the commoners and interested parties as to whether they should agree to a license at all or with conditions and should give written reasons for their decision.

We look forward to your response.

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