

Verderers Court: **Wednesday 18th September 2024**

Presentment: **New Forest Commoners Defence Association**

**Forestry England – Verges and Ragwort**

Good morning Official Verderer, Verderers, and members of the Court.

It can become very easy to focus on the negative issues in the Forest and sometimes we lose sight of the positive. Forestry England has had their fare share of criticism lately from the CDA but when good work has been done it should be acknowledged.

The CDA would like to thank the staff of the FE and the Deputy surveyor, for the work they have put in keeping the verges trimmed back and the mammoth effort of pulling Ragwort.

This work helps keep our stock from being funneled on to the roads; it also gives drivers clear sight of any crossing animals. The Ragwort, unless controlled can spread quickly, being highly poisonous to our stock especially when it dies back.

The FE has set an example the CDA wishes the National Trust would follow. Little or no Ragwort pulling has taken place on the Commons this year, the verges, especially in the vicinity of Blackhill, are thick with Bramble, Gorse and Bracken. During the last drift it forced ponies into the road to face oncoming traffic.

The NT when requested to cut the verges, thought the Reptile habitat to be of greater importance. They also considered pulling Ragwort increased the density of the plants the following year.

The CDA ask that the Verderers to engage in talks with the National Trust to persuade them to trim back the verges and pull their Ragwort, although the Ecology is extremely important the public and our stocks safety must be a first priority.