

Verderers Court: **Wednesday 15th January**

Presentment: **New Forest Commoners Defence Association**

Good Morning Official Verderers, Verderers, members of the court

Andrew Parry Norton- CDA Chairman.

Cycle Routes.

Over the last year the Forest has had imposed upon it, catering vans in car parks, the removal or down grading of bridges, and now the possibility of additional cycle routes.

It could be seen as steps towards the gradual ‘’urbanization’’ of the Forest; as always the increasing number of visitors each year, penetrating deeper into the Forest, the Commoners stock , the architects of the Forest landscape, suffer more harassment and disturbance in their natural environment; and Commoners carry the responsibility of legal litigation from stock interactions.

Already cyclists use tracks that are not the permitted routes; they are often seen crossing open Forest with no consequences of legal enforcement.

Reluctantly, CDA committee conditionally accepts the introduction of the extended cycle network as a method of controlling the influx of cyclists: keeping them on permitted tracks with suitable appropriate way markers, however:

The CDA do not agree to new laid engineered routes on the open Forest. A large network of tracks already exist that could be utilized and will have less impact on the Forest. These tracks should be open for cyclists only during the hours of sunrise to sunset, giving our stock at least some quiet time away from people.

Our acceptance is also on the basis that:

The activities of Commoners managing their stock should be prioritized over recreational use; cycle routes in the vicinity of these organized activities should be closed for the public safety, at the request of the Verderers or the Commoners.

The cycle network needs correctly marking and policing. A substantial number of well trained marshals’ need to patrol a very large area with legal action taken against persistent offenders proactively. Large cycle events, time trials and speeding electric bikes should not be permitted on any of the Crown Lands.

The whole network needs to have constant reviews, possibly at two-year intervals; the routes, during this time span, need careful honest monitoring. Discussions can then take place between all interested parties on what is working, what needs to be changed and what can be improved upon.

It must be stressed that these cycle routes are for **all users**, the cyclists will encounter horse riders, walkers and in some instances vehicles. The cyclists do not have sole use and must treat other users with respect and the appropriate behavior. Signage, maps and phone apps should clearly display this message.

Commoning plays an intrinsic and vital role in maintaining this environmental haven and created this special place that so many people come here to enjoy, it needs protecting to exist into the future,

Commoners are under enormous pressure both in monetary terms and mental strain.

The CDA believes that the vital role Commoners provide should always be considered first over any proposals for recreation in the Forest. Every effort should be made to protect this ancient landscape, the practice of Commoning, and the environmental and cultural benefits it helps to maintain for the nation.

Thank you.