

-VERDERERS COURT MEETING 20st August 2021-

Minerals report from Deputy Gaveler

Covid-19

- Most sites have now returned to some sort of operational normality. Every site must duly and respectfully consider staff arrangements with regards to close working conditions in accordance with Government guidance.

1. Freemining - General

- No new requests for Application to register as a Freeminer since the last Court meeting.
- Total number of Freeminer registrations since 01/09/1838 = **4369**.
Total number of Free Quarrymen registered = **320**
- Now named 'Freeminers Folly' and being developed at a slow but professional pace, coal is now ahead of them (the illusive Whittington Seam aprox 3ft thick) and another active mine added to the list.
- The new mine at Oakenhill opened by Geoff Kear initially looked very promising and after undertaking extensive ground-preparation works, unfortunately, has drawn a blank. The mapped areas of the surrounding workings of this area of coal suggest that the coal is unworked but on inspection, the miners clearly worked far more than originally thought. Many of the mines in this area pre-date the Statutory requirement to formally keep plans (1850) and as such it is never certain that what is suggested on plan is truly representative of what remains.
- The planning application at the Northern Quarter is currently under further review and as such the Galees of the Mount Pleasant and Churchway Gales have once again contacted me. I have a meeting scheduled next week to again consider the situation of these two Gales.

2. Coal Authority

- ALL operating coal mines in the Hundred are now fully CA compliant – all now have either Operator Licences or Combined Licences/Lease.
- A 'Virtual' meeting was held between myself and the CA with nothing extraordinary to report. All CA staff are still working from home with it likely to be the case for the foreseeable. Remaining untreated CA liabilities were discussed with the list of priority sites requiring work now being at an all-time low.
- A collapse of ground on Forest Road out of Lydney (on the Norchard Colliery) led to a multi-agency approach to a quick and resourceful solution as this is one of the major routes into the Forest. The collapsed heading was quickly identified, explored, and treated by back-filling and resin injection in just under a week. The work was publicly praised on social media and the newspaper. A classic case of the right people in the right place at the right time.

3. Quarries (Subject to DFMA 1838)

- No new applications for Grant of Stone-tract by a Freequarryman OR Freeminer.
- **Great Berry Quarry** –Mr J McGrindle of Blakeney Hill has commenced production on a small scale. As per our letter of intent, Mr McGrindle will be offered a lease renewal, as the term left on the existing lease is short. The minerals' planning was however preserved prior to Assignment from R Read. *Renewal in process...Ongoing*
- **Knobb Quarry** -Renewal completed and Quarry assigned to Norton Stone of Gloucester. Very little work has been done since the last meeting.
- **Monument Quarry** – Nothing to report. The quarry will be subject an inspection (by myself) later this year, but my initial findings are that all is in order. *The Status Quo remains.*
- **Birch Hill Quarry** - Renewal Complete to Cotswold Stone. Quietly productive and closed during Covid but now operating once more. New roadside signs have been made and are out when the quarry is open.

4. Quarries (Being dealt with Land Agent) including matters from previous Court

- **Stowfield** – Operation has resumed with full staffing. Instructions have been placed with Wardell's regarding the installation of piezometers across the lease area as part of a ground water monitoring program. One location falls outside of the current lease and is being licenced through myself for the undertaking. *From last meeting - Projected figures have obviously been impacted by the closure (and staff furloughed) with April to September quarterly return being 264K Tonnes*
- **Stowe Hill** – No further movement regarding the planning on the option site containing FE reserved minerals. Until this has been secured there is no conversation to be had with Crown Estates unless they begin to extract from the exempted area in their existing quarry. *The status quo remains the same.*
- **Foxes Bridge Tips** – The lease for the rights to extract clay from by Coleford Brick and Tile is up for renewal at the end of this ensuing year and is likely to be offered under the existing terms. To date only a few samples have been taken from tip No.3-*Coleford Brick and Tile have decided not to renew the Lease for the tips on account of samples producing poor quality results and are choosing to out-source their clay from elsewhere. The tips will subsequently undergo light restoration and will become an organic extension to the surrounding wildlife habitat area. – This lease has now been surrendered and will no longer appear in these reports.*

5. Other General Information

- The Mines Inspectorate have indicated that they would like to undertake a visit to the Forest as part of their usual pro-active annual inspections but due to current working arrangements cannot commit to any date. I will circulate when I have received further information.

Final note.....**From last meeting**

- The Air Quality (Domestic Solid Fuels Standards) (England) Regulations 2020 came into force 1st May 2021.

I can confirm that the above DRAFT legislation was adopted as a UK Statutory Instrument 2020 No.1095 and included exempt coal worked by virtue of the Dean Forest (Mines) Act 1838 as recognised under Part 5 of the referred Instrument.

To date I have received no negative feedback as a result of securing this exemption from any outside body or business and as such consider it another land-mark in Forest of Dean mining history. With the completion of the briquetting plant getting ever-closer and the interest of involvement and engagement being at a high, the Dean mines could not be in a better position.

REPORT END.



Deputy Gaveler

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