



Verderers of the New Forest
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Official Verderer
 Dominic May

6 August 2013

MINUTES OF THE HLS BOARD MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY 2 JULY 2013

Voting Members		
Dominic May	OV	Official Verderer – Verderers of the New Forest (Chairman)
Alison Barnes	AB	Chief Executive – New Forest National Park Authority
Mike Seddon	MS	Deputy Surveyor of the New Forest – Forestry Commission
Non-Voting Members		
Jenny Thomas	JT	Natural England
Graham Ferris	GF	Chairman – CDA
In Attendance		
Jane Smith	JS	Head of Planning & Environment - Forestry Commission
Colin Draper	CD	VGS Manager taking minutes

Item	Discussion	Action
1. Apologies for absence	All members were present.	RESUME
2. Declarations of Interest	OV is a commoner & a member of the VGS & Chairman of the VGS Management Committee. GF is a member of the VGS. AB declared an interest in all Wetland Restoration projects because of the NPA's responsibilities as local planning authority.	RESUME
3. Matters Arising from the Minutes of the last meeting	The minutes of the last meeting were previously approved by e-mail circulation so they could be distributed to all relevant parties for action. They are posted on the HLS website. The following items were discussed: <ul style="list-style-type: none">Item 3. 3.2 The site meeting at Penny Moor has taken place and concerns have been resolved. The ditch will be retained but water levels will be lowered in a way that will still allow the rare plant species to flourish; it is now confidently expected that work will go ahead.Item 3. 3.13 The final draft of the Information leaflet is nearly complete and will be circulated to Board members for approval shortly. It was confirmed that the legal issues relating to ditch boundaries have been resolved. The leaflet includes guidance on not using urban features in rural locations, such as: inappropriate fencing; gates; etc, based on the Landscape Action Plan. There has been some opposition to this, including concerns from the Equestrian Association over some of the wording. GF noted that the CDA would be writing in support of the policies.	RESUME

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Item 6. Discussed at Item 6 on the agenda. Item 7. The Programme Register is to be amended to include the payment which has now been made for the removal of bracken litter. Item 18. The FC and NF NPA have discussed possible guided walks/a walking trail on the Forest, but there are no firm plans as yet. It was confirmed that copies of the HLS Account have been sent to Princecroft Willis to enable them to commence the audit. (Afternote. The auditors have now visited and checked the supporting paperwork). 	GH/CD
4. Health Check	<p>The Board reviewed progress on the items highlighted in red on the annual 'Health Check' checklist, where action is outstanding:</p> <p>Health Check Item 2. Underspend. Work on a programme to address the underspend is continuing and is expected to be completed before the next Board meeting. It is complicated by the number of uncertainties. JT confirmed that NE is reasonably confident that the programme will be delivered but would consider withdrawing some funding if it becomes apparent that work will not be completed. OV reiterated the Verderers' commitment to the completion of the Wetland Restoration programme during the life of the HLS. GF noted that the CDA is less enthusiastic but recognises some benefits. MS said that his aim is to provide a fully costed work programme for the remaining years of the Scheme; he noted recent appointments by the FC of 2 x short-term temporary ecologists (1 full-time equivalent post) and a Senior Ecologist who is helping to progress the writing of plans.</p> <p>Health Check Item 6. Ancient & Veteran Tree 'Haloing'. The NPA have been mapping the location of Ancient and Veteran trees through the Ancient Tree Project. This data should help the FC to locate relevant trees but little work is planned because of the shock that haloing can have on the health of the tree.</p> <p>Health Check Item 22. Historic Environment; Programme of data processing and ground truthing for HE features. The Programme is now in place and the post has been recruited.</p> <p>Health Check Item 23. Historic Environment; Data sharing agreement with HCC and the HLS agreement partners. The board awaits NE input.</p> <p>Health Check Item 26. Historic Environment: Assess condition and threats to each feature and create an annual priority list. Completed.</p> <p>Health Check Item 33. No use of anti-parasitic drugs or Ivermectin wormers on agreement land. A letter from the Verderers' veterinary adviser regarding moxidectin has been passed to NE.</p> <p>Health Check Item 35. Record of stock distribution on Scheme area. Details of stock numbers have been provided by the Agisters based on 'drift' areas. These will be included on an existing GIS layer which already shows the areas for each Agister; work on this will be completed in the next few weeks.</p> <p>Health Check Item 38. Determine a programme of specialist species/habitat survey monitoring to be achieved by year 5. The Board was briefed on the programme which was originally drafted by Jenny Thomas and Simon Weymouth. The FC have let the monitoring contracts detailed for FY13/14 and work is currently underway. Confirmation is required from NE on the specification before tendering two outstanding contracts by the autumn. A further set of monitoring projects will be tendered before the end of the</p>	<p>RESUME</p> <p>CD</p> <p>JT</p>

	<p>financial year for completion by end of 2015. Funding is included in the budget at serial 24 in the Programme Register.</p> <p>Health Check - Capital Works. All in hand.</p> <p>Proposals for next year. JT informed the Board that, before the end of the year, she and CD will work together on a plan for next year. It was agreed that the new 'Health Check' table should be produced in Excel.</p>	JT/CD
5. Latchmore Project	<p>FC are selecting a consultant to lead on Latchmore. A date will be set for a meeting with NF NPA planning staff to discuss the scope of the Planning Application and the level of detail required. The intention is to submit a single application for the whole catchment, rather than separate applications for different sections. MS drew the Board's attention to a report, critical of the project, which had been prepared by Tom Langton, an independent consultant ecologist, and published on the Friends of Latchmore website. The Forestry Commission's focus is to submit applications with the correct level of detail to satisfy the Planning Authority.</p>	RESUME
6. Wetland Restoration	<p>The Board was updated on the Wetland Restoration programme. Although Plans have all been prepared and consulted on for this year's programme, problems remain with gaining consents in time for the works to be carried out in the narrow seasonal window, particularly planning permission and Ordinary Watercourse Consent (OWC). Resolving the reptile issue has been a particular challenge and is dependent on NE agreeing a way forward with their licencing team. Agreement is crucial to gain OWC from HCC for certain sites and to progress Planning Applications. JT informed the Board that the NE 'licensing' team is due to visit the Forest at the end of July/early August.</p> <p>A table showing plans to recoup the HLS underspend on Wetland Restoration was distributed to members. JS confirmed that plans have now been written for all the proposed projects and that it is just a matter of working through the consent process for each one. She also confirmed that a Planning Framework Contract had been awarded with three planning consultancies retained on the Framework.</p> <p>Because of the current difficulties with consents, MS confirmed that it would not be possible to spend the £750,000 annual figure on Wetland Restoration in 2013/14.</p>	RESUME
7. 2012/13 Programme Register	<p>OV informed the Board that funding for the Pony Publicity Group at Serial 13 would not be required for future years as the Group is closing down due to lack of support. CD was asked to liaise with the Group over the future of, and funding requirements for, pre-sale shows at Beaulieu Road which perform a valuable function in attracting better prices at the sales.</p> <p>JS was asked to check that all items at serial 33 have been billed and included in the totals</p> <p>The following amendments were noted for inclusion:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Serial 10. Column 'i' delete comment, insert 'Total includes £40,000 outstanding from 2011' Serial 17. Column 'i' delete comment, insert 'Annual Cost' 	<p>RESUME</p> <p>CD</p> <p>JS</p> <p>CD</p>

8. 2013/14 Programme Register	<p>The following changes were noted for inclusion in the Programme:</p> <p>Serial 11. Remove</p> <p>Add new Serials under VGS as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Futurity Scheme (proposed funding of £8,000 subject to decision at forthcoming VGS Management Committee meeting). OV highlighted the significance: it is intended to address the shortage of New Forest stallions as the total has fallen to only 139 in the whole of UK putting the future of the New Forest breed at risk. • A 'one off' cost for Location Beacons for the Agisters (funding requirement to be identified). OV explained that the requirement was highlighted during recent 'Health & Safety' training due to concerns for the safety of the Agisters when working alone on the Forest. <p>Serial 19. Delete comment</p> <p>Serial 23. Increase funding requirement to £56,000</p> <p>Serial 29. Remove</p> <p>FC to add new serials for individual functions including: rhododendron removal; willow and alder coppicing; etc.</p> <p>The Board discussed the requirement at Serial 58 for 'Restoration of Lost Lawn Sites'. It was noted that this relates to 'wet lawns' and mainly involves the removal of encroaching scrub and trees. GF questioned whether or not this would extend to drainage work. JT explained that NE is required to enforce protection because of the International habitat designations and would therefore be unlikely to sanction any drainage work other than minor maintenance on existing ditches providing there was no impact on the protected interest features. It was noted that some of the sites would be sensitive to local opposition and FC will follow their standard process of planning and consultation, starting with less controversial sites.</p>	<p>RESUME</p> <p>CD</p> <p>GH</p> <p>GH</p> <p>GH</p> <p>GH</p>
9. HLS Staffing & Partner Resources for Delivery of Programmes	<p>The Board noted that NE will continue as at present following the recent Government Spending Review, despite a 10% cut in the budget for Defra. It is not yet known, what, if any, impact the review will have on the NF NPA and FC.</p>	<p>RESUME</p>
10. FC HLS Work Programme to 2020	<p>The Board complimented Marianne Bergin (MB) on the FC HLS Work Programme. Work will continue with the aim of producing a detailed programme to 2020 with budget estimates for each year.</p> <p>It was agreed that the FC should approach Neil Sanderson to identify suitable Lost Wet Lawns for restoration, and the budget for this should be included.</p> <p>The excellent Bracken Survey by Jonathan Cox and Clive Bealey has provided the basis for work to control bracken, although the statement that 'there is no evidence that bracken cover has increased' was questioned. The statement was repeated from a report in 1990 and no survey has been carried out since then. It was felt that the lack of evidence is due to the lack of an accurate baseline against which to measure the current extent and</p>	<p>RESUME</p> <p>MS</p>

	<p>distribution of bracken cover, and should not be interpreted as meaning that cover has not actually increased.</p> <p>Trials will be conducted to see whether or not Alder and Willow coppicing is likely to be successful in view of the age of the trees, as they may not have been coppiced for at least 20 years.</p> <p>Summarising the programme for the remaining life of the Agreement, MS said he is confident of delivery, but this may not be possible with existing staff levels. He will submit proposals for additional staff cover for formal consideration at the next Board meeting.</p> <p>Note. The reference in the Work Programme to 'HR1' is incorrect and should be deleted.</p>	<p>MS</p> <p>MB</p>
11. Capital Works by FC	<p>A contract to remove concrete from Beaulieu Aerodrome will be let for September.</p> <p>£9,000 capital works funding has been carried forward for 'car free ditching'.</p> <p>All 3 outstanding items are scheduled to be completed this year</p>	RESUME
12. Historic Environment Consultation Procedure	<p>The Board agreed the proposals for Historic Environment Consultation Procedure. CD was asked to note this for review by the Board in 12 months' time.</p>	RESUME IN JULY 2014 CD
13. Eyeworth Weir	<p>The Board noted the update on Eyeworth Weir, including inclusion in the NF NPA bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF). AB informed the Board that there is a planned HLF visit on 25 July which will provide an opportunity to showcase what is hoped to be achieved. Key to success is demonstrating a strong partnership between stakeholders. OV asked for more information as he was unaware of the bid which also includes restoration of the Verderers' Hall. CD to ask Kathryn Boler at the NF NPA for the details.</p>	<p>RESUME</p> <p>CD</p>
14. SAMs	<p>The Board noted the summary and table provided by Frank Green (FG). It was acknowledged that the table will evolve as more sites are surveyed. JT suggested that SAM restoration should be via Capital Works grants. The Board preferred to use its annual payment to fund Sam restoration to save the considerable management time in applying for Capital Works grants. The Board has this option in the HLS agreement (part 3 page 27).</p>	RESUME
15. LIDAR	<p>The Board noted the update by Lawrence Shaw (LS) and was pleased to note that the contract to provide a LiDAR assistant for 3 days a week until the end of February 2014 has now been filled, and that Stephen Fisher of Maritime Archaeology Ltd has started the backlog of 'catch-up' work for the project. Work is now on track to catch up by the end of February 2014.</p> <p>AB briefed the Board on the interactive LiDAR map of the Forest which is now available online at www.newforestnpa.gov.uk/lidarmap; a brief demonstration of this was provided after the meeting.</p> <p>The significant contribution being made by volunteers was welcomed. AB explained that these have been recruited through various public events as well as the WW2 project and include members of the Historic Group. OV suggested that the NF HAG</p>	<p>RESUME</p> <p>LS</p>

	<p>should be invited to assist.</p> <p>A query was raised over apparent discrepancies in the size of the various areas referred to in paragraphs 1.1, 1.3, 2.1 and 4.1 in the briefing note provided for the meeting. LS was asked to provide clarification.</p> <p>JS will liaise with LS over the FC LiDAR requirement.</p>	<p>LS</p> <p>JS/LS</p>
16. Baseline Survey	FC is currently using the LAS baseline survey of the condition of HLS parcels to prepare the programme of works required to 2020.	DISCHARGE
17. Measurement of Wetland Restoration	<p>Alex Lovegrove updated the Board on his PhD project on the Management of the New Forest (copies of his notes are attached for Board members). He explained that he is in the second year of a 3 year PhD study.</p> <p>His work will cover some 15 wetland restoration sites and include soil nutrient analysis on sites at different stages following restoration, although this is complicated by the lack of clear information on dates of previous restoration projects.</p> <p>As part of his study, Alex asked for permission to fence a number of small areas; these will comply with the FC approved size and design. He was asked to submit a formal application to the Verderers via the FC showing number and location.</p> <p>The Board asked for a further verbal briefing on progress in 12 months' time.</p>	<p>RESUME IN JULY 2014</p> <p>AL</p> <p>AL</p>
18. Bird Survey	<p>Board members attended an evening site visit to the Nightjar Survey on 24 June, and recorded their thanks to Ian Barker (IB). The Surveyor at the site provided positive feedback on the tender process and provided a fascinating and enjoyable insight into the surprisingly large number of Nightjars recorded in the Forest, including locations very close to villages.</p> <p>The Board commented on the excellent progress by IB in taking this forward, and is reassured that the programme for surveying bird species in the Forest, is well in hand.</p>	RESUME
19. Cutting & Burning Study	The Board welcomed the report by the Game & Wildlife Conservation Trust in partnership with the Natural History Museum, and the findings which provide positive evidence, endorsing the current approach to heathland management.	DISCHARGE
20. Open Forest GIS	JS confirmed that work is progressing satisfactorily in populating the GIS Subcompartment database with data entry contracted out to Geodata. This is included in the Programme Register as a one off cost with a small maintenance budget.	RESUME
21. Wet Lawn Restoration	This Item was covered under Item 8.	RESUME
22. Communications Strategy	Following discussion it was agreed that communications should be confined to publicising successes rather than managed as a formal strategy with a planned programme of press releases. The important factor is to ensure that the correct messages go out. The recent visit to the Nightjar Survey was highlighted as a good example: the message that needs to be conveyed is the good news	<p>RESUME</p> <p>Hilary Makin/ Libby Burke/ CD</p>

	about the large Nightjar populations confirmed by the survey, rather than the visit by HLS Board members. The Board stressed the importance of identifying the right stories, linked directly to the output on the Forest.	
23. AOB	<p>Chinese Lanterns. Concern was raised over the dangers posed by Chinese Lanterns, highlighted by the recent industrial fire in the Midlands. The danger on the Forest is both to stock, which are liable to ingest the wire elements with fatal consequences, and to the Forest itself with Forest fires a real possibility. It was suggested that this is something which should be raised with the two New Forest Members of Parliament.</p> <p>Update on Recent Meeting with HCC. JT updated the Board on a recent meeting with HCC to discuss issues with road improvements and other management activities within the New Forest SSSI. NE is working to finalise a management agreement with HCC with the aim of eliminating damaging activities such as road widening.</p> <p>Public Forest Estate. MS informed the Board that a consultation is due to be launched on the 3rd July on the Public Forest Estate Mission & Objectives.</p> <p>Fencing on A31. The Highways Agency has indicated its willingness to consider modifying its design for replacement fencing on the A31. The current post and wire fencing design will be upgraded to post and rail, which the Verderers are prepared to fund through the VGS element of the HLS, to stop stock escaping onto this busy main road. OV will take this issue forward.</p>	<p>All</p> <p>OV</p>
	<p>The meeting ended at 12.33 p.m.</p> <p>The next meeting is scheduled to be held on Thursday 3 October 2013 at 9.00 a.m.</p> <p>List of future meeting dates (all meetings at 9.00 a.m.):</p> <p>8th January 2014</p>	



Dominic May
Official Verderer

