



Official Verderer  
Dominic May

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# **MINUTES OF THE HLS BOARD MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY 30 JANUARY 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		
Andy McDonald	AM	Natural England
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	1. MS reported that the FC will be conducting an investigation into the scope for a sustainable business in harvesting and selling bracken compost as part of a wider study into biomass opportunities. It was agreed that he should update the Board in around 6 months.  2. The proposed site meeting to review plans at Penny Moor, which was announced at the last Board meeting, has not yet been held. It will be arranged shortly. OV reminded JT that the Verderers would like to join the site visit.  3. MS briefed the Board on the outstanding work to clear concrete from Beaulieu Airfield. A map and short paper identifying the extent and description of the concrete on the North West part of the airfield was distributed to Board members. An initial contract to remove <u>loose</u> concrete was completed in 2011/12. That has left around a dozen sites which still require clearing. The remaining work is to remove hazards such as loose concrete, waste heaps, protruding	RESUME  JT

chamber covers and frames, and filling of manholes at about a dozen sites. It was stressed that work would not remove evidence of past use including lines of former roads, light boxes and manholes (which will simply be filled in for safety). AM approved a rollover of the underspend for this Capital Item to 2013/14.	MS
4. Provision of LIDAR data is in hand.	AB
5. The arrangements for grazing payments on the adjacent commons were considered by the Advisory Group. Subsequently, the VGS Management Committee approved a payment rate of £80 per Livestock Unit. This is subject to formal confirmation of the revised "favourable" condition assessment of the Bramshaw commons which JT agreed to provide.	JT
OV also requested written confirmation of the addition of the HR1 Cattle Grazing Supplement for the Crown Lands.	JT
6. The capital works meeting on rhododendron clearance at Boltons Bench is still outstanding.	MS
<i>Note. AM joined the meeting</i>	
7. CD informed the Board that a meeting of the Land Advice Service Steering Group, originally planned for earlier this month, has been postponed until March. Clear targets for Advisory visits to commoners' holdings will be agreed at that meeting. AB asked for a copy of the targets in due course.	CD
8. The update on the Cutting and Burning Study has not included findings and a conclusion as requested. CD to write and request a formal report.	CD
9. MS will clarify the funding allocation for the Open Forest Sub Compartment Database for 2012/13 and 2013/14, and the programme register should be updated accordingly.	MS
10. CD to pass signed copies of the 2012 Statement of Accounts to Board members and arrange for publication on the HLS website. It was noted that information on HLS expenditure is the subject of a current FOI request and inclusion on the website will make this information accessible. In discussion on FOI requests regarding the HLS, it was agreed that partners should liaise with each other to check whether requests are duplicated.	CD
11. OV updated the Board on recent correspondence with Enterprise Mouchel over funding for an upgraded design for future new fencing on the A31 across the Forest. The proposal is to upgrade the fence from the current pressure treated softwood posts and wire to chestnut posts and hardwood rails, as and when sections of the fence are programmed for replacement. Enterprise Mouchel has welcomed the proposals in principle, but needs approval from the Highways Agency. AB offered to speak to contacts at HCC to seek their support.	AB
12. The report from Sarah Kelly on removal of redundant signposts	

	<p>was noted.</p> <p>13. It was agreed that a final draft of the Information Leaflet should be provided in time for the Verderers' Court in February if possible. There is no need for it to return to the Board.</p> <p>14. The Board considered an update on a proposed project to restore Eyeworth Weir. There is no HLS objective or funding for this, beyond an initial capital project to survey the site. The Board thought it more appropriate for funding to be provided externally, perhaps by English Heritage. The possibility of using underspend on the Wetland Restoration programme was considered, but the money for that will need to be held in reserve for when the programme catches up, so this was not felt to offer a solution. JT advised the Board that NE considers the work to be important. OV reminded the Board that the cost of any new capital works projects will need to be met by the annual payment, and it is unclear at present whether or not this project is affordable. There was a brief discussion over tendering the work to see whether it might be cheaper than the estimate, but this was discounted because of the work involved and because it was felt that it would be unreasonable to expect a contractor to go to the trouble and expense of tendering for work for which funding is not agreed. It was also thought unlikely that there was much scope for savings anyway, because of the known difficulties of working on a site which is partly underwater. It was agreed that further work would not be funded this year. AB to liaise with the NPA external funding officer to see if other money might be available.</p>	<p>AB/Sarah Kelly</p> <p>AB</p>
4. Health Check	<p>AM stressed the importance which NE attaches to the Health Check report. This is a 'living' document which provides visibility of progress against objectives. It was noted that the report includes a number of serials for which there are no objectives; however, these are all part of the HLS Agreement and NE wants to see how they are being addressed.</p> <p>JT then went through the report, briefing the Board on the NE response against each serial (completed copies of the report, with the NE comments and 'traffic light' coding, will be forwarded to Board members). OV asked whether completed serials could be deleted next year to streamline the report, but NE requested their retention as a record of achievement. Specific actions/queries are shown below:</p> <p><b>Underspend.</b> It was acknowledged that the underspend is due to delays in implementing the Wetland Restoration programme caused by additional planning requirements and the exceptionally wet weather last year. AM explained the expectation that money would normally be spent each year and that NE will need to have full visibility of how under-spent money is being tracked, to ensure it is not diverted. The Board asked for the underspend on the HLS to be retained and carried forward as a reserve for future Wetland Restoration expenditure. This was agreed subject to a satisfactory action plan as detailed in section 1.2 of the covering letter which accompanied the agreement.</p> <p><b>Grazing Payments.</b> AM queried the timing of the proposed payment in February to commoners, which would normally not be possible until after the second half yearly payment from NE in April. OV</p>	<p>MS</p>

	<p>explained that this is possible because of the cash flow benefit to the HLS as a whole of the Wetland Restoration underspend.</p> <p><b>Wetland Restoration.</b> MS explained that the FC is re-profiling the Wetland Restoration programme to bring spend back on target over the life of the HLS agreement. This will include a contingency plan to bring forward projects which are less affected by the weather. The assumption is that the programme will continue, but NE would consider other alternatives such as 'lawn restoration' which could be based on the report by Neil Sanderson.</p> <p><b>Restoration of Wood Pasture and Parkland.</b>  Serial 6. Ancient and Veteran Tree Haloing. AB briefed the Board on work to identify ancient trees, the "Ancient Tree Hunt" which is being coordinated by Nick Evans of the NPA.  Serial 7. HLS should provide annual funding for control of Scot's Pine (non-native species). MS to suggest an annual budget for additionality.</p> <p><b>Restoration of Species Rich Grassland.</b>  Serial 9. Alder &amp; Willow Re-Coppicing. MS agreed that the FC will identify sites and produce a programme for the HLS.  Serial 10. Included in FC core programme.  Serial 11. Included in FC core programme, but HLS funding would also be appropriate.  Serial 14. Control of Non Natives. Work is in hand. JT asked for a commitment to continue with this. OV sounded a note of caution as the work is largely experimental: HIWT have not yet received the report by Dr Naomi Ewald with an assessment of the work so far, and the Board needs this confirmation that it is successful. A decision on continued funding will depend on results of work to date, and will be made following receipt of the outstanding report.</p> <p><b>Educational Access.</b>  Serial 18. School Group Visits. NE described the performance against this serial as 'superb' and 'exceeding expectations'.  Serial 19. Training Events. CD reported that HLS funding for the Land Advice Service in 2012/13 had been used for the Baseline Survey. The LAS has continued with a successful training programme, but that has been funded separately. Information for years 1 and 2 was not included in the report. CD to forward details to JT.</p> <p><b>Historic Environment.</b>  Serial 21. Lidar Survey. NE is confident data processing and ground truthing is being addressed.  Serial 23. Data Sharing. AB explained the legal difficulties which are being addressed by NPA lawyers. In hand.  Serial 24. JT stressed that a consultation procedure should be in place for historic Environment work; NE consider this important because it demonstrates to the public that all the relevant bodies within the HLS scheme have a procedure in place that refers to nationally recognised standards and professional bodies. MS to liaise with JT to draft this.  Serial 25. Historic Environment Feature List. NPA to set clear priorities as additional sites are identified.  Serial 26. Monuments and sites identified for conservation should be prioritised.</p> <p><b>Grazing Management.</b>  Serial 33. CD to provide JT with a copy of the letter from the Verderers' veterinary adviser, to confirm that Moxidectin is not an</p>	<p>MS</p> <p>CD</p> <p>AB MS/JT</p> <p>AB</p> <p>CD</p>
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	<p>Ivermectin product.</p> <p><b>Survey &amp; Monitoring.</b></p> <p>Serial 38. Programme of Species/Habitat Monitoring. An extension to the target for completion of this programme from year 5 to year 8 was agreed.</p> <p>Serial 42. Survey Wintering Populations of Relevant SPA Birds. JT to advise whether HLS needs to fund next survey.</p> <p><b>Capital Works.</b> JT reminded the Board that claims for 2012/13 must be submitted to NE by 22 February.</p> <p>Serial 48. Open Forest Sub Compartment Database (SCDB). Note. This is wrongly shown as Capital Works in the Health Check; it should be under the heading of Additional Projects.</p> <p>Serial 52 Beaulieu Aerodrome. Rollover of £8,400 to be claimed by February 2014 agreed by AM.</p> <p>Serial 56. Guttering. Rollover of £15,000 to be claimed by February 2014 agreed by AM. It was further suggested that the FC should set up a 3 year rolling plan for guttering for inclusion in the programme from 2014/15 onwards.</p> <p>Additional serials (serial 57 onwards) to be updated with completed projects such as films, Knightwood archaeological survey, lapwing survey, etc..</p> <p>Summarising the Health Check, AM stated that the HLS is going well and is delivering excellent results. He asked how the programme is being managed. It was explained that this is done by the Board, with each partner responsible for their own projects/targets.</p> <p>OV thanked AM for his valuable input.</p>	<p>JT</p> <p>All</p> <p>MS</p>
5. Latchmore Project	MS informed the Board that the NPA is not requiring Environmental Impact Assessment in support of the planning application for the work at Latchmore, but will require robust information on environmental and traffic implications. The FC will proceed with the planning application later in 2013.	RESUME
6. Wetland Restoration	<p>Work is continuing at Queen's Meadow and is due for completion by mid February.</p> <p>JT informed the Board that JBA Consulting has carried out geomorphological surveys for all planned major Wetland Restoration projects. A final report is due at the end of March 2013. In response to a query from AB she explained that the report does not include information on flood amelioration as this was not included in the brief.</p>	
7. 2012/13 Wetland Restoration Programme	<p><i>Jane Smith (JS) joined the meeting</i></p> <p>JS confirmed that work at Penny Moor has been completed as far as possible, given the constraints of weather and permissions.</p> <p>OV reminded the FC (and NPA) to submit payment requests to Colin Draper before the end of February, for all outstanding money due for this year. This will help the auditors and provide a clearer picture of annual spend.</p>	RESUME
8. 2013/14 Wetland Restoration	There is a relatively narrow 3 month window for completion of work due to environmental and weather limitations. Outside this window, work will continue on planning and site preparation including felling.	RESUME

Programme	<p>MS informed the Board that he has employed Russell Wright and Jackie Kelly as part-time ecologists while Sarah Oakley is away and also to provide additional resource in the short term to speed up creation of operational plans.</p> <p>Arrangements are being put in place to tender for advice on planning applications. This will need to be advertised at the EU level because of the scale of the contract, which will slow down the process so may not be in place in time to assist with the work planned for this year.</p> <p>The intention is to submit applications for as many projects as possible and create a catalogue of projects to provide a range of options.</p> <p>The FC has brought forward future year's smaller projects to allow for delays in receiving consents for this year's larger projects.</p> <p>Planning consents will delay this year's projects. Therefore only about £500,000 will be spent in 2013/14, mainly on smaller projects that do not require planning consent. The remaining £500,000 budgeted for Wetland Restoration projects in 2013/14 will almost certainly not receive planning consent in time to allow them to proceed until 2014/15.</p> <p>OV asked AM if NE agree to 2013/14's Wetland Restoration underspend to be added to the reserve. AM stated that the FC needs to demonstrate that there is a future Wetland Restoration programme to catch up once the planning and environmental consents are in place. MS stated that his intention is to have as many consents as possible in place, to enable a switch of projects at short notice in future if necessary.</p> <p><i>JS left the meeting</i></p>	
9. HLS Staffing & Partner Resources for Delivery of Programmes	No further discussion.	RESUME
10. Verderers' Grazing Scheme (VGS)	Discussed under matters arising at Item 3.	RESUME
11. Capital Works by FC	The Board noted progress.	RESUME
12. SAMs	The Board noted the very clear report on monument conservation.	RESUME MN
13. LIDAR	<p>LIDAR analysis is ongoing for the life of the HLS.</p> <p>The Board noted the allowance for inflation in the LIDAR programme. It was agreed that the paper should be reworked to show a fixed</p>	<p>RESUME</p> <p>AB</p>

	<p>figure for each year; this will inevitably result in a surplus in early years which can be held in reserve for later years.</p> <p>The purchase of the Leica Total Station was not agreed, and may be reconsidered in future with further information</p>	
14. Baseline Survey	<p>OV was disappointed that the report on the Baseline Survey was not available. The information is needed urgently by the FC to enable them to programme work to address issues which the survey has identified. AB explained that 90% of the data has been collated and incorporated on GIS; this is a lengthy process and GIS staff have other commitments; checking data against aerial photography is also time consuming. MS stated that the data from the survey, identifying issues by RLR parcels, will be extremely useful.</p> <p>As the report has not identified any critical issues it was not considered necessary for it to be formally presented at a Board meeting. It should be given straight to Jane Smith at the FC for an action plan.</p>	<p>RESUME</p> <p>Julie Stubbs</p>
15. Bird Survey	<p>OV recorded his thanks to Ian Barker for a good, clear, brief and said that he is very comfortable with the programme under his management.</p> <p>GF asked whether the surveys would provide information on the relationship between the location of birds and bracken. AB advised that the surveys will identify locations so this can be correlated.</p> <p>The Board agreed that staged payments illustrated in Table 4 for future surveys should be adjusted to provide a larger percentage on completion of field work, with a correspondingly smaller percentage on delivery of final reports. And for the tender to be arranged in lots.</p>	RESUME
16. Non Native Plants	<p>Discussed under Item 4. CD to write to Catherine Chatters and ask for the report due from Dr Naomi Ewald to be hastened to enable the Board to make a decision on future funding.</p>	RESUME CD
17. Bracken Survey	<p><i>Jonathan Cox (JC) joined the meeting</i></p> <p>JC provided a brief introduction and overview of his report, prior to taking questions (Board members had all received copies of his final report well ahead of the meeting). His report includes a number of maps identifying 11 different bracken dominated vegetation types or groups. The maps have also been provided as a GIS layer which has already been incorporated in the FC GIS and programmes.</p> <p>OV queried the statement on page 7 of the report that ‘.. there is currently no evidence to suggest that bracken cover has increased in the New Forest’ as this contradicts the perception of commoners who feel that it has increased significantly. JC explained that this statement is taken from a 1990 report by Colin Tubbs. He did not have evidence to say whether or not there has been an increase since 1990 .</p> <p>JC explained that the decline in bracken harvesting which tended to weaken the stands has probably led to stronger, more dominant</p>	RESUME

	<p>stands which appear larger.</p> <p>JC offered to help Dave Morris to analyse the GIS results.</p> <p>JC confirmed that bracken could be managed to meet the NE species objectives and the CDA grazing requirements. Bracken can be beneficial to grass, providing a damp climate allowing it to thrive in periods of dry weather when exposed grass dries out.</p> <p>The detrimental factor is the degree or depth of bracken litter which can smother other growth.</p> <p>JC also suggested that the FC might reduce the frequency of harvesting in some areas, to preserve these beneficial effects.</p> <p>JC suggested that the FC bracken harvesting programme could be continued for a longer season to end-February the following year. JT stated that the start date could be brought forward a month from 1 September to 1 August, subject to a thorough check for ground nesting birds before work starts.</p> <p>MS confirmed that the programme this year has been extended through the winter, with a further £2k allocated by the Board for hoovering up deep bracken litter.</p> <p>The FC will consider asking the Board for additional funding for further additionality to its current bracken harvesting programme.</p> <p>JT asked where the priority should be. JC advised that priority should be given to clearing bracken litter in Groups 4 &amp; 5.</p> <p>JT noted the beneficial effects of siting cattle feeding areas on bracken stands.</p> <p>The Board thanked JC for an excellent report which will be invaluable in helping to develop an enhanced management programme. The FC will use it to identify viable sites for harvesting and a planned cycle of management.</p> <p>OV proposed a further review by JC in 5 or 6 years time to see if bracken cover is increasing, and to measure the success of the intervening management actions taken following this report.</p> <p><i>JC left the meeting</i></p>	
18. Cutting & Burning Study	Discussed under Item 3. CD to write to Dr Barbara Smith and request the formal report or at least an indication of the initial conclusions.	RESUME CD
19. Measurement of Wetland Restorations	The Board noted the report by Alex Lovegrove (AL) and asked for him to attend a future Board meeting. GF to liaise with AL over his request for information on sites of interest to commoners.	RESUME GF



20. Open Forest Sub Compartment Database (SCD)	MS confirmed that this will be a valuable tool so work is ongoing.	RESUME
21. HLS Communications	The Board was reminded of the original Communications programme which had been discontinued. It was agreed that there should be a strategy for communications so that opportunities for good publicity are not missed. AB to ask Hilary Makin to convene a meeting, with representatives from the FC and Verderers, to draft a formal strategy.	DISCHARGE  AB
22. HLS Research Proposal – Dr Ray North	The Board felt this was an interesting proposal, but too limited in scope. JT advised that a NE contractor is designing a monitoring programme. The monitoring programme will be considered at the April HLS Board meeting and, subject to approval, will be put out to tender through the FC. CD to write to Mr North and ask whether he would like to be included on list of those to be invited to tender.	CD
23. AGM	The Board agreed to hold an AGM at 5.00 p.m. after the next Board meeting which will convene at 2.30 p.m. on 3 April. In addition to the stakeholders who were invited to the last AGM, it was suggested that an invitation could be extended to members of the Consultative Panel. CD to compile an invitation list.	CD
24. AOB	MS briefed the Board on the decision of the Information Commissioner on the case relating to information held by the FC about New Forest archaeology and the HLS wetland restorations. He suggested that it would be useful for Board members to read the decision which is published on the Information Commissioner's Website.	All
	<p>The meeting concluded at 13.30 hrs</p> <p>The next meeting is scheduled to be held on 3 April 2013 at 2.30 p.m.</p> <p><b>List of future meeting dates (all meetings at 9.00 a.m. unless shown differently):</b></p> <p>3 April 2.30 p.m. 5 June 7 August 3 October (Note: this is a Thursday) 4 December 5 February 2014</p>	

Dominic May  
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