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MINUTES OF THE HLS BOARD MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY 3 OCTOBER 2012

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		
Colin Draper	CD	VGS Manager taking minutes

Item	Discussion	Action
1. Site Visit to Observe Bracken Treatment at Matley and Bracken Spraying Equipment at Ashurst	<p>The Board attended a site visit at Matley hosted by Dave Morris (DM), the FC Open Forest Manager, to observe FC operations to harvest bracken as part of the bracken management programme. Bracken was being cut and removed by one of the 2 Forest Harvesters funded by the HLS. Removing bracken at this time of year prevents a build up of bracken litter which smothers other growth and, over a period, alters the structure of the underlying soil. It is not possible to cut bracken earlier in the year because of the need to avoid disturbing ground nesting birds and destroying nests and reptiles. The cut bracken is stored locally until the Spring, when it is moved to a main site at South Bentley inclosure where it is turned periodically over a period of about 18 months, and composted. It is sold as 'peat free' compost and Kew Gardens is one of a number of customers. Overall, the cost of harvesting operations is around £18k/year and income from the sale of compost generates a return of around £15k/year.</p> <p>AB suggested that there might be scope for a sustainable business in harvesting and selling bracken compost, which might be attractive to a specialist company; the FC agreed to investigate further.</p> <p>DM explained that in addition to the work carried out by the FC to control bracken, licences are issued to commoners to cut and bale bracken which is then used for bedding for stock; licences have been issued to 7 commoners this year. It was questioned whether this could be extended further and information on the availability of licences to cut and bale bracken, free of charge, will be included in Verderers' Newsletters in the hope of extending this practice.</p>	<p>DISCHARGE</p> <p>MS</p> <p>CD</p>

	<p>It was explained that there is scope for letting a contract for removing bracken litter this winter. DM estimated the additional cost at £2,000. In subsequent discussion it was noted that the FC had programmed HLS funding of £10,000 for heather baling which will now not be taking place this year. It was agreed after the site visit that £2,000 of this would be made available for removing bracken litter.</p> <p>AB asked for Jonathan Cox (JC) to include comments on historical bracken management practices in his report (link to Item 17).</p> <p>For bracken forage harvesting there has been a 26% increase over the last three years as a result of HLS funding, from 50ha to 68ha. The aim is to seek out new sites year on year to continue the expansion of this programme. The increase will be achieved by making an earlier start to the programme.</p> <p>The bracken swiping (mowing) programme (though not supported by extra funding by HLS) carried out in late July and August has seen a 20% increase in the last three years from 12ha to 15ha.</p> <p>Members then travelled to the FC store at Ashurst to see the FC bracken spraying equipment. Hope was expressed that the ban on the use of Asulox, which is the only practical herbicide for the control of bracken, which came into effect this Autumn, could be lifted under licence from next year.</p> <p>For the herbicide application programme the target area to treat each season (July and August) has risen, with HLS funding, from 60-80ha to 80-100ha, although this is governed by the weather conditions. It is hoped that by next summer the new Asulox licensing system will be in place allowing land users to apply for a three month licence that will enable the FC to carry out the programme within the normal window.</p> <p>The Board recorded their thanks to DM for an excellent and informative site visit.</p>	<p>MS & DM</p> <p>JC</p>
<p>2. Apologies</p>	<p>Rachel Bailey (RB): represented at the meeting by Jenny Thomas (JT)</p> <p>OV welcomed MS on his return as a Board Member, following his secondment to the Independent Panel on Forestry. OV noted that Kevin has done an excellent job while MS has been away.</p>	<p>RESUME</p>
<p>3. Declarations of Interest</p>	<p>OV is a commoner & a member of the VGS & Chairman of the VGS Management Committee</p> <p>GF is a member of the VGS</p> <p>AB declared an interest in the Latchmore project because of the NPA's responsibilities as local planning authority.</p>	<p>RESUME</p>
<p>4. Matters Arising from the Minutes of the last meeting</p>	<p>The minutes of the last meeting were approved by e-mail circulation so they could be distributed to all relevant parties for Action. They are posted on the HLS website.</p> <p>The following items were discussed:</p> <p>Baseline Survey. JT was asked to confirm that the amendments to</p>	<p>RESUME</p>

	<p>the IOS for non native trees, increasing the percentage, both in the inclosures that have been thrown open and elsewhere, to 10%, have been approved by the RPA. (Afternote. JT has clarified with RB that this only applies to the inclosures which have been thrown open). It was confirmed that action is in hand to exclude those inclosures which will not meet the revised IOS during the life of the Scheme, at a cost to the Scheme of around £80k/year.</p> <p>Removal of Redundant Sign Posts. Members considered a short paper prepared by Sarah Kelly at the NPA. There was concern over the cost of £5,000 quoted by Paul Garrod of Hampshire Highways, for a consultant to conduct an audit of signage on the B3054. This level of cost would not be sustainable for a Forest wide audit. AB thought that it might be possible to persuade Hampshire Highways to provide some of the funding. It was noted that there are 2 elements to the audit: the first stage is to identify clearly redundant sign posts which simply need removing; the second is to identify further signs which could be removed to 'declutter' and reduce signage in keeping with the local environment. It was agreed that the FC and Verderers would identify key areas/roads for audit. MS asked for routes into and out of Lyndhurst to be included.</p> <p>Information Leaflet. Members considered the draft information leaflet which expanded on the information provided at the last meeting. OV highlighted the importance of the leaflet and the urgent need to provide information to people owning and buying property in and around the Forest, particularly those applying for planning permission, so that they are made aware of the need to avoid encroaching on the Forest. It was agreed that the draft would be distributed to the Verderers and the subject will be included on the agenda for consideration at the next Court committee meeting. JT suggested that the tone of the leaflet could be friendlier to encourage people rather than lecture them, as this might be more effective. It was agreed that this might be achieved by including more explanation together with reference to the character of the Forest and local property values which depend on this. AB noted the comments and will gauge the reaction and views of parish councillors at upcoming Quadrant meetings. Regarding cost, AB asked for funding for 2 days staff time for designing the leaflet, which was agreed. An initial survey by the NPA identified around 1,600 properties which should be included on the distribution, but in discussion it was felt that a much larger number of leaflets is required; OV suggested 5,000 plus. The NPA will review this. It was suggested that distribution could include local estate agents. Members were asked to pass any suggested amendments/ additions to AB. The Board recorded their thanks to Sarah Kelly for her work on the leaflet.</p> <p>Latchmore. MS confirmed that work is in hand to identify and collate the 'lessons learned'. The importance of monitoring projects post restoration was agreed. NE has provided £80k for a pilot study for geomorphological monitoring and additional staff – Jinti Gifford 0.7FTE until March 2014, to oversee the study and work with the FC on the restoration programme.</p> <p>Rhododendron Control. MS confirmed that a proposal for South Walk will be forthcoming.</p>	<p>JT</p> <p>MS/OV</p> <p>CD/Sue Westwood</p> <p>AB</p> <p>All</p>
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<p>5. Latchmore Project</p>	<p>FC has confirmed it will submit a planning application for the restoration works at Latchmore. As first step FC will write to NPA asking if an Environmental Impact Assessment is required. The contact at NE is Adam Wallace an Area Manager who will act as liaison between NE and the NF NPA in respect of the planning application. AB explained that a conflict of interest is unlikely to arise as delegation of planning responsibility within the NPA rests with Steve Avery, Director of Park Services.</p> <p>It was noted that Professor Shepherd of the Friends of Latchmore has asked for separate meetings with MS and AB which they have agreed.</p> <p>The FC will work with the planning authority to determine how to proceed where consents may be necessary for future works.</p> <p>JT requested that Thompson's Castle mire is restored ASAP. There is chronic erosion and a high risk of a slump.</p>	<p>RESUME</p> <p>MS & JS</p>
<p>6. 2012/13 Programme Register</p>	<p>Serial 30 SAMs. Consent was granted by the Verderers at the September Court. The NPA has asked for a second opinion on aspects revealed by the Resistivity and Magnetometry survey so work is on hold for a further month.</p> <p>Wetland Serials. JT confirmed that any unspent wetland restoration funds may be carried forward to the following year providing it is spent on wetland restoration and associated monitoring and SSSI improvements such as invasive plant removal.</p> <p>Serial 31 Latchmore. Postpone to 2015/16; amend register. CD to investigate costs so far for preparatory works at Thompsons' Castle / Latchmore.</p> <p>Serial 33 Wide Lawn, Drivers Nursery, Queen's Meadow, and Camel Green Riverine Woodland. There is a significant difference between the forecast and actual spend on this serial. MS explained that it is impossible to be precise with such forecasts with those in use dating from the earlier SSSI costing exercise. He confirmed all work is tendered and overspends (against forecast) on some projects are often balanced by underspends on others. MS to report back to</p>	<p>RESUME</p> <p>Grave Herve (GH) & CD</p> <p>CD</p> <p>MS</p> <p>JS/GH</p>

	<p>the Board on this project overspend.</p> <p>Serial 35 Penny Moor. MS informed the Board that there is a delay in work on one section while advice is sought from NE on how best to deal with some rare plant species. Spend and forecast on the register to be updated as necessary.</p> <p>Serial 38 Heather Bales. The planned work on heather baling will not now take place because of the number of unused bales from last year due to the postponement of work at Latchmore. Part of this funding will be reallocated to bracken litter clearance as agreed following the site meeting.</p> <p>Serial 46 LIDAR Analyst. Members were informed that a new LIDAR analyst, Lawrence Shaw, has been appointed following the departure of Tom Dommatt.</p> <p>Serial 49 WW2 Contribution. With regard to work to restore WW2 sites, GF asked for any concrete areas that are not intended to be removed, or not of particular historic interest, to be left unexposed to avoid danger to stock and riders, otherwise the CDA would like as much concrete removed as possible.</p>	<p>JS/GH</p> <p>FG</p>
<p>7. 2013/14 Programme Register</p>	<p>Capital Works. OV explained that if the application for a Cattle Grazing Supplement is approved, future capital works projects will be funded from the increased annual payment, rather than separately by NE.</p> <p>Serial 23 Latchmore. Postponed to 2015/16 – register to be amended.</p>	<p>RESUME</p> <p>JS/GH</p>
<p>8. HLS Staffing & Partner Resources for Delivery of Programmes</p>	<p>A proposal was discussed to support the cost of the administrative burden of the three HLS partners. The HLS agreement recommends a maximum of 7.5% of the annual budget is spent on administration. It was agreed to further explore the principle that the partners should be allocated 7.5% of their HLS spend to cover the cost of salaries, invoice processing, contract administration, IT support, management and project support. For administration staff, there will be no further HLS funding for redundancy, maternity pay, etc. which will in future be covered by the 7.5%.</p> <p>AB asked for time to assess if 7.5% of the NPA spend covers the NPA administration costs.</p> <p>This new administration support does not include project delivery officers. Currently the project delivery officers are: Colin Draper as VGS Manager, Sarah Oakley (HLS Ecologist), Lucy Andrews (HLS Works Supervisor), and Lawrence Shaw (LIDAR Analyst). HLS partners can still include staffing costs for project delivery officers within proposals for future individual projects.</p> <p>MS offered to re-arrange the Programme Register to show which partners are delivering which projects, to enable the correct calculation of the 7.5% after which the Board would formally consider whether to adopt the approach.</p> <p>AB asked for extra funding for additional archaeology resources to meet HLS requirements. See agenda item 21.</p> <p>MS informed the meeting that Lucy Andrews, the HLS Works Supervisor, will be taking maternity leave. As the HLS Works Supervisor is a project delivery officer directly funded from the FC's</p>	<p>RESUME</p> <p>AB</p> <p>MS</p>

	£750,000 wetland restoration budget, it was agreed that the cost of maternity pay would be from the FC's £750,000 wetland restoration budget.	MS
9. VGS; Draft Application for HR1 Cattle Grazing Supplement	The Board approved the draft application subject to an amendment to paragraph 8 on supplementary feeding. This should include information on existing arrangements for approval of supplementary feeding areas by FC and NE. CD to submit the amended application to NE.	RESUME CD
10. Capital Works by FC	The Board noted the updated list provided by MS. SAMs. Work is now delayed pending a second opinion on the survey. Eyeworth Weir. The cost of this project is now estimated to be £15 - £20k, subject to tender, due to the need for repairs discovered after vegetation clearance. It was agreed that this could be funded through the annual payment if the HR1 application is approved. Cycle Way Markers. AB expressed disappointment that the QR codes on the cycle waymarkers do not contain site specific information and simply open up the cycling webpage; it was pointed out that they should go to the cycle route map. MS agreed to investigate the cost and viability of providing more local information. Long Bottom and Ashley Observer's Huts. AB suggested that it would be helpful if these had QR codes linking to information on their history, and agreed to investigate this.	RESUME MS AB
11/12. HAP/ SAMs	Eyeworth Weir. Vegetation clearance and survey completed. Additional work to repair weir identified. Ashley Observer's Hut. Work complete. Longbottom Target and Observer's Hut. Work complete. Murray & Carter Stones. No further action. SAMs. Awaiting results of survey. Beaulieu Airfield. Will be cleared over the Autumn. It was noted that additional concrete structures have been revealed as gorse has been removed, including 4 large concrete plinths on the East side of the B3054. It was suggested that remaining areas of concrete which are not removed should be checked for botanical interest as cracks and fissures may be providing a 'limestone' habitat. GIS. On track.	RESUME FG/JS
13. LIDAR	LIDAR surveying of 810 ha has now been completed, accounting for 40% of the planned annual target; a further 1,360 ha is planned to be completed by the end of January 2013 which will exceed the annual target by some 170 ha. The areas selected have been prioritised based on archaeological features and project sites. OV noted that he understood that funding for the LIDAR analyst was only approved for 2 years, if so, any extension to this period will need approval by the Board; CD was asked to check previous minutes and clarify this. It was agreed that AB would submit proposals for the future of the post. Aftemote. The HLS Board meeting held on 21 October 2010 approved a Project Control Document for 'New Forest LIDAR Analysis, Data Provision and Monument Protection' which included staff costs of £30,888 for each of years 1 and 2 of the project, subject to review at the Board meeting in January 2012 (the review has not yet been conducted).	RESUME CD AB

	JT asked for access to LIDAR data for surveys but the licence is limited to the NPA. It was agreed that AB would review this and investigate the costs of additional licensing.	AB
14. Baseline Survey	<p>Julie Stubbs has completed the baseline survey and is preparing a detailed report. There are no critical issues requiring urgent attention. OV enquired about how the report would be used, citing reports from earlier surveys such as the Lapwing Survey and a survey of Knightwood Inclosure which have gathered dust. It was agreed that it would be a valuable management tool to inform the Forest Management Plan.</p> <p>AB enquired about the VGS priorities for the LAS for the coming year and it was agreed that CD would liaise with Julie and submit proposals to the VGS Management Committee which is due to meet at the end of the month.</p>	RESUME CD & Julie Stubbs
15. Bird Survey	Early indications suggest costs may be higher than the original estimate which is worrying, especially in relation to the other bird surveys due in future years. It was questioned whether the remaining surveys could be 'clustered' and let together to reduce the cost. It was agreed that Ian Barker (IB) should be asked to submit proposals for the remaining bird surveys for consideration at the next Board meeting.	RESUME IB
16. Non Native Plants	The Board noted the report by Catherine Chatters.	RESUME
17. Bracken Survey	The Board noted the interim update by JC and asked for him to attend the next Board meeting and present his final report (note. The report to be available for the Board at least 2 weeks before the meeting). See also comment by AB on inclusion of historical data on bracken management at Item 1.	RESUME JC
18. Cutting & Burning Study	The Board requested an update for the next meeting.	RESUME Barbara Smith (BS)
19. Measurement of Wetland Restorations	The Board noted the report by Alexander Lovegrove.	RESUME
20. Open Forest GIS	<p>Change name to 'Open Forest Sub Compartment Database'.</p> <p>JT advised the Board that the 'options' in the HLS Agreement do not relate accurately to the habitat. This is because the agreement was set up quickly without time for this detail to be fully surveyed. While there are no financial implications as the options attract the same payment rate, it is important that this is corrected as it could invite criticism during an inspection.</p>	RESUME
21. Archaeology for Wetland Restoration	AB to draft a proposal for extra resources within the NPA's archaeology department to cope with the HLS workload. MS to table a protocol for discussion at the next meeting.	RESUME AB MS

