



**Verderers of the New Forest**  
**THE QUEEN'S HOUSE**  
**LYNDHURST**  
**HAMPSHIRE**  
**SO43 7NH**

Telephone: 023 8028 3134  
 Fax: 023 8028 3101

Official Verderer  
 Dominic May

26 November 2013

# **MINUTES OF THE HLS BOARD MEETING HELD ON THURSDAY 3 OCTOBER 2013**

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| 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                                    |
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| 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.<br>GF is a member of the VGS.<br>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 | There were no matters arising.   | RESUME                                    |
| 4. 2012/13 Programme Register                           | Clarification was requested on an amendment made at line 18b to FC Staff charges; the amount was updated to reflect the admin charge identified in the Statement of Accounts provided by the 'Auditors' (see Item 13). CD to check with the accountants to see whether the project staff costs at lines 41,42, and 42a have been duplicated in this revised 'admin' cost. The Register to be corrected as appropriate. The importance of separating general admin costs from staff costs incurred in project management was noted.<br><br>It was agreed that separate payment requests should be submitted for each line in the Register to ensure costs are correctly attributed. It was also agreed that payment requests should be submitted monthly after completion of a project. | RESUME<br><br>CD<br><br>All, GH<br>MS, AB |

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|                               | It was agreed to re-name 'snagging' with a more accurately descriptive title.  | JS,GH  |
| 5. 2013/14 Programme Register | <p>It was agreed that the 'comments' column (column i) should only be used to highlight issues which need to be brought to the attention of the Board, rather than completed for every line in the Register.</p> <p>Capital works:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A query was raised over the amount able to be claimed for 'Guttering' as the FC has completed 5 km more than the original bid for 20 km, but at a cheaper rate than the NE standard payment rate per metre. JT confirmed that the claim is limited to the 20 km which was approved and that, having been given copies of the invoices, NE can only pay the invoiced rate.</li> <li>• JT agreed to advise MS on the requirements for Beaulieu Aerodrome funding.</li> </ul> <p>It was agreed that Programme Registers should be completed by the next Board meeting in January for each of the remaining years of the HLS. AB offered to investigate the provision of IT support to assist with this, and to see whether it would be possible to link the Registers to enable automatic updating.</p> <p>MS agreed to provide an up to date forecast for Wetland spend this year, by the beginning of November.</p>   | <p>RESUME</p> <p>CD, GH, PF</p> <p>JT</p> <p>CD, GH, PF<br/>AB</p> <p>MS</p> |
| 6. Wetland Restorations       | <p>JS informed the Board that work on wetland restoration is still continuing, but will be forced to stop shortly when the sea trout start to run and the weather changes.</p> <p>Because of the additional work involved in the planning process no work has been undertaken this year on sites at Wootton or Amberslade. Work has taken place on a number of smaller projects such as Buckherd Bottom, Penny Moor, and Soldier's Bog and work is due to start shortly at Furzey and Hawkhill.</p> <p>MS described the background to the requirement for Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) at Latchmore. Although the NPA had advised a formal EIA was not required, NE legal advice is that one should be completed. The FC has also decided to include all works in the Latchmore catchment within one planning application which will require a new screening opinion by the NPA. FC believes it is therefore likely that EIA may be required for the Latchmore application along with the 3 other largest schemes. It was noted that the extra EIA work could cost as much as £1m. As a result of this expected additional requirement for EIA and the resulting extended planning timetable it means that the larger projects will not be entirely completed within the timeframe of the current HLS scheme which ends in 2020. The larger projects tend to be broken down into phases (sometime as many as five phases) to allow some recovery before tackling the next reach so it is likely that not all phases could be completed by 2020.</p> <p>In the meantime, while the EIAs are prepared, work will continue on the 40 or more smaller projects, with FC seeking pre-application advice from NPA as appropriate.</p> | RESUME   |

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|  | <p>JT explained that NE may decide to withdraw uncommitted funds if work cannot be completed in any one year,. alternatively any underspend could be carried forward against an action plan defining when and how the funds will be spent.</p>   |                                   |
| 7. FC HLS Work Programme to 2020                               | <p>The Board complimented Marianne Bergin on an excellent paper on the FC Works Programme of Spend 2013 – 2020.</p> <p>It was noted that the Baseline Survey conducted by the LAS was invaluable in informing work on the programme, which also drew on the Condition Assessments completed by JT.</p> <p>OV noted that some of the terrestrial works, such as restoration of 'lost wet lawns', also contribute to Wetland Restoration and suggested that some of these costs could be charged accordingly. GF confirmed that restoration of lost wet lawns is fully supported by the commoning community.</p> <p>AB said it is a great programme but questioned how the improvements can be sustained without a separate maintenance budget in the future.</p> <p>MS agreed that this will be a challenge but that the core budget will go some way to addressing this, together with the successful volunteer programme.</p> <p>It was suggested that maintaining the improvements could contribute towards the justification for a further scheme.</p> <p>The Board agreed to adopt the report in principle, subject to confirmation when the Programme Registers are complete for the remaining years of the Scheme, if these show that sufficient funding is available.</p> | RESUME                            |
| 8. Capital Works Being Carried Out by the FC                   | Discussed as part of Item 5.   | RESUME                            |
| 9. HLS Staffing & Partner Resources for Delivery of Programmes | <p>The Board considered a short paper by the FC outlining their staff resource proposals. MS explained that the staff requirement is additional to current capacity and essential to the management of the programme. The proposals were agreed in principle, subject to available funding which cannot be confirmed until after completion of the Programme Registers to end February 2020.</p> <p>MS described the recruiting process which can take up to 6 months if there are no suitable 'in-house' applicants. AB offered to investigate the provision of assistance with ecology capability, but the main need is for dedicated staff working locally.</p> <p>The immediate priority is for a full time HLS Ecologist/Hydro-geomorphologist; it was agreed that this post could be recruited immediately.</p> <p>The Board welcomed an offer by JT to write specific HLS prescriptions for the areas of woodland which were identified as not meeting the IOS for non-native species. It had been explained to NE that some wetland restorations passed through these woodlands and, if they continued to be excluded, then in some cases complete</p>   | <p>RESUME</p> <p>MS</p> <p>JT</p> |

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|                          | river courses would have an un-restored section in the middle. The revised prescriptions will enable their retention in the Scheme and continued funding amounting to some £80k per year, allowing key ecological restoration to continue in these areas.   |  |
| 10. SAMs                 | <p>The Board noted the report prepared by Frank Green.</p> <p>(Afternote: A toll bank is a linear bank, associated with a toll gate or house, that in this case runs across a section of the heath land to prevent people from bypassing the toll gate and avoiding a charge. The location of the toll gate listed in the report was at the current location of the road (Roger Penny Way) and was in use from the 18<sup>th</sup> century.)</p>  | RESUME                                 |
| 11. LIDAR                | <p>The Board noted the report prepared by Lawrence Shaw.</p> <p>Attention was drawn to the improvement in the speed and quality of data being recorded as a result of the introduction of 2 iPad minis, highlighting the benefits of this technology.</p> <p>JS asked about the possibility of the NPA providing the archaeological support for the FC work programme which is currently provided by consultants and referred to the NPA for approval; she felt it would be more efficient if the NPA provided a complete service. AB offered to investigate the possibility of setting up a Service Level Agreement (SLA) for this. It was agreed that JS should liaise with AB and Steve Avery (SA) to investigate this further. In the meantime, MS agreed to look into the procurement aspects.</p> | <p>RESUME</p> <p>JS, AB, SA<br/>MS</p> |
| 12. Bird Surveys         | <p>The Board noted the report prepared by Ian Barker (IB).</p> <p>JS informed the Board that the work by RPS on the Nightjar Survey is most impressive and drew attention to the enormous value of the surveys which have wider implications for other projects.</p> <p>AB informed the Board that the NPA has received 5 tenders for the next survey of Breeding Waders, Dartford Warblers and Woodlark. It was requested that the cost of the successful tender should be notified to board members as soon as possible, and also to CD for inclusion in the Programme Register.</p>  | <p>RESUME</p> <p>IB</p>                |
| 13. Accounts for 2012/13 | <p>A revised Statement of Accounts was provided to replace the original draft sent out prior to the meeting. The revised statement includes the total of the CSS surplus which was spent in February this year on Grazing Payments to commoners; unfortunately, due to a misunderstanding with the accountants over the timing of the spend, it was not included in the original draft sent out prior to the meeting.</p> <p>It was noted that the account is not audited in the true sense as each of the partners' budgets are audited independently. The Statement of Accounts is, therefore, a voluntary arrangement.</p> <p>The accounts were approved.</p>  | DISCHARGE                              |
| 14. RPA Inspection       | CD briefed the Board on the RPA Inspection which is due to continue until the end of December. There was a short discussion about responsibility for cross compliance on the Golf Courses; it was stressed that 5% of the annual HLS payment could be withheld as a penalty for any breaches in cross compliance on spraying and  | RESUME                                 |

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|   | <p>chemical storage by the golf courses, even though the greens, which are the only areas where spraying is allowed, are excluded from the HLS area. It was confirmed that the Area Land Agent has been informed.</p> <p>GF asked for more guidance on what constitutes unsatisfactory levels of poaching as NE and the RPA have different way of assessing this. Guidance is available on the RPA website. The following extract is copied from GAEC 9:</p> <p><i>Where damage has been caused by trampling or supplementary feeding in the winter, it should be minimal enough to allow for the vegetation to recover to its original condition through natural regeneration by the end of the next growing season.</i></p>  |   |
| 15. Communications                        | <p>AB informed the Board of the successful take up by the media of a recent press release on the LiDAR project. A draft press release has also been prepared to highlight the successful findings of the Nightjar Survey.</p> <p>JT reminded the Board that it is a condition of the HLS Agreement that any publicity about the Agreement must first be approved by Natural England.</p> <p>OV asked the NPA to provide data on the number of hits on the HLS website<br/> <i>Afternote: The HLS website was set up without any statistical analysis so there is no information on visits to the site; that has now been rectified and information for the 4 months to January will be available for the next Board meeting. Because the website is hosted on the old NF NPA system which will no longer be supported next year, a paper is being prepared by Hilary Makin setting out options and costs for the future of the website, for consideration at the next Board meeting.</i></p>   | <p>RESUME</p> <p>All, Hilary<br/>Makin; Libby<br/>Burke</p> <p>AB</p> |
| 16. Agree Proposed Dates of 2014 Meetings | <p>Dates of future meetings up to October 2014 were agreed as follows:</p> <p>8 January; 2 April; 2 July (STC); and 1 October 2014</p>   | RESUME  |
| 17. AOB                                   | <p>OV informed the Board that he had received a complimentary letter from the New Forest Access Forum, remarking on the 'detail, comprehensiveness and clarity' of the annual report. The letter also expressed the hope that the Board would fund remedial work and reinstatement of the works carried out by the FC some years ago in arresting and preventing erosion on the Forest. MS noted that the original work was carried out under 'Life 2' and that, currently, there is no HLS funding for remedial work.</p> <p>AB informed the Board that the NPA is being 'restructured' as a result of cuts of £250k in their budget. There are no compulsory redundancies, but one director and 2 managers will be lost. A new post of Head of Environment and Rural Economy' has been created and is being recruited.</p> <p>Sarah Hendry, Director for Rural Development, Sustainable Communities, and Crops (within which falls Forestry and National Parks) at Defra is visiting the NPA on 23 October. She will be attending the formal opening of the new roof on the Beaulieu Road Sale Ring which will provide an opportunity for her to meet other Board members if they are available.</p> | RESUME  |

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|  | <p>CD read out a letter from Dionis Macnair MBE, elected Verderer, in which she expressed concern at the increase in bracken on the Forest, and consequent loss of grazing. The letter compared the relatively small area of bracken which is cut or treated annually at present, with the situation in the 1950s when as many as 600 commoners would harvest bracken for use as bedding for their stock. She asked whether the HLS could fund more bracken clearance and suggested that the reason more commoners do not harvest it today is that it has become overgrown and mixed with bramble, birch and other seedlings. She proposes that the FC should cut, bale and sell the bracken and associated undergrowth for fuel for incinerators to defray the cost of clearance. The subsequent growth of bracken would be lighter and ideal for bedding, and, after an initial cut by the FC, the ground would be safer for harvesting, making this more attractive to commoners. In response, MS explained that the FC intends to increase the programme of bracken clearance but that there are a limited number of suitable sites, noting that modern machinery is bigger and more complex than the smaller, more robust machines used in the past. There are already more sites which have been cleared by the FC than are taken up by commoners, so it is doubtful whether commoners will make a significant contribution to bracken management.</p> <p><i>Afternote: one commoner is buying top quality barley bedding straw from Breamore for £6.00 for a 4' 200 kg round bale. Almost certainly, cutting and baling bracken for bedding will cost more than this.</i></p> <p>Further consideration will be given to other initiatives such as cutting and baling bracken and selling it to commoners. The FC is also investigating reports that bracken is eaten as a delicacy in Korea, which may offer another, if somewhat unlikely, commercial outlet.</p> <p>JT informed the Board that further restructuring will take place in NE; she will keep the Board informed of any changes affecting the Forest.</p> <p>Work is in hand to amend the HLS Agreement to include the allocation of HR1 Cattle Grazing Supplement; one or two other areas of the agreement will be clarified at the same time.</p> |  |
|  | <p>The meeting ended at 11.55 a.m.</p> <p>The next meeting is scheduled to be held on Wednesday 8 January 2014 – meeting in the car park at the Queen's House at 08.30 a.m. for a site visit to view the restoration work at Queen's Meadow, followed by the formal meeting in the Library in the Queen's House starting at 10.00 a.m.</p> <p>List of future meeting dates (meetings at 9.00 a.m. except June 11.00 a.m.):</p> <p>2 April; 30 June, and 1 October 2014</p>   |  |



Dominic May  
Official Verderer