

Official Verderer  
Dominic May

# Verderers of the New Forest

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5 April 2012

## MINUTES of the HLS BOARD MEETING Held on Wednesday 4<sup>th</sup> April 2012 at 14.30 p.m. in the Library, the Queen's House, Lyndhurst

### Voting Members

Dominic May	OV	Official Verderer – Verderers of the New Forest (Chairman)
Alison Barnes	AB	Chief Executive – New Forest National Park Authority
Kevin Penfold	KP	Acting Deputy Surveyor of the New Forest – Forestry Commission

### Non-Voting Member

Rachel Bailey	RB	Team leader Hampshire & IOW – Natural England
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### In Attendance

Colin Draper	CD	VGS Manager taking minutes
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### Apologies

Graham Ferris	GF	Chairman – CDA
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Item	Discussion	Action
1. Apologies	Graham Ferris Chairman of the CDA	
2. Declarations of Interest	OV is a member of CSS; a possible future member of the VGS; & Chairman of VGS Management Committee. RB is a commoner; & a possible future member of the VGS.	<b>RESUME</b>
3. Minutes of the last meeting	The minutes of the last meeting were approved prior to the meeting by e-mail circulation so they could be distributed to all relevant parties for Action. They are posted on the website.	<b>RESUME</b>

### MATTERS ARISING FROM THE PREVIOUS BOARD MEETING

4. 2011 – 12 Programme Register	Members were asked to note that the programme register has been adjusted following the audit, and the sum carried forward from 2010/11 has been reduced by £18,782 to £56,897. A query was raised over the reason for the Knightwood Survey; KP will inform members of background to this.	<b>DISCHARGE</b>  <b>KP</b>
5. 2012 – 13 Programme Register	The 2012/13 budget has benefited from the CSS surplus of £357,639 (of which £164,000 is the 5/12 bridging payment) which has been brought into the HLS account on 1 <sup>st</sup> March. The effect of this is to give a potential underspend this year of £265,000. RB stated that any underspend should be rolled forward to next year against planned	<b>RESUME</b>

commitments for core deliverables such as Species Monitoring and Bird Surveys.

RB stated that the Board needs to allocate funding of approximately £40,000 for the Species Monitoring.

KP asked whether some of the previously-agreed spend for the WW2 project could be brought forward into the 2012/13 programme. AB agreed to investigate.

OV raised the possibility of including the 'Agister's dwelling' project based on the redevelopment of the cottage at Eyeworth into 2 Forestry Commission cottages, but KP explained that this work is currently 'on hold' subject to an FC review.

In a more general discussion over the HLS programme, it was agreed that a draft programme should be prepared for 2013/14, incorporating the additional spend on bird surveys and the WW2 project as well as the other programmed items.

It was also agreed that a 3 year plan should be produced, to take the Scheme up to the 5 year point. This is to be a summary on one sheet.

AB

DE

DE

## 6. Baseline Monitoring

The Board commended JS on an excellent report and plan for the baseline monitoring. It was noted that Alexander Lovegrove, the PhD student is only shown as available for 4 to 6 days. AB reported that Alexander is working on drafting his proposal for the PhD and that she would ensure circulation to GF as the HLS Board contact for Alexander. .

There was a query over the 'Indicator of Success' (IOS) for 'cover of non-native trees and scrub species', shown as >1% for Wood Pasture. RB advised that this is actually >10%, and that allowance is also made for trees/stands of landscape importance.

The Board discussed the possible impact of drought conditions on the survey. RB will liaise with JS after the first week of the survey to see what impact this is having, although she noted that most of the IOS would be unaffected anyway, but the survey could be adjusted if necessary.

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AB/GF

JS

RB/JS

## 7. Historical Archaeological/ Scheduled Ancient Monuments/ LIDAR/ WW2 including Work Programme for 2012/13

Since the last Board meeting, a programme for Historic Environment projects has been produced with assistance from DE. KP highlighted the impact of these projects on FC staff, as FC has to let and supervise the contracts. AB requested confirmation that FC will provide the necessary resources.

It was agreed that more detail on SAMs should be identified on the spreadsheet, with assistance from DE.

It was suggested that some projects, including the 5 original projects for which capital funding was provided in the HLS agreement, are being delayed because of the need to refer back to Natural England for detailed approval. RB confirmed that it is standard practice for details to be submitted to Natural England for all capital works projects and this should not delay work if submitted in good time.

There was discussion over the project to repair the Carter Stone over which there seems to be some misunderstanding. The proposal to fix a plaque to the base, rather than employ a stonemason to re-cut the inscription was not acceptable; the cost for the stonemason is less than £300 and OV is keen that this should be progressed without more delay.

All 5 original HAP projects must now be carried out: AB to confirm timescale with dates.

The deadline for bids for next year's HAP & SAM projects is 1<sup>st</sup> October.

The second LIDAR survey has been completed and a new analyst, Tom Dommitt, has been appointed and starts work 10<sup>th</sup> April.

RESUME

KP

FG/DE

FG

AB

As discussed under Item 5, the possibility of bringing forward some of the WW2 expenditure into this year is to be investigated.

The Board approved a proposal to let a contract for £3,640 to Laura Basell, to complete the LIDAR project set up.

8. Health Check      The wording on February's Health Check report needs amendment as noted at the last meeting. It was agreed that RB would liaise with CD over the changes. **RB/CD**
- At the Health Check, Andy MacDonald highlighted two areas of weakness: HAP delivery; and no Species Monitoring plan. Now that plans for both have been submitted to NE, RB informed the Board that payment of the 2<sup>nd</sup> instalment of the annual payment for 2011/12 has been approved and should be paid into the HLS account in the next 2 weeks or so.
- It was agreed that the Board would consider the Species Monitoring plan and the necessary funding at the next meeting. **RESUME**
9. Beaulieu Road Project      The Board noted the accounts for the Beaulieu Road project. **DISCHARGE**
- A sum of £9,000 representing the promised contributions from the owners of 3 properties which will benefit from the mains water supply, is still outstanding because of legal issues, not associated with the water supply or the HLS. It was queried whether or not the other properties have been granted permission to connect to the new water supply, or whether this was being held up until all the contributions have been received. CD to clarify with Mark Street. **CD**
- There was a discussion over how these contributions were to be treated. The New Forest Trust had thought that the money would be given to them to use as a ring-fenced sum for the future upkeep and maintenance of the sale yard. The Board endorsed its previous decision to bring the money into the HLS. OV stated that the authority over whether or not to make a grant to the New Forest Trust is for the VGS Management Committee. RB confirmed that NE would have no objection for either a one off grant or an annual payment. It was agreed that CD should obtain a copy of the New Forest Trust's financial accounts, plus detailed annual maintenance costs for the Sale Yard. The Board will be kept informed of the VGS's decision. **CD**
- CD to liaise with NPA finance staff over submission of an HLS payment request form in respect of the final invoice from M J Abbott. **CD**
10. VGS      OV updated the Board on recent developments including the hostile reception of the revised arrangements for the VGS at the CDA AGM. **RESUME**
- Commoners are particularly concerned over the requirement for a minimum of ¼ acre of back up grazing for each animal to qualify for payment under the Scheme (although that is not an impediment to commoners turning out more animals and there are currently no penalties associated with higher numbers). The purpose of this condition is to reduce the risk of a large increase in the number of animals turned out on the Forest. However the concerns of the commoners have been noted, and a letter is being posted before Easter to commoners, explaining that informal arrangements for additional back up grazing will be accepted, without the need for any formal letter from the land owner, and that any intensive facilities for housing stock may also be taken into account on an individual basis.
- RB queried why the Verderers have chosen not to base individual entitlements on a 'reference' year, such as the suggestion from Andy MacDonald to base entitlement each year on the numbers turned out 3 years previously. OV explained that this was complicated by the previous CSS bonus arrangements for reducing animal numbers in previous years, which would unfairly penalise those commoners who

had been persuaded to reduce the number of animals they turned out. RB asked if the Advisory Group had met to discuss the new VGS as required in the HLS Agreement. OV explained that the meeting where the arrangements were discussed had been very poorly attended; in particular, although the CDA chairman had been present, the other 2 CDA representatives had not attended, despite the start time for meetings being changed to allow them to attend. RB suggested a meeting of the Advisory Group. CD will organise this before the end of April.

**CD**

11. Capital Works Plan

The capital works plan is in hand. KP reported that his staff had completed as much of this work as possible, and submitted the invoices to Natural England, prior to the end of the FY. Work is continuing and further car free ditching will be carried out this Autumn, aiming to start in September.

**RESUME**

## **OTHER ITEMS**

12. Report & Accounts 2010/11

OV presented the revised HLS accounts to the Board. The conditions on the last page have been amended to remove the privacy caveats. The accounts were approved for signature and publication. KP said that FC internal auditors had been approached to inspect the FC's HLS income and expenditure. OV asked for any additional costs associated with this work to be brought to the Board for approval.

**DISCHARGE**

**KP**

13. Appointment of Auditor for 2011/12

OV informed the Board that the present auditor BDO has quoted £1,500 plus VAT for the accounts this year. This was approved.

**DISCHARGE  
OV**

14. LAS Work Programme

JS was thanked for the LAS work programme. OV expressed surprise at the 20 days spent on managing the small grant scheme when only 3 grants were paid. AB agreed to check and provide a more detailed breakdown for the next meeting. AB informed the Board that a replacement for Mark Larter has now been appointed. Georgianna (Georgie) Watson started work on 2 April.

**AB**

15. Partner Resources for Delivery of Programmes

It was noted that there have been significant cuts in staff numbers and changes in infrastructure since the Scheme was planned, which inevitably impact on the ability of the partners to meet some commitments. This is perhaps a particular issue for some of the 'historic environment' work which, as already noted at Item 7, has a significant impact on FC staff. It is important that key staff involved in drafting capital works applications and managing/overseeing contracts have the correct technical skills. OV asked AB & KP to report to the next Board meeting in May if their respective organisations have a gap in resources for the delivery of HLS programmes.

**RESUME**

**AB & KP**

16. Latchmore FOI Request

The Board noted a request for information, subject to the Freedom of Information Act, on the Latchmore project. It was agreed that KP would coordinate and provide a formal response as the FC is managing the project.

**DISCHARGE**

**KP**

17. Staff Matters

There is a requirement for a replacement for DE who is moving to another appointment within the FC at the end of April. KP has a possible replacement in mind, who has an environmental background as well as in project planning and delivery. The Board approved the

appointment on a temporary short term basis until the end of March 2013. This will allow time to recruit a permanent replacement with the correct technical skills.

18. Any Other Business

OV expressed disappointment that recent appointments to NPA have come from outside the New Forest, whereas local people have knowledge and understanding which would be useful. RB informed the Board that Oliver Cook, who is doing a degree at Cirencester and is the son of one of the FC keepers, has asked if she has any work for him during the summer. She will liaise with him and see if there is an opportunity for him to assist JS with her survey.

RB

AB presented 4 ideas for landscape projects for future discussion, and asked for comments and suggestions to be forwarded to her.

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19. Dates & Format of Future Meetings

The Board approved a proposal to move from 4 to 6 meetings a year. These will be limited to no longer than half a day each. Meetings will alternate between a "monitoring" meeting at which members will visit a project and invite visitors to brief the Board on their projects, and executive meetings which will involve only Board members. The dates for meetings up until the end of the year were agreed. CD was asked to inform all those who attended the last meeting.

DISCHARGE

Future meetings:

30 May 2012

1 August 2012

3 October 2012

5 December 2012

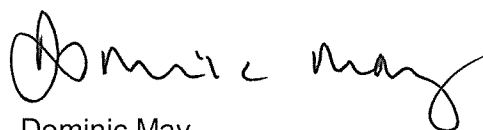
30 January 2013

CD

Action DE to book the Library

The meeting concluded at 1650 hours

**The next meeting will be on 30 May.**



Dominic May  
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