



Verderers of the New Forest

THE QUEEN'S HOUSE
LYNDHURST
HAMPSHIRE
SO43 7NH

Official Verderer
Dominic May

Telephone: 023 8028 3134
Fax: 023 8028 3101

15 February 2012

MINUTES of the HLS BOARD MEETING Held on Wednesday 8th February 2012 at 10.00 a.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 Members		
Rachel Bailey	RB	Team leader Hampshire & IOW – Natural England
Graham Ferris	GF	Chairman – CDA
In Attendance		
Andy McDonald	AM	Regional Manager East, London, and the South East – Natural England
Colin Draper	CD	VGS Manager taking minutes

Item	Discussion	
1. Site Visit to Pondhead	Board members viewed the proposed SSSI restoration works at Pondhead near Lyndhurst.	DISCHARGE
Additional briefing	The Board was given a short update on the SSSI restoration project at Latchmore by Sarah Oakley of the Forestry Commission. The first phase of felling to enable the live ordnance survey to take place, ahead of stream restoration later in the summer, has been completed. A second phase of felling will take place later in the year. Local opposition still remains with a public meeting organised by those opposed to the project, on 22 February, the FC will attend.	DISCHARGE
2. Apologies	There were no apologies for absence.	RESUME
3. Minutes of the last meeting	<p>The minutes of the last meeting are to be amended to incorporate comments by Andy MacDonald under Any Other Business regarding the forthcoming Health Check, particularly the importance of the full spend on SSSI wetland restoration. The amended minutes will be circulated for agreement out of committee.</p> <p>It was agreed that from now on, minutes will not wait for the next Board meeting for approval, but would be agreed by Board members by e mail circulation immediately after the Board meeting. The main advantage would be their earlier publication on the web site, and earlier distribution</p>	<p>RESUME</p> <p>Action CD</p>

	to staff for action.	
4. Declarations of Interest	OV is a member of CSS; a possible future member of the VGS; & Chairman of VGS Management Committee. GF is a member of CSS; & a possible future member of the VGS. RB is a commoner; & a possible future member of the VGS.	RESUME
5. Audit of Accounts	<p>OV apologised for the delay in the completion of the financial report. The audit was originally intended to cover the CSS only, but now being part of the HLS, the auditor felt unable to continue without preparing accounts for the HLS. The result is not a full audit because it is not possible to audit the other partner organisations which have their own audit procedures. This is noted in the report on page 5. The 'confidential' caveat included by the auditor will be removed as the report is part of the public record and will be displayed on the HLS website. The surplus for year 1 is about £56k.</p> <p>OV informed the board that the CSS surplus at the commencement of the HLS has now been brought into the programme register for 2012 and will be used to pay for the 5/12 payment bridging the 5 month gap between the old CSS which ended on 30th Sept 2011 and the start of the new VGS on 1st March 2012.</p> <p>GF queried the link to the FC & NPA audits and suggested the need for a letter confirming their accounts. KP explained that the FC accounts are audited at a national level although it would be possible to request an internal audit to provide assurance for the HLS, and this was agreed as a sensible way forward. AB said that the Chief Finance Officer for the NPA would provide a letter confirming their accounts.</p> <p>RB asked for explanation of the timing of expenditure and amounts repaid to partners for year 1 and how assets are recorded. Although actual payment may have been made after the end of the Scheme year, the auditors have accrued the expenditure as it was incurred.</p> <p>Assets are recorded on a register held by Denise Eccles (DE).</p> <p>The accounts were approved for signature by the chairman.</p>	<p>DISCHARGE</p> <p>Action KP Action AB</p> <p>Action OV</p>
6. 2011/12 Programme Register	The accounts for 2010/11 showed a reduced surplus of £56,000 instead of the budgeted £76,000 surplus. The 2011/12 Programme Register will be amended accordingly to show the reduced surplus carried forward.	<p>RESUME</p> <p>Action DE</p>
7. 2012/13 Programme Register	<p>As already noted, the CSS surplus will be brought into 2012/13 now that the CSS will end 29th Feb 2012. This will be partly used to finance the 5/12 bridging payment between the old CSS and new VGS schemes.</p> <p>The amount budgeted for VGS payments to members has reduced from £550k to £420k because of the realisation that HLS grazing payments can only be paid to stock grazing on Crown lands, and cannot be paid out of area i.e. to stock grazing on the adjacent commons. This is a change from the CSS arrangements which did not differentiate between Crown land and adjacent commons in separate ownership, all of which now have their own HLS schemes. Other factors have also reduced planned expenditure in 2012/13: e.g. car free ditching, which is now funded as a Capital Item; reduced admin costs with the redundancy of the HLS manager. As a result there is now a potential underspend in 2012/13, which should be used to catch up with the average £750,000 annual wetland restoration required in the HLS agreement.</p> <p>OV informed the Board that an annual "cash flow by month" report will be</p>	RESUME

	<p>prepared.</p> <p>RB suggested that non-native plants project expenditure should not be shown under 'wetland restoration'.</p>	<p>Action CD Action DE</p> <p>Action DE</p>
8. Role of LAS	<p>OV briefed the Board on his concerns over the support provided by the LAS and the need for changes to their role to be formalised to ensure value for money. It was noted that there has been a reduction in staff working for HLS objectives due to (a) the departure of Mark Larter (ML) back to NE, and (b) HIWT stipulating that their officer within LAS should not carry out any NF HLS work. The original remit of LAS was to provide advice to land owners/managers to reduce the risk of breaches of cross compliance, the expansion of remit to include providing ecology support to the HLS needs formal agreement. The Board was informed that the NPA has made funding available for third person to join LAS as a replacement for ML on a one year contract, which was welcomed. OV explained that using LAS to provide ecology support to the HLS would not only provide continuity over the life of the scheme, but could also ensure the continued funding of LAS by the HLS beyond the currently agreed period. The changes to their role were agreed and clear direction on priorities will now be given to the steering group.</p>	<p>DISCHARGE</p> <p>Action AB Action OV</p>
11. Bracken Survey	<p>Jonathan Cox (JC) briefed the Board on the Bracken Survey. A sum of £15k over 2 years has been budgeted for this but so far only 1/6 of the area has been surveyed at a cost of £8k. It was explained that the initial FC estimate was that there were only 1,100 ha of bracken, but actual bracken coverage is over 3,000 ha. JC suggested that there are more cost effective ways of conducting the survey including: remote sensing aircraft; infra red; satellite imaging – followed by a targeted survey on the ground to inform a management plan. The option of using LIDAR data could be helpful, although as this was collected in the winter it may not adequately identify bracken at this time of year. It was agreed that this should be investigated, together with the use of existing aerial images.</p> <p>Following further discussion on bracken cover and the options for different RLR parcels, it was clear that JC needed to refer to the HLS agreement and it was agreed that this should be provided for him.</p> <p>OV thanked JC and noted the importance of this work which is a good use of HLS money. It was agreed that the study should continue and funding will be provided in the budget for next year.</p>	<p>RESUME</p> <p>Action JC</p> <p>Action CD</p> <p>Action DE</p>
12. Bird Survey	<p>Ian Barker (IB) briefed the Board on recommended methodologies for the bird surveys including a proposed timetable.</p> <p>KP informed the Board that the FC would wish to survey suitable habitat in the inclosures so that we had a full picture covering the whole of the forest. KP accepted that HLS would only fund areas in the agreement.</p> <p>The board thanked IB and asked him to draw up firm specifications ready to go out to tender, for consideration by the board as follows: May board meeting – nightjar survey August board meeting – wintering Hen Harriers October board meeting – Dartford Warbler, woodlark and breeding waders</p>	<p>RESUME</p> <p>Action IB Action IB Action IB</p>
13. Breeding Waders	<p>A report on the survey conducted in 2011 by E Wiseman, was included in the notes provided to members prior to the meeting. OV expressed surprise that the HLS had already commissioned and paid for a bird</p>	<p>DISCHARGE</p>

	<p>survey of which he had been unaware. The survey was confined to a small number of sensitive sites, but the data will be incorporated in the 'comprehensive' (100%) surveys due to be conducted. The report makes a specific recommendation that the current policy to allow grassland at Crockford to revert to heather should be reversed because of its importance for Lapwing breeding. KP explained that this may be difficult because of changes in the pH of the soil over time. KP noted that it may not always be possible to adopt such recommendations and that they must be considered in a wider context, but he will look into this.</p> <p>It was noted that a process needs to be established for addressing recommendations contained in reports to the HLS board.</p>	<p>Action KP</p> <p>Action GF</p>
23. Update on Wetland Restoration	<p>Simon Weymouth (SW) briefed the Board on the programme for wetland restoration over the life of the HLS. A copy of the 10 year programme was provided for members. SW explained the difficulty in accurately predicting the cost of each project and a discussion followed on the conflicting merits of 'quotes' and 'estimates'. Although the actual cost of contracts based on estimates may rise, experience gained by the FC ensures that such increases are based on reasonable additional costs. FC advice is that this system provides best value for money. The quality of work is also a key factor in selecting a contractor. The programme is not based on specific priorities, but has been drawn up to spread work geographically each year, with a mix of larger & smaller restorations each year too.</p> <p>AM asked SW to add a list of further SSSI wetland restorations to the end of the list, in case of a future requirement for alternative or additional projects.</p> <p>AB was pleased to see sites where we anticipated a higher level of public interest had been highlighted.</p> <p>As a result of the potential underspend in 2012/13, SW was asked whether it was possible to bring forward additional projects from future years up to £180,000 in value. This will relieve pressure on the budgets for 2013/14 & 2014/15 when the bird surveys will need funding. SW suggested that the SSSI restoration originally programmed in 2013/14 for Soldier's Bog and Harvest Slade may be brought forward to this summer.</p> <p>The Board thanked SW for all his work during his time working for the FC in the New Forest, and extended their best wishes to him for the future, on his departure in March.</p>	<p>DISCHARGE</p> <p>Action SW</p> <p>Action SW</p> <p>Action SW</p>
14. Non Native Plants	<p>Catherine Chatters (CC) briefed the Board on progress on the trial of methods to control New Zealand Pygmyweed (<i>Crassula Helmsii</i>) and Parrots Feather (<i>Myriophyllum aquaticum</i>) in the New Forest. The trials have been adversely affected by the weather with unseasonable water levels making trials impossible at times. Since the Board was briefed at the last meeting, additional sites have been treated. The results will continue to be monitored and evaluated.</p> <p>AM asked for the effect on non-target species to be included in the report on the trials.</p> <p>CC requested confirmation of funding for the second year of the project. It was noted that there should be a process for notifying project managers when funding is approved by the Board, It was agreed to write and confirm funding for year 2.</p>	<p>DISCHARGE</p> <p>Action CD</p>

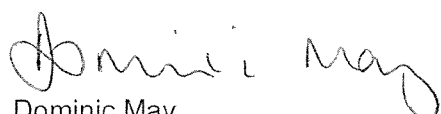
	CC will report the results of the trials to the Board in Jan 2013. It was agreed that the Board would consider a bid for further funding for control of non-native plants if the trials prove successful at an acceptable cost.	Action CC
15. LAS	<p>Julie Stubbs briefed the Board on the work of the LAS and provided a detailed report showing the number of commoners visited, advised & trained. The report also included a table showing the number of days spent on the various commitments in support of the Scheme during 2011/12, with a forecast to the end of March. She confirmed that recruitment of a third team member will take place this spring. She explained that Rhys Morgan is funded entirely by the Hampshire & Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust and is therefore not available to assist with any of the monitoring or survey work for the HLS. However, with LAS back up to 3 members, and with the added resource of the PhD student part funded by the HLS, the team should be able to provide the full service to the HLS.</p> <p>AB said it was important that there should be a clear process for setting the work programme for LAS, with the flexibility to address new tasks, and highlighted again the role of the Steering Group. It was agreed that the LAS should submit draft proposals showing the amount of time allocated to different tasks for the coming year for consideration by the steering group at their next meeting in March.</p> <p>The Board agreed that LAS should carry out the FEP for the additional RLR parcels, and any future FEPs which the HLS may require.</p> <p>AB recommended that the Board should deal direct with JS who is the manager of LAS. RB will continue to represent the Board on the LAS steering group.</p>	<p>DISCHARGE</p> <p>Action JS</p> <p>Action JS</p>
16. Baseline Monitoring	LAS will conduct the baseline monitoring surveys of RLR parcels in the HLS area. It was acknowledged that this would inevitably impact on the amount of time the team would have available to provide advice to commoners this year.	<p>RESUME</p> <p>Action JS</p>
17. Historical & Archaeological (HAP); Scheduled Ancient Monuments (SAM); LIDAR; WWII project	<p>A report by Frank Green, who was unable to attend the meeting, was considered:</p> <p>HAP</p> <p>Long Bottom Target £12,000 (to include Observers Hut). The recommendation for this site is to demolish the dangerous portion of the structure. OV asked that the machinery is preserved. It was noted that the project was proposed by the NF HAG who should be kept informed before any work is started.</p> <p>Long Bottom Observers' Hut. This is a relatively small structure requiring only minor attention; repairs to this could be carried out by an approved FC building contractor.</p> <p>Ashley Walk Observers Hut £1,500. Again, this requires only minor conservation work.</p> <p>Eyeworth Weir £1,200. A query was raised over the funding for repairs to this structure. There is no record of a bid for funding although FG understood that a separate capital works bid has been submitted. The situation needs to be clarified.</p> <p>Beaulieu Heath Concrete Removal £20,000. Work on this is in hand by</p>	<p>RESUME</p> <p>Action FG Action FG</p> <p>Action KP</p> <p>Action DE</p> <p>Action KP</p>

Cutting and Burning	now reduced from £30k to £7.5k as the project has received offers of funding of £15k from the NPA Sustainable Development Fund and £7.5k from the NT HLS. It was noted that the project seemed more biased toward heather than gorse and it was agreed that OV should write back and ask them to encompass all New Forest Heathland that includes the complex of gorse, and secondly, ensure that it is a comparison of the 3 management types in the New Forest: burning; flailing and baling. Funding was approved subject to a satisfactory response.	Action OV
20. RLR Parcels	<p>A meeting with NE was held on 20 January to identify the work necessary to address discrepancies in the mapping for the HLS area. This is broken down into 3 sections:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Parcels already registered with the RLR which simply need adding to, or in some cases removing from, the Scheme. Work on this is in hand and will provide a net gain of £9k pa. 2. A number of parcels which are not registered with the RLR and therefore can't be processed by NE until this is done. Inclusion in the Scheme area will also require completion of a Farm Environment Plan (FEP). It was confirmed that this should be completed by the LAS. DE to provide JS with the list of parcels for JS to carry out FEP. 3. A large number of very small parcels largely consisting of boundary mismatches. Work to include these on the RLR and add them to the Scheme would be disproportionate to the financial benefit. It was agreed that this would not be pursued. <p>In addition to these mapping discrepancies, it was explained that the HLS options on some of the parcels have been wrongly identified with some parcels containing a higher percentage of non-native species (conifers) which will not be reduced to the IOS levels for the selected option during the lifetime of the Scheme. FC's Jane Smith will analyse the detail. KP report cost implications at the next meeting.</p>	<p>DISCHARGE</p> <p>Action DE Action JS</p> <p>RESUME Action Jane Smith Action KP</p>
9. Health Check	<p>AM reviewed the Health Check report submitted to NE ahead of the meeting. The notes below refer to the paragraph numbers in the Health Check:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1c. Underspend in 2011/12 is projected at £82k. 2. AM is content that the Board and the management arrangements are working well and encouraged close working between the partner organisations and other stake holders. 3. The wording needs amendment by the NPA/FG. It was agreed that the revised wording should be passed to CD. 4. AM expressed concern that spending on wetland conservation is still not projected to meet the HLS target and urged the Board to bring this back on track. 7. AM enquired about the processes for managing stock on the Forest. The increased importance of the role of the Agisters was explained, both in monitoring and reporting damage/poaching in the HLS area and in future, monitoring stock on the adjacent commons, particularly the Bramshaw commons which are overgrazed. It was noted that the revised terms and conditions for the new VGS will also entail closer monitoring. 9. RB to send copy of report to the Board. 	<p>RESUME</p> <p>Action FG</p> <p>Action RB</p>

	<p>10. The report does not list or explain the process for landscape projects. It was explained that there were no proposals for any stand-alone landscape projects at present (although a proposal to screen the A31 had been considered but was too expensive to pursue at present). However, landscape improvement is an important part of all wetland restoration projects. The work to remove concrete from Beaulieu Airfield also provides landscape benefit. It was agreed that the NPA Landscape officer should produce a possible plan for landscape projects.</p> <p>11. NPA archaeologist to produce forward programme plan for 10 a year in coordination with FC historic officers.</p> <p>12. CD to maintain a register of known poaching/over grazing issues showing how they have been identified and dealt with.</p> <p>26. This requires amendment to remove mention of the PhD student. AM asked for urgent action to draw up the programme of specialist/habitat survey monitoring and informed the Board that the second HLS payment for 2011/12 would not be released until this is complete. Jenny Thomas NE has provided a species list to SW. The Board took the view that this monitoring might require additional resources in future, but the first step is to agree a plan.</p> <p>38. This was identified as critical.</p> <p>40. Link between SSSI remedies and ISA programme and baseline being done by LAS Board – need to identify someone to hold a register of issues and how/when they will be addressed.</p> <p>43. It was noted that bracken spraying would not be continued after this year because use of Azulux will no longer be permitted – although it is hoped that derogation may be provided in the future. In the meantime, greater emphasis will be placed on harvesting.</p> <p>The Board agreed to improve on two main areas of weakness:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. HAP & SAM delivery b. Monitoring <p>49. This was identified as critical.</p> <p>It was agreed that the partnership would consider rationalising/simplifying the current Health Check template in consultation with NE.</p>	<p>Action AB</p> <p>Action FG</p> <p>Action CD</p> <p>Action SW</p> <p>Action SW</p> <p>Action SW</p>
21, Beaulieu Road Accounts	<p>Final accounts will not be possible until the contract with Southern Water is finally signed off after snagging. There is still some remedial work outstanding to make good settlement at several places along the route of the pipeline. In the meantime, it has been agreed that the HLS will pay the NPA for their expenditure, once the contributions which have been paid to the NPA by the owners of properties which have benefited from the new pipeline, have been paid to the HLS.</p>	<p>RESUME</p> <p>Action CD</p>
22. Start of new Verderers' Grazing Scheme (VGS)	<p>The new VGS will be introduced on 1st March this year. The Scheme rules will be more stringent to ensure that objectives are met. OV highlighted 2 major changes to the Scheme: payments to commoners will be based on Livestock Units (LU), not headage; and will be limited to the number of animals that can be supported by the back up land at their disposal, at a rate of 1 animal per quarter acre. AM noted the qualifying period of 3 years for new members and suggested that this could also be used as a basis for limiting the number</p>	<p>RESUME</p>

	of animals entered by members to the number they turned out 3 years previously – effectively this would provide a rolling 'reference' period and would discourage members from increasing the number of animals they turn out for short term gain – it was agreed that consideration would be given to this suggestion if numbers increase dangerously.	
24. Capital Works Plan	The individual Capital Items had already been largely covered previously during the meeting. AM stressed the need for invoices for work that is completed in time, to be submitted to NE Reading office by 14 March.	RESUME Action DE Action FG
25. Increase to Annual Payment	NE's Naomi Oakley had suggested a Cattle Grazing Supplement of £35 per ha for the grass and heathland options, if the ratio of cattle on the Forest rose above 30%. It was noted that if this increase was implemented, it would obviate the need for supplementary bids for capital works. Noting the current underspend, AM expressed some concern over whether or not the money would be required, and also pointed out that the discipline of submitting Capital Item bids ensures that consideration is properly focused. Before any increase could be considered, there would need to be a clear plan showing how the money would be used. At present there is still a backlog of year one tasks (mainly HAP) which have yet to be completed. There are also 2 ongoing areas of weakness: HAP & SAM; and monitoring. Only when all these issues are resolved would consideration be given to the Cattle Grazing Supplement.	RESUME
10. HLS Administration	<p>KP explained that 40% of the costs for DE were charged against administration, with the balance of 60% charged to wetland restoration projects. KP asked the Board to approve an extension to the appointment for scheme administrator Denise Eccles, to take her up to the 5 year review point for the Scheme. This was agreed.</p> <p>OV asked for additional funding to cover the extra HLS workload within the Verderers' office. The request is for an additional £4k for 2012/13 for the assistant, Linda Ryan, to increase from 30 hours a week to full time. The continued requirement will be reviewed at the January 2013 Board meeting. This was agreed.</p>	DISCHARGE Action KP Action OV
26. Scheme partner communications	Members discussed the possibility of introducing interim meetings to supplement the current programme of quarterly Board meetings. Consideration was also given to replacing quarterly meetings with meetings every 2 months. It was agreed to continue with the current quarterly meetings and to hold additional ad hoc meetings to address specific issues, if and when required.	DISCHARGE
27. Website	<p>The web site will continue to be operated by the NPA.</p> <p>The Financial statement also needs to be displayed on the website.</p> <p>The 10 year Wetland restoration programme should also be displayed.</p>	DISCHARGE Action CD Action SW
28. Films	A DVD of the short films made by Manny Hinge on the projects that have been completed, will be circulated to Board members by KP for comment and any suggested changes to text, commentary, etc, which should be passed to DE. The deadline for completion of the films is 4 April.	DISCHARGE Action KP Action All Action DE
29. Letters from HIWT & Access Forum	<p>The contents of the letter from the HIWT were noted.</p> <p>OV has offered to attend the next meeting of the Access Forum to address the concerns raised by them.</p>	DISCHARGE Action OV

30. Proposed AGM	OV put forward the suggestion of an AGM as an open meeting to keep stakeholders informed of the work of the HLS. All members of Working Groups will be invited, as well as other local organisations. The Board agreed the proposal and a meeting will be held in the Verderers' Hall at 1700 hours on 4 April.	DISCHARGE Action DE Action OV
Any other Business	Spend strategy document has become redundant so will not be continued. KP will finalise the SSSI restoration consultation document. It was agreed that PCDs would no longer be required for new projects.	 Action KP
	The meeting concluded at 1808 hours The next meeting will be on 2 May. Future meetings: 1 August 2012 31 October 2012 30 January 2013	 Action DE to book the Library



Dominic May
Official Verderer