



Official Verderer
 Dominic May

15 January 2014

MINUTES OF THE HLS BOARD MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY 8 JANUARY 2014

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
Andy MacDonald	AM	Natural England
Leanne Sargeant	LS	VGS Manager Designate
Colin Draper	CD	VGS Manager taking minutes

Item	Discussion	Action
1. Site Visit	<p>The Board visited Queen's Meadow to see the completed restoration work in that area. Sarah Oakley briefed Board members and escorted them around the site. The restored areas have recovered extremely well and it is no longer easy to identify the original routes of watercourses where these have been filled in. The separate streams have been returned to their original meanders and these are working well. After the recent heavy rainfall, good evidence was seen of where the streams had flooded onto the surrounding flood plain, leaving beneficial organic matter deposited which would otherwise be washed downstream and lost out to sea. The Board recorded their satisfaction with the end result. OV stated that this is an excellent example of an HLS project which has turned the clock back, to re-wilderness an area, increasing biodiversity and improving environmental condition.</p> <p>Parts of the gravel track past Queen's Meadow have been washed away and there is considerable erosion along the length of that section, which is an unexpected consequence of the project, exacerbated by the severe weather. The FC will investigate options to address this problem for the future.</p> <p>Sarah Oakley was thanked for an excellent briefing and guided tour.</p>	

2. Apologies for absence	<p>All members were present.</p> <p>OV welcomed Andy McDonald to the meeting for the annual Health Check.</p>	RESUME
3. Declarations of Interest	<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 all Wetland Restoration projects because of the NPA's responsibilities as local planning authority.</p>	RESUME
4. Matters Arising from the Minutes of the last meeting	<p>Item 5:</p> <p>2013 Programme Register Capital Works; Beaulieu Aerodrome Concrete Clearance: Work to remove concrete from Beaulieu Aerodrome is still outstanding. Richard Burke (RB) in the FC to provide JT with an estimate of the man hours required to complete phase 2 of this project to enable her to calculate the size of the Capital grant for this work.</p> <p>Item 9:</p> <p>HLS Staffing & Partner Resources: MS confirmed that recruitment of an Ecologist/hydrogeomorphologist is in hand. There was some discussion over the length of time involved in this process, but it was explained that this is driven by rules for public sector recruitment.</p> <p>JT confirmed that she will write new Indicators of Success (IOS) for the areas of woodland which have been identified as requiring amendment, but this work cannot be completed until the revised HLS rules are published, which is expected later this year.</p> <p>Item 11: LiDAR; Service Level Agreement (SLA) for HLS archaeological support: JS confirmed that she has provided the necessary information on the requirement to Frank Green (FG) and is waiting for a response. It was questioned whether an SLA would be cheaper than relying on consultants. Although that could not be confirmed it will be quicker and more efficient and will work well for small and medium projects. Under the terms of the SLA, the NPA will invoice the FC which in turn will submit a request for payment to the HLS for HLS projects.</p>	<p>RESUME</p> <p>RB/JT</p> <p>JT</p> <p>FG</p>
5. 2013/14 Programme Register	<p>The following changes were noted for amendment:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Line 1. Update VGS staff costs to include costs for LS • Line 12. NF Pony Publicity Group. Check NFPPG is still functioning and amend as appropriate; also confirm funding requirement for Display Trailer and, if this funding is still required, resubmit to VGS Management Committee for review • Line 15. Show revised forecast spend/allocation in column h • Line 24. Provide explanation for 'Office Charges' • Line 31. Provide discrete heading for this item • Line 40. Requirement for this project to be reviewed/JT to advise • Line 43. Update spend forecast • Line 46. Felling licence awaited for this work • Line 49. A query was raised over this serial; it was explained that it relates to the hire of rooms for public consultation 	<p>RESUME</p> <p>CD</p> <p>CD</p> <p>CD</p> <p>GH</p> <p>GH</p> <p>JT</p> <p>GH</p>

	<p>meetings on HLS projects</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Line 63-70. Funding to be carried forward to 2014/15 • Line 73. AB to confirm whether funding needs to be split between two years i.e. 2013/14 and 2014/15. <p>AM expressed concern that spend to date is very low in comparison with the planning figure in the programme. It was agreed that the 'Revised Forecast' column should be kept up to date to give a more accurate indication of likely spend, retaining the planning figures in column b for future reference.</p> <p>AB and MS were asked to ensure that so far as possible, payment requests for work carried out this Scheme Year are submitted to CD for payment before the end of February.</p>	<p>GH</p> <p>AB</p> <p>CD/LS/GH</p> <p>AB/MS</p>
6. Programme Registers 2014 - 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Line 12. Amend as appropriate depending on whether or not NFPPG is continuing to function • Delete serial for LiDAR extra resource for future years as this was a one-off cost. <p>Sluffers/Cowleys Heath: JS confirmed that planning for these serials is in hand with work expected to be completed as programmed in 2014/15. AB informed the Board that the Authority had not received requested input from NE on the planning application, delaying the NPA's response to the FC.</p> <p>OV queried why there is no serial for Latchmore in the Programme although there is a serial for Amberwood in 2018/19. The reason is that the programme allows for a period of recovery between adjacent phases of restoration for the larger projects to allow the completed work to settle down. The whole Latchmore restoration project has been provisionally broken down into a number of separate phases, with the final phase falling due post 2020. It will therefore be carried forward to a follow-on scheme if there is one, or Natural England may give approval for any underspend to be carried forward, beyond the end of the Scheme, to enable this work to be completed. The last part of the Wooton restoration may also be treated in this way.</p> <p>OV stated that the currently-projected underspend of just over £1m over the life of the Scheme was approximately 5% of the total funding, and provides a good contingency for future unknowns. AM confirmed that this is not a significant concern for NE at this stage, with 6 full years of the HLS Agreement left to run, as actual spend will inevitably vary from year to year and costs may well exceed estimates. It was agreed that the Board would continue to monitor this. To assist with this process it was agreed that a summary sheet should be introduced, showing annual actual and planned expenditure by type.</p>	<p>RESUME</p> <p>CD</p> <p>GH</p> <p>CD/LS/GH</p>
7. Wetland Restorations	<p>All 2013 projects were completed, except Islands Thorns and Wooton which have been delayed while planning applications are prepared. FC has appointed Land Use Consultants to undertake the EIA for Latchmore.</p>	<p>RESUME</p>
8. FC HLS Work Programme to 2020	<p>The Board approved the Terrestrial Work Programme and asked JS to pass on their thanks to those involved in its preparation for an excellent paper. JS highlighted the invaluable contribution made by the LAS Baseline Survey which provided much of the data on which the programme is based. MS advised the Board that the approval of</p>	<p>RESUME</p> <p>JS</p>

	the Terrestrial Work Programme will now enable his staff to make long term plans for the work.	
9. Capital Works Being Carried Out by the FC	JT reminded the Board that the Capital Works projects, which it was agreed could be carried forward from last year, must be completed and claims submitted to NE Customer Services by the end of February.	RESUME CD/GH
10. HLS Staffing & Partner Resources for Delivery of Programmes	<p>Now that a budget to 2020 has been drawn up, funding for a part time Works Supervisor and full time Contracts Manager for the Wetland and Terrestrial programme, which was approved in principle at the last meeting, was formally agreed. MS explained that work is currently carried out by existing FC staff in addition to their other day-to-day responsibilities which is not sustainable and the additional staff are essential for delivery of the specific HLS programmes.</p> <p>AB asked for regular feedback to the board on progress when the Contracts Manager is in place.</p>	RESUME MS
11. SAMs	The report by Frank Green was noted.	RESUME
12. LiDAR	<p>The Board recorded their thanks to Lawrence Shaw for excellent progress with the LiDAR analysis.</p> <p>The Board noted the proposal to deposit 250 GB of data with the Archaeological Data Service (ADS) at the end of the project and asked for further information regarding costs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Will subsequent access to the stored data be charged or is that covered by the proposed payment of £5,000? • Are there any annual membership or 'maintenance' charges in addition to the fee of £5,000? • When is it planned to transfer the data? <p>The Board agreed in principle to a proposal for 2 LiDAR Exhibitions – a temporary exhibition in 2015 at the HLS mid-point, and a small, permanent installation in January 2020. Detailed proposals with explanation of costs to be submitted to the next Board meeting. Costs to be added into the Programme Register.</p>	RESUME LS LS
13. Bird Surveys	<p>The Board noted their thanks to Ian Barker for his excellent work in progressing the bird surveys.</p> <p>The proposal for a presentation on the results of the Nightjar Survey was welcomed; the Board asked for a 15 minute presentation by RPS at the AGM at 5.00 p.m. immediately after the April meeting.</p> <p>In further discussion of the AGM, other suggestions included:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. screening Manny Hinge's video of the Fletcher's water restoration project, updated to show how well the site has recovered;' 2. Species Monitoring 3. Volunteering within the HLS <p>In light of the low turnout at the last AGM the Board agreed to open up the meeting to all members of the stakeholder groups, rather than simply chairmen/named individuals; invitations to be sent out as soon as possible to allow time for distribution to members of the key organisations.</p>	RESUME IB CD CD/LS

	The Board accepted IB's invitation to a site visit to the Dartford Warbler/Woodlark survey in May/June; CD/LS to arrange with IB.	CD/LS/IB
14. Non-Native Plants Project	The Board confirmed that this is funded through to the end of the current HLS scheme. Catherine Chatters to be informed that the project is funded until 2020 at £12,240/yr and that there is therefore no requirement for an annual application for funds.	DISCHARGE CD
15. RPA Inspection	<p>The recent RPA inspection has identified 2 issues. One of the 3 Forest golf courses has used withdrawn chemicals on its greens and fairways and spread nitrate fertiliser without keeping adequate records. In a separate area of the Forest, cattle have caused an area of poaching which may also be serious enough to be classified as a cross compliance breach, and this is now subject to assessment by NE. As a result, the RPA may impose a 5% reduction in the HLS annual payment as a penalty.</p> <p>MS put this into perspective: while accepting the need to address the issues, the fact that the inspectors only found 2 issues in an HLS covering 20,000ha is exceptionally good, given the size and complexity of the land holding. If the RPA notify their intention to impose a penalty it is open to the Board to lodge an appeal. JT advised the Board that she will have an opportunity to comment on the report before any decision is made.</p> <p>The issue of eligibility for inclusion in the Scheme of areas such as golf courses which fall under the RPA category of 'sporting facilities' which are normally excluded, will be resolved between NE and the RPA.</p>	RESUME
16. Communications Options for HLS Website/Press Releases	The Board accepted the proposal for the HLS website, submitted by Hilary Makin (HM), to create a micro-site linked to the NPA's new website at a cost of £3,000. It was agreed that AB would arrange a meeting with her IT/Comms staff for CD/LS and a representative from the FC to be nominated by MS, to consider the arrangements for maintaining/updating the site and any additional costs for changes to the main structure (layout/images/ etc).	RESUME AB MS
17. Health Check	<p>JT informed the Board that overall, NE is very pleased with the progress made with the HLS scheme. She highlighted the Terrestrial Plan, the historic consultation paper and the Historic priority list which is up and running. On the debit side, the Wetland Restoration Programme is behind schedule but the reasons for that are understood and NE remains confident that this is adequately addressed in the programme to 2020.</p> <p>JT advised the Board that she will add her comments to the Health Check Spreadsheet and return it for action/information as appropriate.</p> <p>AM complimented the board that, since he started his Health Checks in 2011, the HLS has come a long way in terms of management and long term planning.</p>	RESUME JT
18. AOB	AB informed the Board of further planned reductions in the NPA budget, with a 2% cut in 2014/15 and a further 1.7% cut in 2015/16. This places an even greater reliance and importance on partnership working such as the HLS scheme.	RESUME

	OV asked members for a 7 day return on approval of minutes to CD/LS to allow timely circulation of the approved minutes to desk officers for their action.	All
19. Confirm Dates for Future Meetings	<p>The meeting ended at 1pm</p> <p>The next meeting is scheduled to be held on Wednesday 2 April 2014 at 2pm, followed by the AGM in the Verderers' Hall starting at 5pm.</p> <p>List of future meeting dates:</p> <p>30 June 2014 at 11am 1 October 2014 at 9am</p>	

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