



Verderers of the New Forest
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Official Verderer
Lord Manners

10th January 2019

MINUTES OF THE HLS BOARD MEETING HELD ON 9th January 2019

Voting Members		
Lord Manners	OV	Official Verderer – Verderers of the New Forest (Chairman)
Bruce Rothnie	DS	Deputy Surveyor – Forestry Commission
Alison Barnes	AB	Chief Executive – New Forest National Park Authority
Non-Voting Members		
Robert Stride	RS	CDA Representative
Jenny Thomas	JT	Lead Adviser New Forest - Natural England (NE)
In Attendance		
Sonia Lorenzo-Martin	SLM	Head of Planning and Environment – Forestry Commission
Tina Woodley	TW	VGS Administrator
Nick Wardlaw	NW	HLS Contract Manager – Forestry Commission

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

No apologies – all present

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

OV is Chairman of the VGS Management Committee.

AB declared an interest in all Wetland Restoration projects because of the NPA's responsibilities as local planning authority.

RS is a member of the VGS and a committee member of the CDA.

PRESENTATION REGARDING POSSIBLE FUTURE SCHEME OPTIONS

Adam Bates from NE gave the board a presentation on the options currently available for future schemes for the New forest. NE no longer have the delegated responsibility to set up new schemes, this is now under the auspice of the RPA whose staff are currently receiving training.

Option A - to apply for a Countryside Stewardship Scheme based on a 'whole common' approach. This would involve all commons landowners joining together and setting up a formal commons association and putting one CS application in for the

whole area. This would be a 10 year agreement with a 5 year break clause. Leaving at any other time would incur reclaims and penalties. The RPA/NE could not be involved in the association as they need to maintain impartiality to all agreements. Most existing HLS options to land parcels fit into CS options but the main difference is that under CS there is no option for negotiated rates. The standard rate per hectare for CS is much higher than currently being received under the current HLS Scheme. The payment rates have increased for the heathland management, restoration of wood pasture and cattle grazing options, they have decreased for the grassland option.

CS schemes have very strict rules regarding eligibility of land parcels. This needs to be evidence based as the City Agri programme has no flexibility in its system. Soil analysis will be required for any parcel managed under a grassland option, it is not necessary for heathland or wood pasture options, this is to ensure it falls within acceptable levels; also grazing calendars are required to evidence the grazing supplement and extensive photographic evidence of land parcels to prove option allocation. Prescriptions would be required to lay out the evidence needed for the RPA. The current HLS prescriptions are already robust and could be tailored for use. The board agreed that preparations should be made to complete an application to join the CS scheme as the window for submitting an application for an agreement to start in January 2021 is due to open in February 2020 and is likely to have a closing date of around August 2020.

Adam Bates will notify JT as soon as the application form is available and it will be forwarded to TW. TW will then liaise with the HLS team to complete a BETA check of land parcels in order to complete an application to submit if required. It was suggested that assistance be sought from DEFRA before the application is submitted due to the complexity of the agreement and the inflexibility of the current system to be specific to the New Forest. AB to contact DEFRA official to request a visit to discuss the difficulties of submitting a CS application for the New Forest. JT & OV to arrange an initial meeting of Commons landowners to measure the level of interest to entering a joint application for the whole of the New Forest.

Action JT &
TW

ACTION AB
Action JT &
OV

Option B – to put forward an application for a pilot scheme specific to the New Forest highlighting its unique qualities based on the objectives of the current HLS but with extras including the value of natural capital and the wider landscape. It was felt that a pilot would need to be innovative to succeed as the acceptance rate of pilots has been very low. The board felt that the existing scheme had been a successful pilot in any event. Option C – HLS rollover. It was confirmed that one of the 2019 expiring New Forest HLS schemes has now had confirmation of a one year HLS rollover. If the same offer is to be extended to schemes expiring in 2020 it is hoped that this will be confirmed before August 2019.

MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

RESUME

Julian Glover Visit to the New Forest

OV & AB reported that the visit was a great success. AB hopes to receive an update in the next couple of weeks and will forward to the board as soon as possible.

Action AB

PROGRAMME AND SUMMARY

RESUME

The programme summary was reviewed for 2018 and the projections for 2019 studied. NW informed the board that the 2018 underspend on the Open Habitat was due to issues with procurement process delays on setting up framework contract for the ridge

and furrow delivery. As an interim measure smaller programmes have been tendered. The project is expected to catch up during 2019.

FC UPDATE

RESUME

Wetland Restoration

NW reported that all sites worked this year have been visited to assess for any repairs or maintenance, as well as a number from the previous year.

Terrestrial Restoration

NW reported on the works carried out and completed for winter 2018 including the clearance of natural regeneration on open habitats, Lost lawn projects, slender cotton grass habitat, Non-native Scots Pine removal on open habitat mires and the Rhododendron cut and burn. Works due to commence from January 2019 include Ridge and Furrow removal, Southern Damselfly habitat restoration and Scots Pine Removal.

Verge Restoration

The board studied the comprehensive report supplied by the Verge Restoration officer detailing the works carried out during 2018.

Wetland Restoration Monitoring

The board studied the monitoring data and reports for work carried out in 2018 including Hydro-Chemistry, Physical Monitoring and Ecological Monitoring. The Monitoring officer will keep the HLS website regularly updated with the monitoring results so that it can be viewed in context. AB requested for the next board meeting that pre and post restoration fish data be supplied in a simple format for the board to study.

Action NW

Concrete Removal

TW had supplied the board with electronic copies of the Desk based assessment of the built heritage at Setley Plain. A hard copy of the report was circulated for reference.

RESUME

LiDAR ANALYSIS REPORT

The board studied the report supplied by the LiDAR Officer. 2018 saw the near completion of all of the Lidar analysis and survey work commissioned to be undertaken across the open Crown Land. Work has commenced to deposit the LiDAR data with the Archaeology Data Service (ADS) to provide public access to data where possible. LS & MS will work together to deliver a HLS exhibition for 2019. JT requested that LS prepare a list of historical environment projects that are beyond the remit of FC responsibilities before their meeting in March.

Action LS

LAND ADVICE SERVICE WRITTEN UPDATE

RESUME

The NFLAS report was studied and the work of the team was praised. The board agreed that continued funding and support of the NFLAS was important. OV gave the board an update on the efforts of the Encroachment Working Group.

ENGAGEMENT AND INTERPRETATION OFFICER WRITTEN UPDATE

RESUME

The board studied the E&I report and discussed the success of the press coverage in 2018. AB requested for MS to circulate the report in the National press to the board members. It was noted to thank Esta Mion for all her hard work alongside MS over the last year.

Action NW

<p>JT advised AB that a NE representative, Helen Spring, was now available to join the communications team. AB to arrange to get her engaged in helping to spread the good news stories.</p>	<p>Action AB & MS</p>
<p><u>HIWWT WRITTEN UPDATE</u></p>	<p>RESUME</p>
<p>The report was studied and the board agreed what a huge success this project had been and how important it would be not to have a break in funding as it would have a detrimental effect on the forest. AB reported that the NPA are currently having discussions on bio-security and asked if it was an issue that needed more thought. DS replied that FC staff and contractors already have a bio security protocol in place. AB questioned whether public consciousness on bio security should be raised. DS committed to research national directives on the subject and report back.</p>	<p>Action DS</p>
<p><u>HLS EDUCATION ACCESS ANNUAL REPORT</u></p>	<p>DISCHARGE</p>
<p>The board studied the annual report of the HLS funded education access visits that had taken place in 2018. 2770 pupils from 44 schools were able to visit the New Forest National Park to learn about its natural and historic environment and land management thanks to HLS funding. Members agreed that it was a very positive project that would be important to be included in any future scheme.</p>	
<p><u>FUTURE NEW FOREST ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP SCHEME UPDATE</u></p>	<p>RESUME</p>
<p>AB informed the board that at the second reading of the proposed Agriculture Bill, under the list of defined 'public goods' – landscape was omitted from the list. The National Parks are pushing for an amendment to the bill. NPA Chairman and OV to write to local Ministers to lobby for an amendment to include 'landscape'.</p>	<p>Action AB & OV</p>
<p><u>AOB</u> <u>2019- A Year of Celebration</u></p>	
<p>The board considered a funding request proposed by the HLS Communications Steering group. A huge amount has been achieved by the scheme, so throughout 2019 it is proposed to celebrate these achievements through an engagement campaign. The board agreed in principle to these proposals and offered assistance in the delivery of the projects.</p>	
<p><u>2019 AGM</u></p>	
<p>The annual AGM date was set for Wednesday 22nd May 2019 and the suggested venue was New Park Show Ground and that it should be a celebration of the scheme's achievements. TW to contact the show society to confirm availability. TW & NW to start working on the Annual Health check (this could assist in creating a detailed end of scheme report).</p>	<p>Action TW Action TW & NW</p>
<p><u>HLS Team Structure</u></p>	
<p>The board members requested that their thanks and appreciation be forwarded to Sarah Oakley (HLS Ecologist) for all the years of hard work and dedication she has shown to the FC and delivery of wetland restoration projects under the HLS. AB to liaise with NW on sending a token of the boards' appreciation.</p>	<p>Action AB & NW</p>
<p><u>Freshwater & Wetland Strategy Group</u></p>	
<p>DS advised the board that the next meeting of the Wetland Strategy Group is due to take place at the end of February – date to be confirmed.</p>	

Partnership Plan

AB reminded the board that the Partnership Plan is soon due for renewal and to consider what they think should be included and how the preparation of the new plan could best engage partners and increase commitment to actions.

Meeting closed at 12.30pm.

DATES FOR FUTURE MEETINGS

Wednesday 10th April 2019 – 9am

Wednesday 22nd May 2019 AGM – 5pm TBC

Wednesday 3rd July 2019 – 9am

Wednesday 2nd October 2019 – 9am

Wednesday 22nd January 2020 – 9am

Delegated Actions to		
Jenny Thomas	JT	Lead Advisor New Forest – Natural England (NE)
Alison Barnes	AB	Chief Executive – New Forest National Park Authority
Tina Woodley	TW	Verderers Grazing Scheme Administrator
Nick Wardlaw	NW	HLS Contract Manager – Forestry Commission
Matt Stroud	MS	HLS Engagement and Interpretation Officer
Lawrence Shaw	LS	HLS Archaeologist

Lord Manners
1/2/19

Lord Manners
Official Verderer

