



Verderers of the New Forest
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Official Verderer
Lord Manners

12th August 2020

MINUTES OF THE HLS BOARD MEETING HELD ON 8th JULY 2020

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

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Due to the current Government restrictions regarding public gatherings this meeting was held remotely with all board papers and member's contributions received via email and an accessible shared folder.

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.

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

MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

RESUME

Cycle Counters Report

The board were supplied with a summary of data for the period 2013-2019. The most recent data will be shared with the board when it becomes available. JT requested a final report on the project and commented that a crucial part of the project will be to monitor the usage levels of the cycle routes to inform future decisions on how better to manage access to protect the habitats of the forest. AB and CL also asked if the data can be worked on to supply a report that is informing us about what

action/management is required. DS observed that the data suggested that the off track cycling was by locals as opposed to visitors and that it could be beneficial to share data with the FE keepers for their interpretation. DS also felt it would be interesting to view the data for the lockdown period when it becomes available. SLM commented that the management of cycling network will come under RMS. Actions around non-network cycling is of most concern at the moment and should be something the Rec Team would lead in partnership with NPA.

Holly Pollarding

The board were supplied with a map of 8 sites that have been selected for this winter's programme. JT commented that this programme looks great as it targets the priority areas, but asked if it was possible to increase the area of Holly to be managed this year as the area still to addressed within the A&O's is considerable.

Action SLM

Site Visit Protocol

The board was supplied with a draft protocol with regards to the arranging of site consultation visits.

DS and OV commented that only one site visit would take place and noted the importance of adding a time scale to the responses to the site visit minutes as this was key to allowing forward planning of projects.

Bracken Management

Ground based use of Asulam – SLM informed the board that additional approval has been granted by the Chemicals Regulation Division (CRD) of the Health & Safety Executive subject to the terms set out in an Emergency Authorisation. This authorisation for the ground based use of Asulox is only short term (2020) –

However, one of the requirements added to the approval is to exclude stock from the treated area for one month after application to ensure that Maximum Residue Levels are not exceeded in stock entering the food chain. As a consequence, the team were not able to complete their planned programme this year.

PROGRAMME AND SUMMARY

RESUME

The board were supplied with the latest available programme register that covered the period up to the end of June 2020 and projected work programmes for 2021 in the event of a roll over extension.

Also supplied was two different PR scenarios to illustrate the potential impact and disruptions of Covid-19 in the delivery of the 2020 work programme. The PR will be monitored and reviewed under a monthly basis. These predictions will obviously be subject to any future changes in Government guidance, availability of staff and contractors and weather/ground conditions. In addition to that, if restrictions are extended or tightened the team might be unable to undertake the necessary consultations to deliver some of the planned programme.

DS asked if the delay from the E&M subgroup would hold up the Botanical Survey for this season and would it be acceptable to delay it for a year?

Action SLM

DS also asked when the River Habitat Surveys are due to be delivered/

Action SLM

DS enquired on the status of the NPA spend to date – The NPA finance team reminded the board that the NPA only submit a claim annually for the budgeted amount agreed on the PR. DS requested that the forecast columns be updated to reflect the latest estimated figures.

Action TW

FE UPDATE

The board studied the report supplied by FE for the Summer 2020 Period. AB thanked the HLS team for such a thorough progress report and analysis of scenarios or delivery in light of Covid-19.

New team members have been appointed – the new HLS project manager is due to start early July and a temporary maternity cover Works supervisor is due to start at the end of July.

Wetland Restoration

Invitation to a mini competition was sent to framework contractors for a number of sites to be included in the Wetland enhancement work. Contractors were asked to provide Covid-19 continuity plans and RAs explaining their arrangements to comply with Government guidance while undertaking the work.

Maintenance work on 9 Wetland restoration sites are due to take place at the end of July.

Fish and Kingfisher Surveys have been contracted for Pondhead and Wootton

The FWRP is due to meet again at the beginning of July when their next step is to agree the evidence and monitoring plan.

Terrestrial RestorationRidge and Furrow and Stump Shearing

Areas for stump shearing have been awarded to contractors for Highland Water, Ferny Knapp and Norley to commence Autumn/Winter 2020. Further call offs for new restoration sites are in progress and will be awarded in July/August.

Rhododendron Management

The contractors have completed 49 days of application in 7 sites, making the most of the great weather.

Lost Lawns

The programme this winter includes restoration in Tantany Wood.

Mature Scots Pine Removal from heathland at Clumbers has been completed – other sites are still in the planning stages. Seedling and sapling pine sites will be worked this Autumn as soon as weather and ground conditions allow.

Verge Restoration

The Verge Restoration Officer reported that due to Covid-19 restrictions she has changed her normal working practices, with minimal face to face contact with residents, locals and visitors and communicated via other means like email or signage, issuing "No Parking" stickers.

She also reported that over the past three months the majority of work has been completed on the current project areas at Broomy Plain, Woodlands, Denny Campsite entrance, Linford and Ogdens. A large number of sites are still being worked upon for future verge protection measures.

Wetland Restoration Monitoring

The board studied the report on the effects the lockdown working restrictions has had on the collection and testing of the samples, the physical and biological monitoring. The River Habitat repeat surveys contracted with BU have not been able to take place due to Covid-19 restrictions.

No new specialist species surveys are being done under HLS this year. The final report of the Southern Damselfly report will be available soon. The Wader survey report will be completed next year with the addition of the Snipe survey.

ENGAGEMENT AND INTERPRETATION OFFICER WRITTEN UPDATE

RESUME

The board studied the report from the E&I Officer.

This included details on the launch of two new videos, How has the HLS helped Commoning? And How has Commoning benefitted the Forest? The first video has already had a reach of in excess of 25,000 on Facebook and is being shared by other organisations. Continued success of the HLS leaflet has resulted in a reprint and the first framework of the HLS End of Scheme report has been approved by Natural England and is currently being worked upon by the same external design company that created the HLS Leaflet. The board will be kept informed as it progresses. The NPA's Annual review will also include 2 pages dedicated to the HLS scheme and its successes over 10 years. Quotes for the development of the online map have been received and discussions are taking place regarding access and uploading the data about the different projects.

DS noted some great work all round – good partnership sharing and promotion of messages.

HIWWT WRITTEN UPDATE

RESUME

The report from the New Forest Non-Native Plants Project was studied.

The Project Officer thanked the HLS Board for providing additional funding for 2020/21 which will enable work to be undertaken by contractors to control Gaultheria at an additional site and enable more time to be spent by the project officer with volunteers monitoring the control of the invasive non-native plants during the autumn and winter.

The Implications of Covid-19 meant that HIWWT has cancelled all volunteer work parties until at least the end of July 2020. However, the Wildlife Trust has authorised staff to undertake field work with individual volunteers in accordance with Government guidance regarding social distancing. Work that has been achieved includes Control of Himalayan Balsam, American Skunk Cabbage and Pink Purslane. Control of Pitcher plant is scheduled for later in the season. Contractors have undertaken work on the control of Parrots Feather, Japanese Knotweed, Iris laevigata,, Cottonaster, Montbretia, Golden Club, Gaultheria, Sheep Laurel and American Skunk Cabbage. The contractors reported significant decline in areas that had previously been treated.

JT commented that she was always impressed with the amount of time and effort put into this project. AB agreed and noted it was good to see so little Himalayan Balsam from sites already cleared. DS also commented great work yet again and great to see numbers of invasive species decreasing.

NFLAS WRITTEN UPDATE

RESUME

The board studied the report from the NFLAS on their recent work which included giving advice to commoners on legislation, regulations, land management and rules relating to the HLS Scheme. DS noted the NFLAS were a good support for commoners and expressed a well done to the team. AB commented on their excellent

Delegated Actions to		
Tina Woodley	TW	VGS Administrator
Sonia Lorenzo-Martin	SLM	Head of Planning and Environment – Forestry England

Lord Manners
19 October 2020

Lord Manners
Official Verderer

