



Verderers of the New Forest
THE QUEEN'S HOUSE
LYNDHURST
HAMPSHIRE
SO43 7NH

Telephone: 023 8028 3134
Fax: 023 8028 3101

Official Verderer
Lord Manners

13th November 2020

MINUTES OF THE HLS BOARD MEETING HELD ON 11th November 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
Jackie Kelly	JK	HLS Project Manager – Forestry England

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

RESUME

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

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

RESUME

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 latest data collected from the ten cycle counters has not yet been analysed but will be shared with the board when the information becomes available. JK asked the board to consider investigating the installation of a more sophisticated system that may allow regular and remote downloading. CL asked the board to consider a system of actual volunteers to physically count the number of cyclists in hotspots.

JT had looked back to the original project of installing the data loggers and how it was to be used to help the forest. The original project included the signage and the printed cycle route leaflet which could also have had an effect on the trends. The introduction of new software for the data loggers would be a long term project and at present there is no guarantee of continued funding. CL commented that cycling across open forest was a very big issue. OV was satisfied that the spend was worth it but could not justify extra spend at this time. The board requested the awaited report for the January meeting and to also include an indication of the number of cycle route leaflets that have been handed out to the public.

Action JK/AB

Holly Pollarding

The programme for Winter 2020/21 is currently being prepared with the aim to cut understorey holly in around 18 plots spread across different woodlands. The total area treated will be roughly double that of last year and the programme will target sites highlighted in the 2018/19 survey report as 'urgent priority' and 'priority' areas for cutting.

Botanical Survey

The survey has been put on hold pending the recommendations of the Freshwater & Wetlands Restoration Forum.

River Habitat Surveys

The Pondhead RHS has been carried out and the contractor is finalising the report. A survey at Wootton was also planned for this year but could not be carried out due to high water levels, it will now be completed in 2021. The remaining RHS surveys have also been postponed to 2021 due to COVID-19 restrictions.

PROGRAMME AND SUMMARY

The board were supplied with the latest available programme register that covered the period up to the end of September 2020. The board requested the October PR as soon as it is available. SLM informed the board that the spend from Sept to Feb would mostly be for terrestrial works and that no new large sites of wetland restoration had taken place this year but previous sites had received repairs and maintenance over the summer. The board requested a draft programme of works for 2021 be available for the January meeting. JK reported that the bulk of the work would be on terrestrial restoration. JT noted that there was still plenty to achieve in returning these SSSI's to good condition. Huge areas have been covered which are good gains for the future. OV agreed that it was good to emphasise on the terrestrial and the ridge and furrow works were a once in a lifetime opportunity to restore sites back to their original habitat.

RESUME

Action JK

FE UPDATE

The board studied the report supplied by FE for the Autumn 2020 Period. The board were informed that Sonia Lorenzo Martin, the Head of Planning and Environment will be leaving at the end of November to take up a position with the South Downs National Park. The board thanked Sonia for all her hard work and dedication to the HLS scheme and wished her well in her new role. The board welcomed Jackie Kelly as new HLS Project Manager and Kaleb Thompson has also joined as HLS Works Supervisor. CL requested that the January report include indications on total size of areas covered under the Terrestrial projects.

RESUME

Action JK

Terrestrial Restoration

Ridge and Furrow and Stump Shearing

Work commenced in September in areas that were left over from February 2020. By the end of October full ridge & furrow stump removal had been completed at Turf Hill and Markway, while stump shearing had been completed at North Sluffers, Markway, Highland Water and Ferny Knapp.

Further stump shearing work is either in progress or due to start before the end of 2020 at Highland Water, Norley and Longdown.

Other sites being planned for work in 2020 are Marchwood, Ipley, Dibden and Fawley.

Rhododendron Management

The summer herbicide application programme completed 66 days of work up to the end of August. Areas covered included Turf Hill, Godshill, Bramshaw, Castle Malwood and surround, Kings Garn, Janes Moor, Rhinefield and Clumbers, covering 44 hectares in total. Preparation for the winter programme to cut rhododendron bushes and burn the arisings is underway. Areas to include Bramshaw, Amberwood, Shave Green, Anderwood, Dames Slough, Ferny Knapp, Fletchers Thorns, Rhinefield, Hinchleslea and Seththornes totalling 18.3 hectares.

Lost Lawns

The programme for this winter includes restoration in Tantany Wood (3.2h) which has previously been agreed with stakeholders. CL noted that the CDA committee would value feedback from FE on the report prepared by Neil Sanderson on the lost lawns projects. JK promised to give an update at the January meeting

Action JK

Mature Scots Pine removal from Heathland
Clumbers all timber has been removed

Action OV/JK

Woodcrates phase 1 remaining timber on site will be cleared this winter. Phase 2 will be consulted on in early 2021 due to COVID-19 restrictions limiting the ability to run effective consultations. OV & JK to review and agree the proposed site visit/consultation protocol. JT reported that she had visited the Woodcrates site and had compiled some principles to consider. JT offered to supply a brief report and map prior to any future site visit.

Action JT

Seedling and sapling pine
Dibden and Dunches Arch will be worked this autumn as soon as weather and ground conditions allow.

Bracken Management

The bracken forage harvesting programme was completed upon 37 sites across the forest throughout September and early October. The total area harvested was 46.2 hectares. The spraying programme for 2020 was withdrawn due the limitation of excluding livestock from the area after application. CL commented that if spraying continued to not be an option there was scope to incentivise commoners to utilize the bracken for animal bedding. JK to look into the option and report to the board.

Action JK

Verge Restoration

With the easing of the Covid-19 restrictions the Verge Restoration Officer received a large amount of correspondence from residents/locals and partner organisations about persistent verge parking and reporting areas of parking erosion. The VRO has carried out considerable liaison the residents, parish councils and Neighbourhood Watch, and has worked with other teams in Forestry England to get emergency measures in place. Further measures will be implemented over the winter, including work under the HLS project to install new signage and new sections of dragon's teeth to protect verges. This is additional to the ongoing projects that are due to take place over the winter into 2021. CL requested an indication of the total area of verge that has been protected under HLS. The board noted the huge increase in visitor numbers and the damaging effect it has had across the forest not just caused by parking but by the sheer volume of people and use. AB commented on NE being encouraged to come up with something to address the issues surrounding special access management in the national parks. JT noted that the central team at NE have been working on these issues during Covid to make amendments to the countryside code. AB confirmed that she is already in correspondence with NE on this subject.

Action JK

Wetland Restoration

The Wetland Restoration Officer prepared and supervised a programme of wetland enhancement work between July and September at a number of sites. Wet weather in August caused the programme to run behind schedule and work at Pondhead and Wootton Phase II are now deferred until 2021. A new framework for the contract to supply operational services to support the wetland restoration work programme is being set up.

Wetland Restoration Monitoring

The HLS Monitoring officer has continued to collect data from various ongoing surveys as part of the HLS monitoring programme. Forestry England is planning to review the monitoring programme and make any necessary adjustments once the FWRF agrees an evidence and monitoring plan.

Species Monitoring

The draft Southern Damselfly report has been received and is being finalised. The wader survey report is with Natural England for review. The snipe survey is now due to be carried out in 2021 due to Covid-19 restrictions on volunteers.

RESUME

ENGAGEMENT AND INTERPRETATION OFFICER WRITTEN UPDATE

The board studied the report from the E&I Officer.
This included references to the NFNPA Annual report that contained two pages dedicated to the HLS scheme and its successes over the last ten years. The second

of the commoning videos was released and has proved very successful on social media. The E&I officer also reported that a new page on the HLS website has been created updating people of minor wetland repairs. Explaining why it is being done and where.

The New Forest Ambassador Scheme was also created during lock down and part of this project was to raise awareness of the damage caused by verge parking. A form was set up for people to let the NFNPA know of any sightings of verge parking.

240 forms were completed reporting issues across the forest. The E&I officer is also currently working on the end of scheme report and draft pages are being circulated to key team members for fact checking. AB reported that it is hoped to be able to get the board to agree the final report in January. OV offered his thanks to the E&I officer for all her efforts. CL offered more support from the CDA by offering to include E&I reports in the CDA newsletter.

HIWWT WRITTEN UPDATE

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

AB considered that the new Ambassador scheme now running may be an opportunity to record and report non native plants through the NFNPA. The board requested a breakdown of the work achieved over the HLS area during the last 10 years be forwarded for the January meeting.

RESUME

Action TW

NFLAS WRITTEN UPDATE

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.

RESUME

LiDAR WRITTEN REPORT

The board studied the LiDAR and Archaeology report supplied by Lawrence Shaw.

This is the last report from Lawrence as he is leaving the NFNPA to take up a post with FE. The board wished him well in his new role as Lead Historic Environment Advisor and thanked him for his hard work and enthusiasm in his work for the HLS scheme. During the last six months the archaeology team have commented on and supported 24 wetland improvement programmes and provided support on the ridge and furrow and stump removal programs undertaken.

RESUME

FUTURE NEW FOREST ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP SCHEME UPDATE

JT reported that for agreements extended for one year in 2019 or 2020, RPA may offer to extend agreements for a further year. It will be based on the criteria that were used last year. Provided the criteria is met, an offer will be made to extend the agreement for a further year. This is unlikely to be before the New Year.

RESUME

HLS AGM

The board agreed it would be good to have a gathering next summer if possible. Revisit the proposal in January.

RESUME

REVIEW OF VGS ANNUAL GRANT BUDGETS

Review of the VGS Grant budgets was postponed to a future meeting pending the roll over confirmation.

RESUME

AOB

Annual Healthcheck

JT proposed to delay the annual healthcheck for 2020. It was already planned to revamp the current report to better illustrate the evidence and delivery of what has been achieved. The board agreed to a new 2 year version in a new revised format.

RESUME

Action
JT/TW/JK

Evidence and Monitoring

OV enquired on the status of monitoring information available publicly. JT has requested a report of the monitoring and surveys. JK noted that it is being worked on and suggested a meeting with the board to discuss details on pulling the narrative together. OV commented that it sounded encouraging. JK to report back in January with progress.

Action JK

HIWWT Request for Additional Funding 2021

The board studied a funding request from HIWWT for an additional £2700 for 2021/2022. This would enable the officer to commission contractors to treat non

native plants on the HLS agreement area. The board agreed to the funding request but asked for a report covering the work achieved through HLS funding over the last 10 years. TW to inform applicant.

Action TW

PhD Project Proposal

The board were asked to consider a PhD research project through the University of York. The board discussed the opportunity but felt it could not commit to a long term project at this stage of the agreement. JK to notify applicants.

Action JK

Wet Condition Access

OV raised the issue of accessing restoration sites in wet weather. JK assured the board that protocol is in place for the contractors working at the sites. This includes briefing and pre work presentments

Meeting closed 12.42pm

DATES FOR FUTURE MEETINGS

9am Wednesday 27th January 2021 – Via TEAMS
Future Dates TBA

Delegated Actions to		
Tina Woodley	TW	VGS Administrator
Jackie Kelly	JK	HLS Project Manager – Forestry England
Alison Barnes	AB	Chief Executive – New Forest National Park Authority
Lord Manners	OV	Official Verderer – Verderers of the New Forest (Chairman)

J Lord Manners
22/1/2021

Lord Manners
Official Verderer
6