



**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

6<sup>th</sup> May 2021

## MINUTES OF THE HLS BOARD MEETING HELD ON 28<sup>th</sup> April 2021

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		
Charlotte Lines	CL	CDA Representative
Jenny Thomas	JT	New Forest Specialist – Natural England
In Attendance		
Tina Woodley	TW	VGS Administrator
Jackie Kelly	JK	HLS Project Manager – Forestry England
Mike Pittock	MP	Head of Planning & Environment – 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.

Revised Budget Forecast

A revised FE budget forecast for 2021 was supplied to the board.

Cycle Counters Report

Cycle counters have been returned to the supplier for data extraction, once FE have received the data they will finalise the draft report summarising outcomes from the project.

Holly Pollarding

Copies of maps for the holly pollarding programme were supplied to the board as requested.

Monitoring

An overview of monitoring work was supplied to the board

Overview of habitat restoration delivered in Q1 2021 as requested – see below

<b>HLS project</b>	<b>Habitat restoration work delivered Jan-Mar 2021</b>
Open habitat restoration	Seedling and sapling pine removal: <b>10.3ha</b> at Fawley
Ridge & furrow	Full ridge & furrow: <b>3ha</b> at Fawley Stump shearing: <b>60ha</b> at Longdown, Ipley, Perrywood and Fawley
Rhododendron	Cut & burn programme: <b>27ha</b> treated
Bracken control	<b>n/a</b>
Coppicing/pollarding	HLS enabled an additional <b>6.4ha</b> to be treated across 12 sites
Lost lawns project	None: Tantany Wood (3.2 ha) deferred to 2021/22
Verge restoration	Liaison at numerous sites across New Forest, verge protection works installed at Pilley (including 45 DTs) and Linwood (250 DTs)
Wetland restoration	None: works being planned for summer 2021

HLS Healthcheck

TW and JK have been working with NE to prepare the new format HLS Healthcheck that will cover 2020/21

Reflective Collars/ Eartags

TW is working with the E&I officer regarding a communications plan to include the promotion of reflective collars and eartags.

PROGRAMME AND SUMMARY

The board were supplied with the latest programme register detailing spend to the end of Quarter 1 – This included the revised forecast provided by FE and a bank reconciliation to date and a projection of spend to the end of 2021. The revised increased figure for the Ridge and Furrow project will be supplied to the board in the next couple of weeks. It was noted that all previously felled sites are due to be worked on by 2022 and then the project will move onto those areas that are freshly felled. OV commented that this was great work by the HLS teams and AB agreed it was good news. JT commented on the amazing recovery of the Durhill site since it was cleared despite it being a difficult site and the change of weather patterns. JT thought that Durhill would be a good case study to monitor the recovery of vegetation on restored ridge and furrow sites.

RESUME

Action JK

The expected spend on wetland repair and maintenance was reduced due sites only needing minimal repair in 2021. OV requested the HLS team contact the neighbours at Pondhead before work commences as he had promised they would be kept informed on any future work at that site.

Action MP/JK

JT commented that there was plenty still to achieve going forward at sites like Durhill, the Verderers Inclosures, more terrestrial works and holly pollarding, as well as wetland projects in the future once the forum have agreed the evidence and monitoring strategy. JK said it would be good to identify sites that match the forum's strategy and could be worked on at short notice. JT suggested a couple of places where a small amount of work would help some large SSSI units achieve favourable condition. JT mentioned future opportunities to work on the mires within the inclosures which are not currently covered by HLS but contribute to adjoining SSSI units becoming favourable. This may be something that is different in a future scheme. CL asked that as we move from the end of HLS into ELMS was there scope to a funding increase in the grazing element and for an evidence based survey or study to be commissioned to focus on what the forest stock graze on and their grazing habits. JT referred to the Putnam report from 1981 that showed the stock to be preferential grazers, and recently a small trial survey had taken place to assess the impacts of grazing on invertebrates. CL felt the old report needs looking at again to be more up-to-date and robust in its support of grazing. JT replied the SAC plan has been recently updated and covers this and will be out for consultation soon. The CDA will be included in the consultation.

CL asked if there are any aspirations to plant new native trees. JT replied this was covered by the FDP. CL requested a summary of the details.

Action JK

## FE UPDATE

RESUME

### Staff Update

The board welcomed Mike Pittock who started his role as Head of Planning and Environment at the beginning of February. This position has responsibility for overseeing Forestry England's delivery of the HLS scheme. Mike was previously Operations Manager within Forestry England's South District.

Recruitment for a replacement Wetland Restoration Officer is currently underway to replace Emma Tomlin who left at the beginning of the year.

### Terrestrial Restoration

The board studied the FE update which included updates on the Ridge and Furrow removal and stump grinding project which achieved a full programme of work despite varying weather conditions. The winter programme to cut and burn Rhododendron totalled 27 hectares. CL asked if there was a potential to increase the rhododendron programme. JK replied the surveys had taken place in 2013 and 2017 and that there is scope to repeat but it was getting harder to find areas to identify. CL said the CDA would assist in identifying sites. BR requested that GPS locations be supplied when reporting new areas of rhododendron. Seedling and sapling pine removal was undertaken at Fawley totalling 10.3ha. Planning and preparation are underway for the Winter programme prioritising those areas in most urgent need of works to tackle tree and scrub regeneration, in consultation with NE. Work is ongoing to set up a new framework contract for habitat restoration work under the terrestrial HLS programme.

### Bracken Management

The Bracken control group has applied for a further emergency authorisation to allow Asulam to be used in the 2021 season but the condition to exclude livestock from

treated areas and not to use near ditches and water sources would prove impractical for use on the forest. FE continue to work with the bracken control group to seek alternative options for the future.

#### Holly Pollarding

An area of 6.4ha was treated. This is targeting areas identified in the Sanderson report as urgent priority and priority areas for reducing the shade from dense holly to benefit epiphytic lichens. It was noted that holly pollarding is a specialised skill and training is required to do the task correctly.

#### Verge Restoration

The board studied the report from the VRO of work undertaken in the 1<sup>st</sup> quarter of 2021 which included site visits, speaking to drivers, issuing No Parking Stickers, installing temporary signage and continuing to monitor the worst areas. Reported problems include increased levels of displacement parking causing extensive verge erosion and vehicles blocking access ways and/ or the public highway. OV commented that it would need ongoing communications and education to spread the importance of verges. The VRO is working with the HLS E&I Officer to update the website and is working with partners to update the joint leaflet aimed at home owners adjoining the Open Forest. It is estimated that somewhere in the region of 12 miles of forest verge has now been protected thanks to the HLS funding.

#### Wetland Restoration

The team are planning a reduced programme of works for summer 2021 to carry out urgent enhancement work at two previously restored sites and to reduce/ remove exposed stakes at a number of previously restored wetland sites.

#### New Forest Freshwater and Wetlands Restoration Forum (FWRF)

A virtual FWRF Evidence and Monitoring workshop was held at the beginning of March where all participants voted in agreement with the proposed approaches to evidence gathering and monitoring. Footprint Ecology are now finalising an Evidence and Monitoring plan.

#### Wetland Restoration Monitoring

The board were supplied with an overview of the current monitoring programme for information. Once the FWRF Evidence and Monitoring plan is available it will be used to review the programme and consider what adjustments may be needed to deliver the recommendations in future years, along with the potential budget implications. An updated wetland monitoring programme will be brought to a future meeting for discussion and input from the board. In the meantime, the team are continuing to gather data in line with the current monitoring programme.

#### Species Monitoring

A Snipe survey is underway (postponed from 2020 due to Covid 19 restrictions). This was part of the repeat breeding wader survey. The Southern Damselfly report is being finalised. The board were asked to support the commissioning of two new surveys for 2021 This was to cover Vegetation monitoring at ridge and furrow restoration sites and Reptile habitat suitability assessment for ridge and furrow restoration sites. This would cover pre and post surveys, post felling and after ridge and furrow removal at year 1 and year 5. The board supported the commissioning of these new surveys.

Action JK

## ENGAGEMENT AND INTERPRETATION OFFICER WRITTEN UPDATE

RESUME

The board studied the report supplied by the E&I Officer. This included the HLS importance to World Wetlands Day, World Wildlife day and Earth day. The announcement of the rollover and updating the HLS Website. A comms plan for the rest of 2021/22 is being worked upon and the HLS has upcoming articles in local and national publications. The end of scheme report is now going to be available in a digital format and will tie in with the AGM.

## HIWWT WRITTEN UPDATE

RESUME

the board studied the report from HIWWT for works covered in the 1<sup>st</sup> quarter of 2021 including the Monitoring and control of Himalayan Balsam, Monitoring and control of Pitcher Plants, Monitoring of Cotoneaster and Monitoring of Gaultheria. Surveying to be undertaken by the Project Officer and volunteers in 2021 includes the recording of Cotoneaster.

Work undertaken by contractors on Crown Land on the Open Forest during 2021 included Control of Parrot's feather, Control of Japanese knotweed, Control of American skunk cabbage, Control of *Iris laevigata*, Control of Cotoneaster, Control of Golden Club, Control of Gaultheria. The board requested TW approach CC to see if more work could be covered in 2021 with additional funding towards the Non Native Plant project as this was fulfilling one of the HLS prescriptions.

Action TW

## NFLAS WRITTEN UPDATE

RESUME

The board had studied the report from The NFLAS and BR commented they were doing a great job. The team is now reduced by two members following the end of the OPOF project. AB commented that indications point to any new scheme having a stronger emphasis on farm advice so hoped it would secure the team in the future. CL supported AB in this opinion.

## LiDAR REPORT

RESUME

A short report from Steve Fisher stated there really was not a great deal to report for the start of the year as it has been fairly quiet in terms of archaeological advice. There had been tree stump removal at Fawley and Ipley inclosures for which the team identified and highlighted to FE a number of heritage and archaeological features, some scheduled and some that had been identified by remote sensing surveys commissioned in advance of the forestry work. A nice outcome of the felling at Ipley in particular is that several Bronze Age barrows now enjoy a much better view across Yew Tree Heath – the view is probably one of the reasons that they were originally built where they were. Over the summer the team will be consulting with FE on their planned operations this autumn, resulting in a good lead time to best mitigate for heritage features within those areas.

The only other HLS work has been a few bits of advice on road edge restorations. JT requested an annual catch up with the Archaeological team.

Action JT

## FUTURE NEW FOREST ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP SCHEME UPDATE

RESUME

JT stated there was not a lot new to report other than ongoing test and trials taking place across the country, one of which involves common land. It is still not known if a bespoke scheme will be an option or whether the New Forest will need to fit the standard ELMS criteria. Discussions took place on possible ELMS headings including Nature Recovery, Landscape Recovery, farming in protected landscapes, Natural Capital and what delivery would look like in the New Forest.

HLS AGM

RESUME

TW reported that she is working with the E&I officer to produce an online version of the AGM combined with the digital end of scheme report. TW will work with OV on the Chairman's report and report to the board on progress at the next meeting.

AOB

RESUME

Turf Hill

JK reported that a site meeting had taken place at Turf Hill on the excluded areas for Ridge and Furrow. The Archaeologist has agreed to stump shearing on the site if ground conditions are favourable as this is the most preferred method to protect the any historical features. Unfortunately, this means the remaining ridge and furrow cannot be removed in this area.

Meeting closed 12.49pm

Jul Munnell  
21 May 2021

## DATES FOR FUTURE MEETINGS

9am Friday July 9<sup>th</sup>- Via TEAMS?

9am Wednesday November 3<sup>rd</sup> – Via TEAMS?

Delegated Actions to		
Tina Woodley	TW	VGS Administrator
Jackie Kelly	JK	HLS Project Manager – Forestry England
Mike Pittock	MP	Head of Planning & Environment – Forestry England
Jenny Thomas	JT	New forest Specialist– Natural England

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