



Verderers of the New Forest
THE QUEEN'S HOUSE
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Official Verderer
Lord Manners

5th February 2021

MINUTES OF THE HLS BOARD MEETING HELD ON 29th January 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
In Attendance		
Tina Woodley	TW	VGS Administrator
Jackie Kelly	JK	HLS Project Manager – Forestry England

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

RESUME

Apologies received from Jenny Thomas – Lead Adviser New forest – Natural England

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 board were supplied with a draft report summarising outcomes from the project which had been running since 2011. The board felt there was still a need to continue monitoring the cycling usage of both official cycle routes and undesignated gravel tracks as well as looking in the future to monitoring the increasing incidences of cycling across the open forest. Problems had been experienced collecting the data

from the existing counters due to mechanical and technological issues. JK will work with the Recreation team to resolve these challenges with the existing counters to collate the latest data. The board requested a review of the objectives of the project and to investigate if it may offer background data for future strategies involving other partner organisations and possible expansion of monitoring with new technology now available.

Action JK

Draft programme of FE works for 2021

The board were supplied with a draft programme register of works planned for 2021.

HLS Healthcheck

TW, JK and JT to arrange meeting to discuss details of preparing the new format HLS healthcheck that will cover 2020/21.

Action TW,JK
&JT

PROGRAMME AND SUMMARY

The board were supplied with the latest available programme register that covered the period up to the end of December 2020. The board discussed the difficulty of planning future projects with the annual uncertainty of being offered a rollover of the HLS agreement for the following year.

RESUME

FE UPDATE

The board studied the report supplied by FE for the Winter 2020 Period.

The board were updated on the staffing situation within the HLS team and it was reported that Mike Pittock will be taking on the role as Head of Planning and Environment. This position has responsibility for overseeing Forestry England's delivery of the HLS Scheme.

RESUME

Terrestrial Restoration

During November and December stump shearing work was carried out at Highland Water and the removal of arisings from Turf Hill was completed. Further full ridge and furrow and stump removal is planned for Marchwood and Fawley and stump shearing is due to progress at Perrywood, Longdown, Fawley and Ipley.

The Winter programme of Rhododendron management is well underway with work continuing into February at a number of sites.

The planned restoration of lost lawn at Tantany Wood has been deferred to Winter 2021/22.

Phase 1 of the Mature Scots Pine removal from heathland at Woodcrates is due to have the remaining timber removed from site as soon as the ground conditions are suitable. The timber felled at Slap Bottom to date is due to be cleared and further discussions for this area are to be held.

Seedling and sapling pine removal work started has started at Dunces Arch and is due to be completed in early 2021.

A decision on an Emergency Authorisation for the use of spray for Bracken Management for the 2021 season is expected in early 2021 but it is likely to include a condition to exclude livestock from the treated areas after application. Although spraying is reserved for those areas where cutting is unable to take place, keeping the animals off for month after spraying is not a practical condition for the forest. FE continue to work with the Bracken Control Group to seek alternative options for the future.

Holly Pollarding

The Holly Pollarding project has been expanded this winter and the aim is to cut the understorey holly in around 12 plots spread across different woodlands. The programme is targeting sites highlighted in the 2018/19 survey report from N Sanderson. This work is due to be carried out between January and March 2021.

CL requested a map of the sites – JK to supply

Action JK

Verge Restoration

During the past quarter the Verge Restoration Officer has continued to respond to a high volume of contacts from residents/locals and partner organisations about persistent verge parking and reporting area of parking erosion. As reported in the last update the various Covid -19 restrictions have contributed to the increased pressure on verges. BR commented on the extraordinary amount of work and effort needed for every little bit of verge protection achieved. OV agreed that a lot of work had taken place, especially engagement work.

New signage and DT's have been installed at Ogdens. The VRO worked with the Parish Council, Verderers, CDA and Somerley Estate to develop the plans and carried out considerable liaison with residents and local users of the area.

Ongoing Verge protection projects include Linwood- High Corner to Red shoot, Furzey Lane/ Rans Wood, Pilley Pound, East End, Bank/Gritnam, multiple sites at Burley, Blackfield, Godshill and Woodgreen.

Wetland Restoration

The Wetland Restoration Officer left in January and the FE are in the process of recruiting a replacement. Information from surveys of previous restoration sites is being used to assess whether any further enhancement work is required and a programme of works is being put together for summer 2021. CL requested a report on the areas requiring work – JK will bring to the next meeting. The HLS team are working with FE's procurement team to set up a new framework contract for the supply of operational services to support the wetland restoration work programme. These opportunities are advertised on a national tender site. AB wondered if the NFLAS could assist with local contractors in the process of applying for tenders. BR agreed this would be a good idea.

Action JK

Action AB

New Forest Freshwater and Wetlands Restoration Forum (FWRF)

Following on from the meeting of the sub group in November a draft engagement and communication strategy has been developed which will be reviewed and updated as the FWRF progresses through the next steps. NE have procured the services of an independent contractor to facilitate the approval of the proposals and help set out a roadmap for the next phase of restoration planning. Forestry England will work on this with the contractor and NE during Q1 of 2021. JK will keep the board informed on the outcome of upcoming meetings.

Action JK

Wetland Restoration Monitoring

The HLS Monitoring Officer (MO) continued to collect data from various ongoing surveys over the Winter as part of the HLS monitoring programme.

This included Hydro Chemistry, Physical Monitoring and Biological Monitoring. A video has been passed to the E&I officer for inclusion in the upcoming 10-year celebration on line.

CL requested a summary of monitoring for the board to show the narrative of pre and post works. JK commented that a short document to highlight the results of the monitoring would be available at the next board meeting.

Action JK

Species Monitoring

The Southern Damselfly report is still being worked upon. The Hen Harrier report has been finalised.

ENGAGEMENT AND INTERPRETATION OFFICER WRITTEN UPDATE

RESUME

The board studied the report from the E&I Officer. This included updates on the media coverage resulting in an article in Hampshire Living Magazine in January 2021 on the New Forest Wetlands, why they are special and how the HLS scheme is helping.

A social media campaign was released to coincide with the winter programme of Rhododendron removal with a message that it is an invasive species and thanking people for keeping it from spreading from private properties onto the open forest.

Verge restoration was highlighted on social media and the launch of the New Forest Ambassador Scheme has resulted in more than 400 completed forms being returned detailing verge parking concerns.

The HLS webpage has been updated with details of the Verge protection works that have been completed.

The E&I officer also included an overview of upcoming projects including the NPA's Awakening Festival, (AB will send link to board members) World Wetlands Day, the HLS End of Scheme Report that is now going to be in a digital format and the Climate and Nature Emergency communications from the NPA that can include the HLS works and how they are helping to increase resilience and reconnecting habitats. CL asked if a communication could be put out regarding the Reflective collars/ear tags on stock – TW to ask E&I officer to run a story.

Action TW

HIWWT WRITTEN UPDATE

RESUME

The board studied the extensive report supplied by Catherine Chatters outlining the recent activities of the New Forest Non Native Project since the last meeting. The project officer thanked the board members for agreeing to the additional funding at the last meeting that brings the annual support to £23,767 for the control of invasive non-native plants within the open forest on the Crown lands.

HIWWT staff were able to undertake field work with individual volunteers during the Autumn in line with Government guidance but this was revised in January 21 as a result of the latest lockdown measures. It is hoped volunteer work parties planned for 2021 will go ahead but the situation will need to be reviewed nearer the time in light of up to date government advice. The board studied the project reports on the latest practical works undertaken that included the control of Pitcher plants, monitoring of Cotoneaster and Gaultheria. These were supported by excellent maps showing the locations of the Cotoneaster plants that were identified which greatly assists in the application of the herbicide treatment by the contractors.

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. The board discussed the views on farm advice as part of the requirements of ELM's scheme. CL commented that help was needed now to guide commoners going forward.

LiDAR REPORT

RESUME

The board were given a verbal update from AB on the activity since the last board meeting. Lawrence Shaw left the NPA at the end of October and Steve Fisher has

overseen the necessary HLS fieldwork since then including oversight of FE works for stream restoration and dragons teeth installation. Gareth Owen has joined the team in January. Gareth and Steve are reviewing the outstanding work left in the HLS Heritage Mapping Project which includes some desk based analysis and walkover surveys with volunteers to ground truth the data. Proposal on 2021/22 work will be brought to the next board meeting. AB offered to forward the link to the publically available LiDAR data.

Action AB

FUTURE NEW FOREST ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP SCHEME UPDATE

RESUME

JT sent apologies to the meeting but forwarded a briefing to board members that as far as she was aware the Verderers HLS scheme would receive a roll over offer into 2021/22 shortly.

HLS AGM

RESUME

It was discussed that it was very unlikely that an actual live AGM could be held in 2021 due to the ongoing Covid restrictions. TW considered the options of having a virtual AGM available digitally in conjunction with the release of the Celebration material the E&I officer has been working on. OV to supply Chairman's annual report. TW to liaise with the E&I officer to work on a plan. It was decided that a personal thank you would be sent to all HLS volunteers from the Official Verderer to acknowledge their commitment and importance to the projects during the last 11 years and how he looks forward to seeing them all again shortly.

Action OV
Action TW

Action TW

AOB

RESUME

HLS Staff

BR reported to the board that the HLS project team staff members have now been made permanent employees of FE as opposed to fixed contracts. This now offers increased security to both employees and the HLS project team.

Meeting closed 11.20am

DATES FOR FUTURE MEETINGS

10.30am Wednesday April 28th – Via TEAMS

9am Friday July 9th - Via TEAMS?

9am Wednesday November 3rd – Via TEAMS?

JKManners
21 April 2021

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)

Lord Manners
Official Verderer