



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

16th July 2021

MINUTES OF THE HLS BOARD MEETING HELD ON 9th July 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	Lead Adviser New forest – 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

All Members present

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

JK supplied a link to the FDP documents to the CDA, including details of where any native planting might take place during the plan period.

TW informed CC that additional work could be undertaken this year by the HIWWT Non Native Plant project. CC is sending in a proposed work programme for 21/22.

JT, JK and TW are booked in for a catch up meeting with the Archaeology team at the end of July.

JT reported that the updated SAC plan is complete and due to go out for stakeholder consultation shortly.

PROGRAMME AND SUMMARY

RESUME

The board were supplied with the latest programme register detailing spend to the end of Quarter 2. The revised figure for the ridge and furrow projects has been included. OV commented on the success of this project and the speed that the restored habitat had recovered. (The board members had visited a previously worked site at Slufers prior to the meeting).

JK noted that the majority of operational spend in Q2 was for verge restoration. Invoices for surveys and monitoring are due in Q4.

JT commented that focus could be given to restoration of broadleaf woodland within the agreement area. For the thrown open inclosures, discussions will be needed to decide on land owner responsibility for the transition to A&O with regard to the Conifer regeneration. AB suggested that this work could be referred to as a Nature Recovery Programme, which is terminology increasingly used nationally as part of the Environment Bill and being translated into local plans. JT already refers to the FDP as a nature recovery plan for the Crown lands and that the SAC covers all land, acting as a manual for land owners and managers and describes the vision for the whole forest.

AB informed the board that the South Downs NP had issued a press release regarding their Nature Recovery plan, which seeks to raise funds and support for what they have termed 'ReNaturing' ([What does ReNaturing in the South Downs look like? - South Downs National Park Authority](#)). The NFNPA has employed a Nature Recovery Officer, Alison Levy who will work to pull all the various plans together and create a geographic vision and work with partners to clearly articulate and present our collective nature recovery ambitions equivalent to the South Downs with the HLS featuring strongly in the plan.

ANNUAL AUDITED ACCOUNTS

DISCHARGE

The board had been supplied with copies of the final audited accounts for 2020. These had been studied and the board agreed for the OV to sign them as a proper record. These accounts will be put onto the HLS Website for public viewing.

Action TW

FE UPDATE

RESUME

Staff Update

The current DS Bruce Rothnie is retiring on 6th August and Craig Harrison has been appointed as his successor. Craig will become Forestry England's HLS Board Member from the next meeting. The board thanked Bruce for his support and hard work towards the HLS and wished him well in his retirement.

JK reported that unfortunately the position of Wetland Restoration Officer had not been filled. The board discussed the options of splitting the position into two separate jobs as it is proving difficult to source candidates with all the skills needed for this role. This is not helped by the large numbers of Wetland Restorations taking place in the Uplands creating a shortage of experienced people at this end of the country. MP commented that the FE are utilising and training their existing staff to assist with recruitment in the future.

Terrestrial Restoration

Ridge & Furrow Removal and Stump Shearing

Planning and preparation is underway for winter 2021/22. Sites include Longdown, Marchwood, Dunces Arch and Dibden. This will complete the initial programme of work agreed to be completed between 2019 – 2022.

Additional work is planned for new clear fell sites at Longbeech, Kings Garn, Turf Hill and Millersford. Additional sites may come forward later in the year and could be included, subject to HLS budget and contractor availability.

OV raised the possibility of how further work could be carried out to restore the remaining area of Turf Hill. This will be the subject of further discussion with the HLS team

Rhododendron Management

Planning and preparations are underway for Rhododendron foliar spraying which will commence in July and continue until October (weather permitting). The cut and burn programme will continue over the winter months. As reported at the last meeting all sites identified in the surveys carried out in 2013 and 2017 have now been treated. This winter's programme has been informed by the reports from FE staff and others. The CDA members have been given the link to report any they might see to FE. A repeat survey will be commissioned in 2022 to assess the current distribution of Rhododendron across the forest.

Lost Lawns

The planned restoration in Tantany Wood (3.2h) is scheduled for winter 2021/22. JT and JK are intending to revisit the lost lawn project to see what could be put forward next.

Action JT &
JK

Mature Pine Felling and Seedling and Sapling Pine Removal

A consultation site visit took place at Woodcrates in June to discuss the phase 2 works. A record of agreed actions has been circulated and restoration work is planned for this winter.

The planning and preparation of the seedling and sapling pine removal is underway, prioritising those areas in most urgent need of work to tackle regeneration in consultation with NE. Natural regeneration will also be removed from a number of sites prior to ridge and furrow operations. Sites include Longdown, Longbeech and Kings Garn.

Bids for the new 4-year framework contract for habitat restoration work under the terrestrial HLS programme are being evaluated and contracts awarded in July.

Bracken Management

The current regulations regarding the use of Asulam for bracken controls means it is unable to be used on the open forest. No suitable alternative has been found and so no spraying will happen this summer. The forage harvesting programme has been increased but this is not a suitable alternative to spraying in many areas due to the differing habitats

Holly Pollarding

A further 6-8ha of dense holly is due to be treated this winter as an HLS project to benefit epiphytic lichens.

Verge Restoration

The VRO continues to be very active with site visits, speaking to drivers, issuing No Parking stickers, installing temporary signage, monitoring the worst affected areas and carrying out significant liaison with stakeholders, as well as new protection measures and ongoing works in various sites across the forest.

Wetland Restoration

Urgent enhancement works are due to take place over the summer at 2 previous restoration sites (Longbeech mire and Pondhead)

New Forest Freshwater and Wetlands Restoration Forum (FWRP)

Footprint Ecology is finalising the Evidence and Monitoring Plan, which was commissioned by NE. Funding has been made available by NE and Forestry England to commission further work from a contractor, to include facilitating the next steps in restoration planning through the forum and facilitating delivery of a communications plan.

Wetland Restoration Monitoring

The HLS Monitoring Officer is continuing to gather data in line with the current monitoring programme. Once the FWRP Evidence and Monitoring plan is available the team will review the programme and consider what adjustments are needed to deliver the recommendations for future years along with the potential budget implications. A proposal for an updated wetland monitoring programme will be brought to a future board meeting for discussion and guidance from the board.

Species Monitoring

The postponed 2020 Snipe survey has now been completed with the report due to be finalised by September. This was part of the repeat breeding waders survey (Curlew, Lapwing and Redshank surveys already done).

The Southern Damselfly report is being finalised and due to be delivered by the end of the year.

A programme of vegetation monitoring at new ridge and furrow sites will start over the summer. The surveys will monitor how sites respond after restoration from commercial forestry to open habitat.

Discussion was held as to how the Surveys undertaken as part of the HLS could be shared in the future.

RESUME

ENGAGEMENT AND INTERPRETATION OFFICER WRITTEN UPDATE

The board had already studied the report from the E&I Officer. The highlights during the last quarter include a social media campaign regarding the stallions being turned out and the successes of the HLS Bloodlines scheme. This was in the form of a video featuring Agister Maton. Also posts about Verge restoration work, insect week, world rainforest day, articles relating to HLS in Hampshire Living and Park Life. Future work includes updating the HLS website, the HLS AGM update and Full Scheme report, project on Verges, Education and children and Archaeology.

RESUME

HIWWT WRITTEN UPDATE

RESUME

The Board sent congratulations to Catherine Chatters of the HIWWT for receiving the British Empire Medal for her service to the nations biosecurity through her work fighting Non Native Invasive Plant species.

A full report of all the ongoing work by the officer, her dedicated team of volunteers and contractors was studied and the board repeated their thanks for the dedication to the project which is an important prescription of the HLS agreement.

NFLAS WRITTEN UPDATE

RESUME

A report from the New Forest Land Advice Service had been circulated to the board detailing the work completed to support commoning in the New Forest and support and promote the HLS scheme.

LIDAR REPORT

RESUME

The board studied the report supplied by Gareth Owen who has replaced Lawrence Shaw as Manager of the HLS Archaeology and Heritage Team. He is being supported by Stephen Fisher (Archaeological Officer) and Hilde van de Heul (Assistant Archaeologist). Since January the team have reviewed the work undertaken to date and responded to new requests from the FE and continued with ongoing works including Ridge, Furrow and Tree Stump removal sites and verge restoration sites. The placing of the LiDAR data to ADS is still in the final legal/administration stages and the team will update the board as soon as it progresses.

The team hope to get the volunteers back out to conclude the heritage mapping survey project in 2021.

During the review and through discussions the team have identified 3 projects that could be conducted during 2021 and into 2022 and requested the boards consideration. 1 – Data Consolidation 2 – Data Interpretation 3 – Hidden Heritage.

The board supported the projects but noted that only the HLS related areas could be covered by the scheme.

FUTURE NEW FOREST ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP SCHEME UPDATE

RESUME

JT reported on the latest updates from DEFRA, firstly by 2024 they will have fully introduced the three new environmental land management schemes and they will be open for applications; the sustainable farming incentive (SFI) Local Nature Recovery and Landscape Recovery. A version of SFI is being launched in spring 2022. It will focus on soil health and animal health and welfare. Likely to hear more on the other two schemes later in the year.

For Existing HLS Schemes the RPA have indicated they will continue to extend agreements where they are meeting their objectives until 2024.

The government intend to maintain current average levels of investment in farming of £2.4 billion per year in England over the life of this parliament, with funding released from direct payments being re invested into delivering new schemes. It is envisaged that 30% of the funding released will be at farm level on schemes such as the Sustainable farming incentive, the remainder will be spent on locally tailored initiatives (such as Local Nature Recovery and Countryside Stewardship) and landscape scale interventions (such as Landscape recovery and Nature for Climate projects).

DEFRA have also just released details of a new scheme called Farming in Protected Landscapes Programme – this will fund projects that support nature recovery, mitigate the impacts of climate change, provide opportunities for people to discover, enjoy and understand the landscape and its cultural heritage or support nature friendly, sustainable farm businesses. The NFNPA are appointing an advisory group to recommend eligible projects for funding.

CL gave the board a verbal update on the latest information from the Foundation of Common Land and their tests & trials.

HLS AGM

The online alternative to the normal AGM format is being worked on by the E&I Officer and TW.

RESUME

AOB

The OV thanked Bruce Rothnie for his commitment to the HLS board and hopes he enjoys his retirement. DS thanked the OV and replied he is very excited about the future of the New Forest – wished the board and the new DS luck in keeping the work of the HLS moving.

Meeting closed 1.10pm

DATES FOR FUTURE MEETINGS

9am Wednesday November 3rd – Queens House

Delegated Actions to		
Tina Woodley	TW	VGS Administrator
Jackie Kelly	JK	HLS Project Manager – Forestry England
Jenny Thomas	JT	Lead Adviser New forest – Natural England

Lord Manners
19 August 2021

Lord Manners
Official Verderer