



Verderers of the New Forest
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Official Verderer
Lord Manners

10th Nov 2021

MINUTES OF THE HLS BOARD MEETING HELD ON 3rd November 2021

Voting Members		
Lord Manners	OV	Official Verderer – Verderers of the New Forest (Chairman)
Craig Harrison	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

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

The Audited Accounts for 2020 have been posted to the HLS Website.

The board were supplied with the finalised Cycle Counters report that summarised the outcomes from the project. CL noted that off road cycling was an ongoing CDA discussion. JK commented that this report would feed into the RMS project.

OV to forward the report to the Verderers and RMS for their information.

Action OV

An overview of habitat restoration delivered during Quarter 3 of 21 was supplied for the board.

PROGRAMME AND SUMMARY

RESUME

The board studied the latest programme register detailing the years spend to the end of Quarter 3, along with revised forecasts to cover works planned for Quarter 4. The estimated annual spend is looking to be less than projected due to a reduction in cost of wetland repairs. Additional ridge and furrow works will take place in the new year.

FE UPDATE

RESUME

Staff Update

The board welcomed Craig Harrison who has joined as Forest Management Director and Deputy Surveyor for South District following Bruce Rothnie's retirement. A new Habitat Restoration Officer has been appointed. Lorna Bailey-Towler will start her role in early November, OV and AB supported the new officer being mentored by Sarah Oakley for the first year to assist in the delivery of habitat restorations.

Terrestrial Restoration

Ridge & Furrow Removal and Stump Shearing

The season started in early September and good progress has been made. Full ridge and furrow and stump removal was completed at Marchwood and Dibden and stump shearing work was completed at Longdown. Additional stump shearing is planned for Long Beech, Kings Garn and Knightwood. Stump shearing work was also completed at Turf Hill on the area with potential archaeology, methods were discussed and agreed with the NPA Archaeologist. A site visit has been arranged in November with the Verderers to inspect the work. Planned work at Dunces Arch is on hold pending a survey for unexploded ordnance. (Post meeting note: this site visit was postponed and is rescheduled for Friday 14th Jan)

Rhododendron Management

A large programme of foliar spraying has been completed this summer. Sites included Little Wootton, Horseshoe Bottom, Fletchers Thorns, Holmsley, Burley, Highland Water, Islands Thorns and Bramshaw. Planning and preparation are underway for the cut and burn programme that will follow over the winter months, starting in the south of the forest. A new survey is planned to assess the current distribution of Rhododendron across the open forest (previous surveys were carried out in 2013 and 2017).

Lost Lawns

The planned restoration in Tantany Wood is scheduled for Winter 2021/22. A review of Neil Sanderson's "Lost Lawns" report is to be carried out this winter with new sites planned for consultation in spring 2022.

Mature Pine Felling and Seedling and Sapling Pine Removal

The remaining timber from phase 1 at Woodcrates has now been cleared. The agreed phase 2 restoration works started in October and are due to be completed this winter. A site visit for stage 3 consultation will be arranged in the spring.

Natural regeneration of seedling and sapling pine was removed at Turf Hill, Dunces Arch, Long Beech and Kings Garn. Planned work for the winter will prioritise those areas most in urgent need of work to tackle tree and scrub regeneration, in consultation with Natural England. Areas include Dur Hill, Markway, Longdown, Ipley and Dibden.

The 4-year framework contract for habitat restoration work under the terrestrial HLS programme was awarded in September replacing the expired framework that covered the removal of trees and scrub via the use of chainsaws, brush cutters and flails.

In 2017/18 a programme of work was carried out to benefit Slender Cottongrass by removing encroaching Willow, Birch and other scrub species from sites at Holmsley and Fort Bog. Neil Sanderson's latest survey of these areas reported good results. Further work to clear collapsed Willow is planned for winter 2022/23.

Bracken Management

The bracken forage harvesting programme started in September with 61ha on 49 sites planned for delivery by the end of October. JT requested the amount covered by HLS be stated. No bracken spraying was done on the open forest in summer 2021 due to the restrictions on using Asulam. Natural England reports that an alternative herbicide is being trialled but is unlikely to be ready for use in summer 2022.

CL put forward a proposal for the board to consider the merits of purchasing a smaller machine to cover the verges and difficult to reach sites. CL offered to supply a list of sites identified. JT had concerns on such a large purchase with annual roll over status. AB proposed the possibility of using a contractor with the appropriate machinery on a temporary contract. CL and MP to discuss details and report at next meeting.

Holly Pollarding

Up to 6 sites identified as "urgent priority" or "priority" by the N.Sanderson report will have under storey Holly treated under the HLS project to benefit Epiphytic Lichens over the coming winter.

CL asked if any new pollarding sites were planned? JT said the CDA would be welcome to suggest areas for trial.

Verge Restoration

The Verge Restoration Officer focuses primarily on education and engagement with visitors and locals. Under the HLS project further measures are being planned or implemented at in excess of 20 sites during autumn/winter 2021/22. CL had concerns with the verge protection work at Emery Down and requested JK ask the VRO to revisit the site. CL also asked if the scrub regeneration could be cleared around installed dragons teeth. MP will organise clearance.

Action MP

Wetland Restoration

Urgent enhancement work was completed at Long Beech Mire and Ocknell Mire.

New Forest Freshwater and Wetlands Restoration Forum (FWRF)

Footprint Ecology finalised the Evidence and Monitoring plan, which was commissioned by Natural England; it is now being reviewed by NE specialists. Footprint Ecology have been appointed to work with the forum to facilitate the development of a Restoration Plan and a Communications Strategy. They are

currently finalising the Evidence and Monitoring plan, which was commissioned by Natural England it is now being reviewed by NE specialists before being presented to the Forum. The board discussed the importance of carbon related data to support restorations and possible alternative terminology for the features to be used by the communications team as an opportunity to utilise the habitat environment and produce a nature recovery strategy on a landscape scale.

Wetland Restoration Monitoring

The monitoring programme will be reviewed against the FWRF Evidence and Monitoring plan and a proposal for an updated wetland monitoring programme will be brought to the next board meeting for discussion.

In house and volunteer monitoring has continued over the summer including analysing data from hydrological loggers located at various sites and timelapse camera footage of how water interacts with the floodplain during high rainfall events. The extended Riverfly programme captures data about pollution-sensitive freshwater invertebrates to monitor water quality. Monthly surveys are usually carried out from April to October with the help of citizen science monitoring volunteers.

Commissioned surveys of post restoration fish and freshwater invertebrates from four previously restored sites was completed in September. A written report summarising the results is due by the end of the year.

The HLS website will be updated with highlights from the reports.

AB had received a request from FFG to join the HLS website as they do not have their own site. The HLS website has not got the functionality to support this request.

Species Monitoring

The postponed Snipe survey was completed in June and the report is due to be finalised by the end of the year. This was an element of the repeat breeding waders survey (curlew, lapwing and redshank surveys already done).

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

A programme of vegetation monitoring at 4 new ridge and furrow sites commenced this summer to monitor how sites respond after restoration from commercial forestry to open habitats.

ENGAGEMENT AND INTERPRETATION OFFICER WRITTEN UPDATE

RESUME

The report covered updates on recent communication projects including Net Zero with Nature week, COP26 and NZWN programme, updates to the HLS website, the HLS roll over in the NPA's Annual review. The team filmed Agister Maton and the building process of the newly rebuilt pound at Furzey Lodge. This will be published soon, highlighting how the HLS supports commoning. A new education newsletter has been designed to target education providers. The take up for school visits supported by the HLS has been very good since September. Upcoming comms projects include a Verges animation focusing on the importance of verges, also a release about the benefits of Holly pollarding for certain lichens, Bracken harvesting and the Awakening festival in February.

HIWWT WRITTEN UPDATE

RESUME

The board studied the report supplied on the work completed in the last quarters by Catherine Chatters and her team of volunteers. This included the control and monitoring of Himalayan Balsam, Pitcher Plants and Golden Club. Recording and monitoring of Cotoneaster and Gaultheria. Also, the control of various non-native

species by contractors. JT commented that the HLS funded project work to control Himalayan Balsam and Pitcher plants is really paying off now.

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

A review report of the work undertaken in the last quarter by the archaeology team was studied. This included details on advice given at stream restoration sites, ridge and furrow sites and on verge restoration and bracken removal. It was also reported that the final sign off from Cambridge was still needed before the final administration to release the LiDAR to Archaeology Data Service can be completed. The board will be updated as soon as this progresses. Ongoing work for the team includes processing the winter 2019/2020 survey data and concluding the Heritage mapping surveys.

The Archaeology team presented the board with three proposals for future 2021/22 projects.

Project 1 is an HLS New Forest Heritage map to bring together all known and available heritage information in more detail than available on the HER.

Project 2 An HLS Atlas of the New Forest's Archaeology: The New Forest through time. This project aims to produce an engaging, information and illustrated digital publication exploring the rich heritage of the New Forest through the historical periods.

Project 3 The legacy of War on the Forest. A project that seeks to complete a more complete record of the extent of 20th century-built heritage in the New Forest combining existing datasets with new volunteer led survey.

The board gave its approval to the funding of Project 1 (£1000) and project 3 (£500) with the condition that the funding only covered areas included in the HLS.

More information was requested by the board on Project 2 as to how much could be attributed directly to the HLS. AB to report back to the next meeting with more details from the Archaeology team.

Action AB

FUTURE NEW FOREST ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP SCHEME UPDATE

RESUME

JT reported that the HLS rollover has had Ministerial sign off.

Schemes that have already rolled over and which continue to meet the criteria will be rolled over again this year. The only formal correspondence HLS customers with expiring agreements will receive from RPA is either a letter offering them an extension or a letter confirming they are not suitable for extension. TW to keep an eye out for the notification as there is a time period on acceptance.

Future Scheme Update

Landscape Recovery Pilot, this is not the same as the Foundation for Common Land Expression of Interest for a Landscape Recovery Test and Trial

Eligibility - sites between 500 to 5,000 connected hectares

Themes of pilot

- 1.Recovering and restoring England's threatened native species: birds and insects.
- 2.Restoring England's streams and rivers: improving water quality, biodiversity and adapting to climate change.

It is expected that the projects will deliver other benefits, such as carbon savings to help achieve net zero.

The scheme will begin piloting around 10 projects in 2022, and launch in 2024

Online information sessions were held and recorded

AGM

RESUME

Current plans are for 2022 AGM to take place in early Summer if Covid restrictions allow.

AOB

RESUME

Dates For 2022 Meetings

These were discussed and agreed as below.

Meeting closed 12.30

DATES FOR FUTURE MEETINGS 2022

Thursday 13th January – 9.30am Queens House

Thursday 28th April – 9.30am Queens House

Wednesday 6th July – 9.30am Queens House

Wednesday 5th October – 9.30am Queens House

Delegated Actions to		
Alison Barnes	AB	Chief Executive - NPA
Lord Manners	OV	Official Verderer
Mike Pittock	MO	Head of Planning & Environment - FE

*Lord Manners
13 January 2021*

Lord Manners
Official Verderer