



Verderers of the New Forest
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Official Verderer
Lord Manners

14th January 2022

MINUTES OF THE HLS BOARD MEETING HELD ON 13th January 2022

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

An overview of habitat restoration delivered during Quarter 4 of 21 was supplied for the board.

The VRO revisited the verge protection measures at Emery Down. These measures were installed by the FE before the VRO was in post and therefore not covered by HLS.

PROGRAMME AND SUMMARY

RESUME

The board studied the latest Programme Register of spend to the end of December 2021. TW reported the 2021 annual HLS payment had been released at the end of December and all 2021 VGS Grazing payments had been made to Forest Commoners. The board discussed the reserve needed to carry forward for maintenance of capital items and restoration repairs. JT has received information that the RPA are likely to continue rolling over existing HLS schemes until 2024 if they still meet the objectives.

The board agreed there was still plenty of important work that could be done before 2024. TW & JK to produce future forecasts and include adjusting the budgets in line with inflation as agreed by the board, for the next two years and present to the next board meeting.

Action TW &
JK

The Healthcheck for 2020 and 2021 will be available for the next board meeting. MP asked for the boards support to acquire quotes to commission surveys for restoration plans for the newly felled inclosures. The board felt it would be a good idea to have a comprehensive plan that could be used as a practical template for methodology that could be applied to multiple sites. A brief of the project to be forwarded to the board before quotes are sought.

Action TW &
JK

Action MP

FE UPDATE

RESUME

Staff Update

The newly appointed HLS Habitat Restoration Officer Lorna Bailey-Towler joined the team in November. Sarah Oakley is mentoring her for 1 year on a part time basis.

Terrestrial Restoration

Ridge & Furrow Removal and Stump Shearing

During the last quarter stump shearing work has been completed at Long Beech (2.58ha), Kings Garn (3.14ha) and Knightwood (2.7ha).

Planned work at Dunces Arch is on hold pending further survey for unexploded ordnance in areas where intrusive restoration work is planned.

Future work programmes will depend on the timing of planned felling through the Forest Design Plan.

Rhododendron Management

The winter programme to cut Rhododendron bushes and burn arisings is focusing on areas at Allum Green and Little Wootton Inclosure. A proposal to commission a new survey for 2022 to assess the current distribution of Rhododendron across the open forest will be brought to the next board meeting. Previous surveys were carried out in 2013 and 2017. AB suggested the NPA Ambassadors could assist with the survey as well as running a comms project to promote. AB, JK and CC to liaise.

Action AB &
JK

Lost Lawns

The planned restoration in Tantany Wood (3.2ha) has been delayed until September 2022 pending further survey for archaeology and potential unexploded ordnance. Plans will be agreed to manage any constraints.

Review of Neil Sanderson's 'Lost Lawns' report is in progress and new sites being planned for consultation in spring 2022.

Mature Pine Felling and Seedling and Sapling Pine Removal

Woodcrates – The agreed phase 2 restoration works started in October with 4.72 hectares completed so far. A consultation site visit for phase 3 is planned for spring 2022.

Seedling and Sapling Pine natural regeneration was completed at Turf Hill, Dunces Arch, Long Beech and Kings Garn (23ha in total). Work to tackle tree and scrub regeneration is planned for the rest of the winter season at Dur Hill (13.54ha), Longdown (25.55ha), Ipley (13.67ha) and Markway (18.78ha).

Bracken Management

The programme for 2022 will focus on forage harvesting operations due to the ongoing 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.

Holly Pollarding

Up to 6 sites of holly will be treated under the HLS to benefit epiphytic lichens during winter 21/22.

Verge Restoration

The Verge Restoration Officer will be retiring in August 2022. The HLS team are starting the succession planning process and the board discussed the future of the role and agreed there was a need for a VRO going forward. JK to put a job description together.

Action JK

Wetland Restoration

The new Habitat Restoration Officer and the team are currently working up a programme of enhancement works for summer 2022 and starting to formulate a longer-term programme. Details will be shared at the next board meeting.

New Forest Freshwater and Wetlands Restoration Forum (FWRF)

The Evidence and Monitoring plan put forward by Footprint Ecology is currently being reviewed by NE specialists. Footprint Ecology have also been appointed to work with the forum to facilitate the development of a Restoration Plan and a Communications Strategy.

Wetland Restoration Monitoring

The HLS monitoring programme will be reviewed against the final agreed FWRF Evidence and Monitoring plan and the team will consider what adjustments may be needed to deliver the recommendations, along with potential budget implications. This can then be forwarded to the board for discussion and input.

A considerable amount of raw data has been collected under the current programme and is in the process of being reviewed and analysed. This includes pre- and post-work fish population surveys, freshwater invertebrate surveys, river habitat and geomorphology surveys, water level and water quality monitoring and time lapse photography.

Species Monitoring

The Snipe survey that was postponed from 2020 due to Covid 19 restrictions was completed in June. This was part of the repeat breeding waders survey (Curlew, Lapwing, and Redshank surveys already done). The final Breeding Waders Survey Report 2019-21 is now available on the HLS website.

The Southern Damselfly report is now complete. A programme of vegetation monitoring at 4 new ridge and furrow restoration sites started this summer to monitor

how sites respond after restoration from commercial forestry to open habitats. The contractor has completed the pre restoration surveys and the first report is awaited. A retille habitat suitability assessment and mitigation guidance for ridge and furrow restoration has been commissioned but due to contractor illness this report has been extended to the end of March 22.

AB and OV requested a quick synopsis of the species surveys for the April board meeting.

Action JK

ENGAGEMENT AND INTERPRETATION OFFICER WRITTEN UPDATE

RESUME

The board was supplied with a report detailing the communication campaigns from the final quarter of 21 – this included the DEFRA 100 objects campaign that included the HLS funding of reflective pony collars and reflective cattle ear tags. The HLS tie in to the COP26 and NZWN programme. Updates to the HLS Website and filming at the rebuilt Furzey Lodge Pound. Plans of upcoming projects include articles based around the HLS rollover, the 2022 comms plan, a planned verges animation and the Awakening Festival in February.

HIWWT WRITTEN UPDATE

RESUME

CC requested the board's approval for an additional £4000 for 2022 to commission contractors on HLS area to treat Cotoneaster and Yellow Azalea. The board agreed to this but requested more information on the methodology for treating Yellow Azalea. (Post meeting note – CC reported that the Azalea is treated using the same methods as Rhododendron).

Action TW

The board studied the comprehensive report supplied by CC on the work of the Non-Native project between Oct and Dec 21. This included work by project officer and volunteers monitoring and treating Pitcher Plants, monitoring of Cotoneaster, monitoring of Gaultheria. The project officer also recorded surveys of Cotoneaster and created maps relating to these surveys. Work undertaken by contractors included the control of Parrots Feather, control of Japanese Knotweed, American Skunk Cabbage, Iris laevigata, Cotoneaster, Golden club and Gaultheria.

LIDAR REPORT

RESUME

The board studied the report from HLS Archaeology and Heritage Team. This covered the ongoing work and responses to new requests from the HLS team.

FUTURE NEW FOREST ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP SCHEME UPDATE

RESUME

JT reported that information has just been released about the Landscape Recovery pilot that will hopefully be launched next year. Landscape Recovery is a new approach to supporting long-term, significant habitat restoration and land use change. This will include all types of land as eligible including land inside or outside protected areas as well as common land and sites between 500 and 5000 hectares. The Local Nature Recovery is the successor to Countryside Stewardship. It will provide a range of options much like HLS and at this stage, appears to be the most appropriate future scheme for the New Forest. JT will forward any more details as they are released.

The board discussed that this may dovetail and unlock other environmental schemes—CL reported that a Foundation of Common Land Test and Trial on Governance of future schemes is due to be launched in the New Forest and the Malverns.

AGM

RESUME

The board agreed that an AGM would be organised for 2022. The date Thursday 15th September 6pm was agreed and it is to be held at Hale Village Hall. TW to book and organise with other HLS partners.

Action TW

AOB

AB reported to the board that the Government response to the Landscape Review is due to be released in the coming week. This opens a period of public consultation on the landscapes review. In particular, they want the public's thoughts on the potential legislative changes that the government are planning. The consultation closes on 9th April.

OV noted that NE had given a presentation to FE on Carbon Storage – commenting that grassland was an important factor in carbon storage. JT agreed this was a very good report. AB commented this would feed in the NPA's Zero with Nature topic.

Meeting closed 12.30

*Full Minute
25 April 2022*

DATES FOR FUTURE MEETINGS 2022

Thursday 28th April – 9.30am Queens House

Wednesday 6th July – 9.30am Queens House

Wednesday 5th October – 9.30am Queens House