



Verderers of the New Forest
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Official Verderer
Lord Manners

29th April 2022

MINUTES OF THE HLS BOARD MEETING HELD ON 28th April 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 (Via TEAMS)
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 in Q1 of 2022 was supplied for the board.

Draft Healthcheck for 2020 and 2021 will be forwarded to the board when complete.
Details from the Healthcheck will be used for the AGM report, to support a roll over and produce new comms to promote the HLS.

Action JK &
TW

Four priority sites have been identified for the first set of Inclosure Restoration Action Plans: Dur Hill, Sluffers North, Markway and Turfhill. The proposal is to engage a contractor to work in collaboration with FE staff to draw up a plan for each site – these will be practical plans with a map and a clear list of actions needed to restore each site to favourable condition. This will then work as a template for work on other Verderers Inclosures that are planned later in the design plan. MP thought this plan may be achievable within the next year. AB felt it would be important to be able to quote an estimated cost per hectare for restoration to assist in securing future funding. OV requested a total possible hectareage and notional cost per hectare for the next board meeting.

A Rhododendron Survey is due to be commissioned and carried out in 2023. The survey will map the location and height/size of rhododendron, which will be used to plan future work programmes. AB asked if the NF Ambassadors could be engaged to assist with the survey. JK to investigate the possibility. Survey brief and cost TBC.

Action JK

The recruitment process for a new Verge Restoration Officer is underway with the closing date for applications being 2nd May. JK reported that a lot of interest has been shown in the post.

Action JK

A synopsis of the species surveys will be included in the Healthcheck document.

PROGRAMME AND SUMMARY

RESUME

The board studied the latest Programme Register of spend to the end of March 2022 and projected spend to the end of December 2022 which included adjusted budgets to reflect inflation.

TW reported that the annual VGS grants had been paid at the beginning of April. FE Claim 29 is due by the end of April.

AB asked if the budget for the Wetland repair and maintenance was an ongoing annual outlay. JK informed the board that it would be an annual expense as it covered not only minor repairs to any of the previously restored sites but also enhancement of those sites as new methods are found and reacting to the natural system as it changes whilst bedding in. JT commented that many completed restorations never need any additional work, whilst others need work due to the changing weather patterns causing for example wash outs until the site has vegetated over and stabilised.

FE UPDATE

RESUME

Staff Update

HLS Monitoring Officer Grace Herve has left the HLS Team at the end of March to take a temporary role at Dorset Wildlife Trust. She will return to FE after 1 year. Preparations are underway to recruit a replacement. HLS Works Supervisor, Laura Ortiz Garcia is taking 2 year career break from FE and recruitment is underway for a replacement.

Terrestrial Restoration

Ridge & Furrow Removal and Stump Shearing

Following a site meeting at Turf Hill with the Verderers and the NPA Archaeologists, further work was carried out to remove ridges and furrows in an area where stump shearing had been carried out in autumn 2021 (2.4ha.) The agreed method was overseen by the archaeologist. The OV commented that the NPA Archelogy team had been very helpful and supportive. Further survey for unexploded ordnance was

carried out at Dunces Arch which confirmed that works can go ahead in the areas where intrusive restoration work is planned. This site is now programmed for autumn 2022.

Preparation and planning is also underway to restore new clear fell areas at Knightwood and Matley Ridge in the 2022/23 winter work programme. Future sites will depend on the timing of planned felling through the Forest Design Plan. Potential sites that may come forward in 2022/23 include Turf Hill, Millersford and Markway.

AB asked if there was a list of units that had been upgraded to favourable. JT replied that in excess of 6000ha had been re categorized since 2011 with many areas still to be assessed.

Action JT

Rhododendron Management

The winter programme to cut rhododendron bushes and burn arisings focused on areas at Allum Green and Little Wootton Inclosure. Planning is underway for the summer spraying programme to include sites at Dibden, Woodcrates, Turf Hill, Fawley, Dunces Arch, Little Wootton and Allum Green.

Lost Lawns

The planned restoration in Tantony Wood (3.2ha.) is programmed in for winter 2022/23 pending further survey for archaeology and potential unexploded ordnance. Plans will be made to manage any constraints. Further sites from Neil Sanderson's Lost Lawns Report are planned for consultation in May 2022. CL asked to be included in the consultation list to arrange the CDA representative.

Action JK

Mature Pine Felling and Seedling and Sapling Pine Removal

A consultation site visit for phase 3 at Woodcrates took place in April 2022 and a record of the agreed works was circulated to attendees. Preparation and planning are underway for the work to be carried out in winter 2022/23. The OV thanked the team for producing prompt and detailed minutes.

Work to tackle tree and scrub regeneration was completed at Dur Hill (13.5ha.) Longdown (25.6ha.) Ipley (13.7ha.) and Markway (18.8ha.). Further works as part of a rolling programme are planned for winter 2022/23 at Turf Hill (19.2ha.) Markway (27.2ha.) Durr Hill (22.7ha.) Longdown (22.4ha.) Dibden (5.5ha.) and Fawley (3.3ha.). Further work will be planned for winter 2022/23 to clear collapsed willow at Holmsley and Fort Bog to benefit slender cottongrass.

Bracken Management

The programme for 2022 will again focus on forage harvesting operations due to the ongoing restrictions on using Asulam.

Holly Pollarding

Six sites were worked in winter 21/22 under the HLS project, Canterton Wood, Shave Green, French's Bushes, Red Shoot Plain, Black Bush and Stricknage Wood. This is a rolling programme of work that aims to treat all 'urgent priority' and 'priority' areas within 29 woodlands over the next 3-5 years. JT noted that this is critical work as the old growth pasture woodlands support an internationally important lichen assemblage.

Verge Restoration

The VRO has been working with residents/ locals and partner organisations to install protection measures and change behaviours to protect the forest verges.

Thinning A & O Plots

A new programme of work is being planned to carry out much needed thinning of A&O regeneration plots. Work will begin in winter 2022/23 at Bratley Wood to establish a more natural A&O woodland structure going forwards. Works are also planned for Brook Wood and Bramshaw Wood.

Wetland Restoration

The programme of enhancement works planned for summer 2022 include Claypits Bottom, Deadman Bottom, Amberslade, North Sluffers Inclosure, Pondhead, The Noads Mire, Cowleys Heath East and Shirley Holms Mire. A new 4 year contract for wetland maintenance is being set up to replace the expired framework. Bids are due to be evaluated in May and contracts awarded in June.

New Forest Freshwater and Wetlands Restoration Forum (FWRF)

The Forum meeting was held in March to review the Evidence and Monitoring plan. The Chair of the Forum has stepped down and the secretariat is leading the process to appoint a new chair.

Wetland Restoration Monitoring

The HLS monitoring Officer left the team at the end of March for 1 year. The options are being considered for recruiting a replacement bearing in mind any adjustments to the monitoring programme that may be needed to deliver the recommendations in the final agreed FWRF Evidence and Monitoring Plan.

The HLS Website pages for Surveys and Monitoring have been updated to include new pages for the different techniques used for monitoring wetland restorations. More results will be added as they become available. A report summarising the results of the 2021 post restoration fish and freshwater invertebrates surveys has been finalised and published on the website. Contractors have carried out evaluation of the data collected at Harvestslade, North Sluffers, Wootton and Pondhead. The results will feed into the 'monitoring case studies' that will be developed for each of these sites following the recommendations in the FWRF Evidence and monitoring plan. Repeat River Habitat surveys have been finalised for the 4 sites. The results from these will also feed into the monitoring case studies.

The board supported the proposal to commission site based 'monitoring case studies' to combine data from the various strands into a single succinct report for each site (North Sluffers, Harvestslade, Pondhead and Wootton). The report would describe the site 5 years after restoration in the context of habitats present and the relevant measures of success.

Action JK

Species Monitoring

A programme of vegetation monitoring at 4 new ridge and furrow restoration sites started in summer 2021 to monitor how sites respond after restoration from commercial forestry to open habitat. The contractor has completed the pre restoration surveys and delivered the first report summarising the baseline data. The first post restoration surveys are due to take place in summer 2023 (for sites that are restored winter 2022/23)

A reptile habitat suitability assessment and mitigation guidance for ridge and furrow restoration has been commissioned and is due to be complete by September 2022. Species surveys for the Six Spotted Crane Fly and the Beaulieu Dung Beetle to be commissioned for 2022. Surveys of the Brown Diving Beetle and the New Forest Mud Beetle to be commissioned for 2023.

ENGAGEMENT AND INTERPRETATION OFFICER WRITTEN UPDATE

RESUME

The board studied the report from the E&I Officer detailing work in the first quarter of 2022. This included reports on the media coverage of the visit from the rural Affairs Minister Lord Benyon in March. Promotion of World Wetlands Day, World Wildlife Day, International Day of Action for Rivers and Walking Wartime Britain.

Updates to the HLS Website are constantly being made and new content added. A short film of the rebuilding of Furzey Pound is due to be released shortly. Promotion of the Stallion Scheme coming up in May and an animation highlighting the importance of Verges is also due to be released. The comms team have also been promoting the rarity and special qualities of the New Forest Heathland and the New Forest's Archaeology.

HIWWT WRITTEN UPDATE

RESUME

A comprehensive report of the work carried out by the HIWWT Non-Native plants team was studied by the board. This included details on the practical work undertaken by the project officer and volunteers on the open forest in 2022. Monitoring and control of Himalayan Balsam, Pitcher Plants, Monitoring Gaultheria and Cotoneaster. Also work undertaken by contractors to control Parrots Feather, Japanese Knotweed, Iris laevigata, Cotoneaster, American Skunk Cabbage, Golden Club, Gaultheria and Yellow Azalea. The board agreed in principle to continue to support the project into 2023/24.

LiDAR REPORT

RESUME

The board studied the report from the HLS Archaeology and Heritage Team. This covered the ongoing work and responses to new requests from the HLS team at a number of sites of planned restoration or ridge and furrow and stump removal. Also advising on sites of new verge restoration and bracken removal.

The processing of the winter 2019/2020 survey data is slowly continuing to convert the raw data to suitable records that can be submitted to the county historic environment records.

Work has begun to plan volunteer led surveys which will complete the gap filling exercise to complete the Heritage Mapping survey project.

FUTURE NEW FOREST ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP SCHEME UPDATE

RESUME

JT had no new updates but will keep the board informed if any news is released

AGM

RESUME

TW confirmed that the AGM is booked for Thursday 15th September 6pm at Hale Village Hall. TW has contacted all HLS partners and contributors to ask for their support on the evening.

AOB

RESUME

CL requested a copy of the options around Penny Moor that are still being worked up

Action JK

CL requested an update on the FE Test and Trial in Dorset – MP will forward report.

Action MP

JT informed the board that she has a new post within NE – working on Nature Recovery of Hampshire/ New Forest. It is unknown if she will still be working with the HLS Board. The board thanked her for all her help and support and hoped she would continue to be involved.

Meeting closed 11.53am

DATES FOR FUTURE MEETINGS 2022

Wednesday 6th July – 9.30am Queens House

Wednesday 5th October – 9.30am Queens House

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

*JKL Manners
5 June 2022*

Lord Manners
Official Verderer