



Verderers of the New Forest
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Official Verderer
Lord Manners

15th July 2022

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

Voting Members		
Lord Manners	OV	Official Verderer – Verderers of the New Forest (Chairman)
Alison Barnes	AB	Chief Executive – New Forest National Park Authority
Non-Voting Members		
Charlotte Lines	CL	CDA Representative
Jenny Thomas	JT	New Forest Nature Recovery Senior Adviser – 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
Susan Mitchell	SM	FCL Test & Trial Coordinator New Forest

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

RESUME

Apologies from Craig Harrison – Deputy Surveyor – Forestry England

The Board welcomed Susan Mitchell from the Foundation for Common Land, who is the Test and Trial Coordinator for the New Forest.

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

Healthcheck for 2020 and 2021 revised draft of FE data was forwarded to TW to complete. TW and JK to meet with NE advisor to discuss. A synopsis of species surveys is included in the healthcheck.

Action TW &
JK

A New Forest Rhododendron Recording Survey has been set up with the NPA and launched 1st July. This is open to the NF Ambassadors only and will run for a trial 6-month period. The results will feed into the rhododendron survey that will be carried out during 2023 across the open forest. If the trial is successful, the recording survey could be rolled out more widely in 2023.

The HLS Lost Lawns team will now include CL in the consultation list for future site visits.

PROGRAMME AND SUMMARY

RESUME

The board studied the latest Programme Register of spend to the end of June 2022 and projected spend to the end of December 2022.

It was noted that the spring/summer spend is lower as the majority of the terrestrial works occur Sept – Feb.

FE UPDATE

RESUME

Staff Update

Jake Leigh joined the HLS Team in June as HLS Works Supervisor, replacing Laura Ortiz Garcia. He is working with Lucy Andrews on the Terrestrial programme. Holly Fitzgerald joined the HLS team as Verge Restoration Officer in July. She will work alongside Jayne Albery until Jayne's retirement in August.

Terrestrial Restoration

Ridge & Furrow Removal and Stump Shearing

2.4ha of furrows were removed at Turf Hill following the stump removal. Dunces Arch is programmed in for Autumn 2022. Survey for unexploded ordnance was carried out earlier in the year, which confirmed that works can go ahead in areas where intrusive restoration work is planned. Preparation and planning are also underway to restore new clear fell areas at Knightwood and Matley Ridge in the 2022/23 winter work programme.

Rhododendron Management

The summer spraying programme is underway. Contractors are treating sites at Dibden, Woodcrates, Turf Hill, Fawley, Dunces Arch, Longdown, Little Wootton and Allum Green. Planning has started for the winter programme to cut rhododendron bushes and burn the arisings.

Lost Lawns

The planned restoration in Tantany Wood is programmed for winter 2022/23. Plans will be put in place to manage constraints from archaeology and potential unexploded ordnance. A consultation site visit was held in May for Millyford Green and Anderwood and a record of the agreed works has been circulated to attendees. These sites will be restored in winter 2022/23.

Mature Pine Felling and Seedling and Sapling Pine Removal

Woodcrates – The agreed phase 2 restoration works started in October with 4.72 ha completed so far (remaining timber to be removed when conditions allow) and one more area to complete in winter 2022/23. A consultation site visit for phase 3 took

place in April and a record of the agreed works circulated to the attendees. Preparation and planning are underway for the work to be carried out in winter 2022/23.

Further work to tackle tree and scrub regeneration are planned for winter 2022/23 as part of a rolling programme at Turf Hill (19.2ha), Markway (27.2ha), Durr Hill (22.7ha), Longdown (22.4ha), Dibden (5.5ha) and Fawley (3.3ha). JT had noted regeneration behind Roe and Milkham – JK to discuss with NE advisor.

Action JK

Further work will be planned for winter 2022/23 to clear collapsed willow at Holmsley and Fort Bog to benefit slender cottongrass.

The HLS team are working with the E&I officer to review and update the Terrestrial pages on the HLS Website.

The team is engaging a contractor to work in collaboration with FE staff to draw up Inclosure Restoration Action Plans for Durr Hill Inclosure (SSSI Unit 338 - 73ha) Sluffers North (SSSI Unit 113 -101ha), Markway Inclosure (SSSI Unit 531 - 105ha) and Turfhill (SSSI unit 68 - 57ha). These will be practical plans with a map and a clear list of actions needed to restore each site. JT commented it was good to see work progressing on the restoring these units as it contributing to their change in status. The government's 25-year environment plan has a biodiversity target to restore 75% of protected sites to favourable condition. Many units of the New Forest SSSI are due to change soon – The New Forest SSSI is currently 54% favourable with 21% remaining to reach target.

Bracken Management

The programme for 2022 will again 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

The team plan to treat a further 6-8ha of dense understorey holly to benefit epiphytic lichens under the HLS project in winter 2022/23. This is a rolling programme of works that aims to treat all "urgent priority" and "priority" areas identified by N Sandersons' 2018/19 report in 29 woodlands over the next 3-5 years.

Verge Restoration

The Verge Restoration Officer is retiring in August. Her replacement stated in July to allow for a handover period. Alongside the usual engagement with residents/ locals and partner organisations, measures were installed at a number of locations during April to June, including Wootton, Decoy, Boundway, Latchmore, Aldridge Hill, Woodgreen and Godshill. Preparations are underway for a programme of new and outstanding work due to take place in 2022 to include the following sites – Blackfield and Roughdown, Bank/Gritnam, Burley, Furzey Lane, Gatewood and Brockenhurst. Ongoing work with E&I Officer to update relevant pages on the HLS Website and develop verges animation.

Thinning A & O Plots

A new programme of work is being planned to carry out 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

A programme of enhancement works for summer 2022 has been drawn up for the following sites.

Claypits Bottom - Deadmans Bottom – Amberslade – North Slufers Inclosure – Pondhead – The Noads Mire – Cowleys Heath East and Shirley Holms Mire.

A new 4-year framework contract was awarded in June to carry out wetland maintenance and small scale restoration work.

AB questioned the ongoing costs of these enhancement works. JK reported that some of the costs were the result in price increases across the board but also noted that the number of sites requiring minor corrective works was tiny in comparison to the number of sites restored during the 12 years of the HLS.

New Forest Freshwater and Wetlands Restoration Forum (FWRF)

In its role as Secretariat for the forum, Forestry England led the process to find and appoint a new chair. David Rumble, CEO of Wessex Rivers Trust was nominated and voted as chair via an online vote. Wessex Rivers Trust also requested to have a seat on the forum.

Wetland Restoration Monitoring

The Citizen Science volunteers are surveying 3 Riverfly sites again this season. Harvestslade restored in 2015, Wootton restored 2016-18 and Millersford (not restored). The monthly surveys are carried out from April to October.

Following recommendations in the FWRF Evidence and Monitoring Plan, 3 vegetation surveys have been commissioned to be carried out in 2022 which will trial a new protocol being developed to monitor wetland restoration projects in the New Forest. Post restoration vegetation monitoring at North Slufers Inclosure (restored 2014) and Harvestslade (restored 2015). Baseline vegetation survey before restoration is being carried out at Picket Bottom Mire. The surveys will be carried out this summer and reports provided by the end of the year.

In line with recommendations in the FWRF Evidence and Monitoring plan it is planned to engage a contractor to combine data from the various monitoring strands into a single succinct report for each site. The report would describe the site 5 years after restoration in the context of the habitats present and the relevant measures of success.

Species Monitoring

2 specialist species surveys have been commissioned for 2022;

Six spotted crane fly (*Idiocera sexguttata*) A habitat suitability assessment and survey of the current known location, plus additional sites with wet transition mires with woodland adjacent.

Beaulieu Dung Beetle (*Liothorax niger*) A habitat suitability assessment and survey of the past known locations.

The report for the reptile habitat suitability assessment and mitigation guidance for ridge and furrow restoration is due by end September (delayed due to contractor illness).

OV suggested the HLS Website may be a good way to include an informal briefing of the reports published. OV suggested a date in mid-September to have a site visit which could include studying surveys and discussion of future plans. AB suggested Ian Barker could join and assist.

Action TW

ENGAGEMENT AND INTERPRETATION OFFICER WRITTEN UPDATE

RESUME

The board studied a report supplied by the E&I Officer for the last quarter. This included media coverage of the Verderers Stallion Scheme, a short film covering the rebuilding of the pound at Furzey Lodge and the importance of heathland and Wetlands.

HIWWT WRITTEN UPDATE

RESUME

An extensive report of work carried out by the New Forest Non-Native Plants project coordinator and volunteers was studied. This included updates on monitoring and control of Himalayan Balsam, Pink Purslane, American Skunk Cabbage, Pitcher Plants and monitoring of Cotoneaster and Gaultheria. Also details of the works undertaken by contractors on the open forest.

LIDAR REPORT

RESUME

The board was supplied with a report from the HLS Archaeology and Heritage Team detailing works undertaken on behalf of the HLS. This included advice prior to stream restoration, the signing off of the LiDAR data to ADS meaning it is now available to be viewed by the public. TW to discuss with E&I Officer to promote this achievement. Ongoing work includes processing winter 2019/20 survey data and concluding the Heritage Mapping Surveys.

Action TW

NFLAS WRITTEN UPDATE

RESUME

A report covering the support given to promote the HLS for the period from October 2021 to end of June 2022 was studied. This covered an extended period due to staff illness at NFLAS.

CL asked for NFLAS continued assistance in locating back up grazing for commoners due to the current pressures of losing grazing due to landowners signing up the land as mitigation for other projects. The CDA are sending out a survey to identify the size of the problem. SM commented that the FCL are looking to see if this is happening elsewhere in the country.

FUTURE NEW FOREST ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP SCHEME UPDATE

RESUME

JT had no further update on ELMS. JT advised TW that a letter is being sent from the RPA to existing agreement holders to inform them that from 31st Jan 2023 the agreements will converge to domestic terms and conditions for existing HLS Schemes. There may be a potential for a 5-year rollover agreement.

AGM

RESUME

The AGM is scheduled to take place on 15th September at Hale Village Hall with an open invitation to attend. This will be a celebration of the achievements and outcomes of the HLS Scheme. E&I Officer to assist TW in promoting the evening.

Action TW

Continuation on Board

JT announced she is to remain on the HLS Board despite her change in role within NE.

FCL Thank You

Sue Mitchell thanked the board, the HLS Team and TW for all their assistance and time given to the Test and Trial process.

FiPL Funding

AB wanted it noted that whilst we are very pleased that FiPL is up and running with a good project pipeline, the New Forest is in a poor position relative to other protected landscapes with the allocation of Farming in Protected Landscapes grant money due to the New Forest being treated as one holding only. This is not something we want to persist into future schemes.

Meeting closed 16.32pm

DATES FOR FUTURE MEETINGS 2022

Wednesday 5th October – 9.30am Queens House

Delegated Actions to		
Jackie Kelly	JK	HLS Project Manager – Forestry England
Tina Woodley	TW	VGS Administrator

Lord Manners
14/10/2022

Lord Manners
Official Verderer

