



Verderers of the New Forest
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Official Verderer
Lord Manners

7th October 2022

MINUTES OF THE HLS BOARD MEETING HELD ON 5th October 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 |
| Jackie Kelly | JK | HLS Project Manager – Forestry England |
| Craig Harrison | DS | Deputy Surveyor – Forestry England |

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

RESUME

Apologies from Mike Pittock - Head of Planning & Environment – Forestry England

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

Estimated restoration costs – The average cost of restoring thrown open Inclosures is in the region of £5000 inc. VAT per hectare dependant on site specific requirements and constraints. JK commented on the difficulty of quoting an "average cost". The board discussed the narrative behind the locking in of carbon in the felled timber. JT noted the FDP statement needs updating to include the restoration of peat bogs and streams. DS commented that FE already have a narrative for the harvested timber and JT said NE has published reports to support the Pasture Woodland. JT to supply report to JK

Action JT

Healthcheck – TW & JK met with NE Advisor to discuss the completion of the healthcheck. JK to make final updates to FE content. TW to liaise with other HLS partners for final updates. Action JK & TW

PROGRAMME AND SUMMARY

RESUME

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

JK reported the figures supplied for Q3 were an estimate and final figures would follow when available.

It was noted that Autumn is when a lot of the terrestrial work is completed and the survey invoices come in at the end of the year.

CL requested TW to share the latest VGS reports with the board for the next meeting. Action TW

The board agreed this would be informative. CL led a discussion on the notion of increasing grazing payments by reducing support of other VGS projects. CL questioned if it was appropriate going forward to use VGS funding for some of the projects listed including £42,000 for sponsoring NFLAS. The board suggested the CDA write a proposal to produce to the VGS Committee for discussion. Action CL

RESUME

FE UPDATE

Staff Update

Jayne Albery retired from Forestry England in August after 47 years of dedicated service. Holly Fitzgerald is the new Verge Restoration Officer.

Lucy Andrews has moved to a new role in the District team on a 2-year fixed term appointment. Recruitment is underway to backfill her role.

Andy Hartstone has joined Forestry England as a Works Supervisor. He will spend 50% of his time supporting the HLS team with habitat restoration projects.

Terrestrial Restoration

Ridge & Furrow Removal and Stump Shearing

Work completed at Dunches Arch (4.9ha). Final costs were lower than the original estimate. Work is underway to restore new clear fell areas at Knightwood (2.1ha) and Matley Ridge (2.75ha). Future works programmes will depend on timing of planned felling through the Forest Design Plan. Sites that may come forward in the next financial year include new clear fell areas at Matley Ridge, Dunces Arch, Turf Hill and Millersford, Markway and Ferny Knapp.

Rhododendron Management

The summer spraying programme treated sites at Dibden, Woodcrates, Turf Hill, Fawley, Dunces Arch, Longdown, Little Wootton and Allum Green, Final costs were lower than the original estimate. The Ambassador scheme to report the sighting of Rhododendron has been slow to take off. AB will push the initiative forward. Action AB

Plans are being finalised for the winter programme to cut rhododendron bushes and burn the arisings.

A & O Woodland Restoration

The planned restoration in Tantany Wood will be split into two phases. A contractor is being sought to carry out works at the Tantany lawn area (-3ha) this winter. Work to restore Tantany Wood (-9ha) will be planned for winter 2023/24. Plans will be put in place to manage constraints from archaeology and potential unexploded ordnance. Planning and preparations are underway for restoration of lost lawn areas at Millyford Green and Anderwood, as agreed at a consultation site visit in May.

Work is underway at Woodcrates to complete phase 2 works which started last winter. Work will then begin on the agreed phase 3 restoration works, which are due to be completed by the end of Feb 2023. The budget estimate has been increased to reflect actual costs tendered by contractor. Further work to tackle tree and scrub regeneration is being carried out as part of a rolling programme of work due to be completed by the end of Feb 23. Works have started at Turf Hill (19.2ha) and Durr Hill (22.7ha). Contractors will also carry out work at Longdown (22.4ha), Markway (27.2ha), 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 cotton grass. The HLS team are liaising with the E&I officer to review and update the Terrestrial pages on the HLS website.

Bracken Management

Forage harvesting operations are ongoing to treat 27 sites across the forest (33ha in total). Contractors have increased their rates due to higher running costs and the budget estimate has been increased to reflect this. The harvested bracken goes on to become an ingredient in ericaceous compost.

Holly Pollarding

It is planned 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 work that aims to treat all “urgent priority” and “priority” areas (from the 2018/19 survey report by N. Sanderson) within 29 woodlands over the next 3-5 years.

Verge Restoration

Alongside the usual engagement with residents/ locals/ and partner organisations, measures were installed at a number of locations during July to September. Ongoing works are planned for 5 more sites over winter. JK requested a site meeting between NE advisor and VRO to discuss future projects. JT to arrange

Action JT

Thinning A & O Plots

A new programme of work is being planned to carry out thinning of A & O regeneration plots. In winter 2022/23 work will be carried out at Bratley Wood to thin old planting areas and regeneration pens to restore a more natural woodland structure. Works will also be planned for Brook Wood and Bramshaw Wood.

Wetland Restoration

It was not possible to complete the full programme of planned enhancement works as some sites were too dry, meaning there was a risk the work would not be effective or could potentially cause unnecessary damage. The budget forecast has been adjusted accordingly. Enhancement works were completed at the following sites: North Sluffers Inclosure, Pondhead and the Noads Mire. The following sites were postponed and will be programmed in for summer 2023: The Noads Mire, Claypits Bottom, Deadman Bottom, Amberslade, Cowleys Heath East and Shirley Holms Mire. Felling work at Foulford Mire and Picket Mire will take place over the winter to clear trees and scrub from the mire and stream edges.

New Forest Freshwater and Wetlands Restoration Forum (FWRF)

David Rumble, CEO of Wessex Rivers Trust, is the new Chair. Wessex Rivers Trust will also have a seat on the Forum. Forestry England, in its role as Secretariat will meet with the new Chair, Natural England and Footprint Ecology in October to discuss next steps.

Wetland Restoration Monitoring

Riverfly Programme: 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 being carried out from April to October.

Botanical Survey: A contractor completed post-restoration vegetation monitoring at North Sluffers (restored 2014) and Harvestslade (restored 2015) to trial a new protocol being developed to monitor restoration projects in the New Forest. A report is due by the end of the year. A baseline vegetation survey is also being carried out at Picket Mire.

Species Monitoring

Surveys of the Six-spotted Cranefly and the Beaulieu Dung Beetle are now complete and the full reports will be uploaded to the HLS website.

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

Next year surveys include Dartford Warbler and repeat Nightjar.

RESUME

ENGAGEMENT AND INTERPRETATION OFFICER WRITTEN UPDATE

The board studied the report supplied by the E & I Officer. This included details on the media coverage of World Rivers Day, the video of the new pound at Furzey Lodge and promotion of the job vacancy for Habitat Restoration Officer. The HLS website revamp is still underway and the E&I Officer supported the partners at the New Forest Show and put a lot of effort into the preparation for the HLS AGM.

RESUME

HIWWT WRITTEN UPDATE

The report supplied covered details on the monitoring and control of Himalayan Balsam, control of Monkey Flower, American Skunk Cabbage, Pitcher Plants, Cotoneaster and Gaultheria by the project leader and her team of volunteers.

It also listed the work undertaken by contractors to treat non-native invasive species on the crown lands.

RESUME

LIDAR REPORT

The report detailed a review of the work undertaken by the archaeology team during the last quarter on behalf of the HLS. This included surveying stream restoration sites and ridge and furrow sites. Ongoing projects include the finishing of processing previous survey work over the winter and concluding the heritage map surveys. AB to get update on previously approved projects

Action AB

RESUME

FUTURE NEW FOREST ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP SCHEME UPDATE

JT reported that from January 1st 2023 all Environmental Stewardship agreements will be run under domestic terms and conditions. The New Forest may be eligible to extend its HLS agreement for 5 years. Within the 5-year extension, applicants may leave the agreement at an agreed point if accepted onto another environmental scheme.

Natural England will assess whether the agreement meets the criteria and if appropriate will recommend that the RPA offer an extension for 5 years. RPA will then decide whether to extend the agreement. The extension will be based on the

criteria that was used in previous years. The agreement must continue to meet these criteria.

Action TW

The board had a unanimous agreement to accept a 5-year extension if it was offered. The board asked if the NFCDA had any thoughts on the roll over and CL expressed they had some reservations and concerns around the rollover.

TW to keep an eye out for the offer and chase RPA if not received by January.

The board had a discussion on alternative choices to HLS and ELM's and their viability for the New Forest. CL asked for clarification as to why a CS was not being pursued? There is an expectation of the need to do extensive work towards a replacement scheme and there are concerns about ability of the Forest to meet the criteria of a CS and deliver value for money.

AGM

The HLS AGM had to be cancelled as a sign of respect for the death of the Queen. The board agreed that it would be beneficial to create a digital version of the annual report and the accomplishments of the HLS over the past couple of years. TW to work with Maria Court (E&I Officer) to create event. CL invited the HLS to join their AGM as speakers.

RESUME

Action TW

AOB

No other business put forward.

Meeting closed 12.10pm

DATES FOR FUTURE MEETINGS 2023

Wednesday January 25th – 9.30 Kings House

Wednesday April 26th – 9.30 Kings House

Wednesday July 12th – 9.30 Kings House

Wednesday October 25th – 9.30 Kings 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 |
| Alison Barnes | AB | Chief Executive – New Forest National Park Authority |

Jul Manners
19 December 2022

Lord Manners
Official Verderer