



**Verderers of the New Forest**  
**THE KINGS'S HOUSE**  
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Official Verderer  
Lord Manners

27<sup>th</sup> January 2023

## MINUTES OF THE HLS BOARD MEETING HELD ON 25<sup>th</sup> January 2023

|                    |    |  |
|--------------------|----|--|
| Voting Members     |    |  |
| Lord Manners       | OV | Official Verderer – Verderers of the New Forest (Chairman)               |
| Paul Walton        | PW | Head of Environment & Rural Economy – New Forest National Park Authority |
| Craig Harrison     | DS | Deputy Surveyor – Forestry England                                       |
| 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                                   |
| Mike Pittock       | MP | Head of Planning & Environment   |

Prior to the start of the meeting Susan Mitchel gave the board feedback from the Foundation for Common Land's Phase 2 Interim Report, looking at delivering multiple outcomes at landscape scale on Commons.

### APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

RESUME

Apologies from Alison Barnes – Chief Executive – New Forest National Park Authority

### DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

RESUME

OV is Chairman of the VGS Management Committee.

PW 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

PW reported that the Ambassador scheme for reporting Rhododendron has been paused until the Spring.

JK supplied TW with the final updates for 2020/21 Healthcheck. Draft figures for 2022 are being finalised.

## PROGRAMME AND SUMMARY

RESUME

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

JK reported the staffing figures supplied for Q4 were an estimate and final figures would follow in early February.

It was noted that Winter is when a lot of the terrestrial work is completed and the survey invoices come in January/February.

The VGS Committee is meeting early February to discuss the CDA's correspondence regarding the future allocation of grant funding.

The board agreed that as a five year extension to the current agreement has been taken to produce a provisional budget for the five years. TW & JK to produce for next board meeting. Action TW & JK

An option of the extension agreement is an ability to apply for CS Capital funding on certain projects. A new list of items covered by this option is due for publication in late January. TW to circulate to the board as soon as it becomes available. Action TW

## FE UPDATE

RESUME

### Staff Update

Becks Bisset joined Forestry England in January as Habitat Restoration Officer on a 2 year fixed term appointment to cover Lucy Andrew's role. MP thanked JK for successful recruitment process. The Monitoring Officer position is still vacant and the board discussed proposals to update the role as a result of the recently agreed FWRP Evidence and Monitoring Plan.

### Terrestrial Restoration

#### Ridge & Furrow Removal and Stump Shearing

Work to restore new clear fell areas was completed at Knightwood (2.1ha) and Matley West Ridge (2.75ha). JT had visited Markway and commented on the success of the project saying 255ha had been turned from unfavourable to favourable condition in the agreement area in past year. Much of this was as a result of restoration work undertaken through the HLS. JT offered to supply a map highlighting those units. Work at Matley Ridge Central (10.9ha), Matley Ridge East (5.07ha) and Perrywood Ironhill (4 ha) are due to be completed by the end of February. Action JT

### Rhododendron Management

The winter programme to cut and burn Rhododendron bushes is underway. Sites at Little Wootton, Acres Down and Black Knowl are due to be completed by the end of February.

Existing rhododendron records are being collated in preparation for a repeat survey across the open forest in 2023.

### Lost Lawns

Restoration work completed at Millyford Green (1.75ha) where birch, willow and scrub were removed to open up the lawn.

Lawn restoration is also underway at Anderwood and due to be completed by the end of February. Tantony Wood restoration is planned for Winter 2023/24 due to difficulties procuring contractors with capacity to deliver the planned restoration.

### A & O Woodland Restoration

All felling complete for the agreed phase 2 and 3 restoration works at Woodcrates and a proportion of the timber has been cleared. Remaining timber will be cleared when ground conditions are suitable.

Work to tackle tree and scrub regeneration has been completed at Turf Hill (19.2ha), Durr hill (22.7ha) and Markway (27.2ha).

Longdown (22.4ha), Dibdin (5.5ha), Fawley (3.3ha) and Ravensnest (3.7ha) are due to be completed by the end of February.

Work to clear collapsed willow at Holmsley and Fort Bog to benefit slender cottongrass is planned for winter 2023/24.

### Bracken Management

Forage harvesting operations to treat 27 sites across the forest (33ha in total) were completed in October.

### Holly Pollarding

Work to treat understorey holly to benefit epiphytic lichens at Bigness Wood (0.8ha), Yew Tree Hill/ Buskett's (1.2ha) and Fair Cross (1.3ha), which is due to be completed by mid-march. JK to enter new serial line for Holly Protection project.

Action JK

### Verge Restoration

The Verge Restoration Officer has engaged with residents / locals and partner organisations, responded to reports of verge parking and requests for advice, and monitored sites where measures have been installed. Preparations are underway for verge restoration works in March at the following sites. Dunces Arch, Rufus Stone, Brockis Hill, Parc Pale and Holidays Hill.

### Thinning A & O Plots

A new programme of work is underway to carry out thinning of A&O regeneration plots. Felling work has been carried out in 6ha of Bratley Wood to thin old planting areas and regeneration pens to restore a more natural woodland structure. The felled timber will be removed in Q1 2023.

### Wetland Restoration

Felling work has been completed to help restore wetland habitats at the following sites. Foulford Mire – clearance of trees and scrub from around mire and stream edge and Picket Mire – clearance of trees around mire edge. A programme of works for Summer 2023 will be put to the board at the next meeting. The proposal will include sites postponed from last summer.

### New Forest Freshwater and Wetlands Restoration Forum (FWRF)

The Forum meeting in November included a presentation from Natural England about climate and valley mires in the New forest, which highlighted the importance of restoring damaged peatlands to make them resilient in the face of climate change. The Evidence and Monitoring plan was signed off, subject to a final amendment noting Natural England's condition assessment process. Footprint Ecology is progressing the final Restoration Plan, which will be presented at the next forum meeting in April. The communications Sub-Group will also be reconvened to progress the communication Strategy, including recommendations on consultation processes and how to enable dialogue with the public.

### Wetland Restoration Monitoring

Ongoing work includes the citizen science volunteers completing surveys for the Riverfly programme on a monthly basis with all data being uploaded to the national ARMI database.

A contractor completed post restoration vegetation monitoring at North Slufers and Harvestslade to trial a new protocol being developed to monitor wetland restoration projects in the New Forest. A baseline vegetation survey was also carried out at Picket Bottom Mire. The report is due by the end of March.

### Species Monitoring

The board agreed to the following species surveys for 2023;

Brown Diving Beetle (*Agabus brunneus*) and New Forest Mud Beetle (*Helophorus laticollis*)

Repeat bird surveys for Dartford Warbler and Nightjar. (Last done 2018)

Repeat surveys for fairy shrimp (2013/14 survey)

Further targeted surveys for six spotted crane fly (*Idiocera sexguttata*) focusing on sites with similar habitat conditions and high connectivity to Stony Moors as recommended in the 2022 survey report.

Beaulieu Dung Beetle (*Liothorax niger*) survey sites to be revisited in April and May 2023, as the survey was compromised by the unusually dry conditions last summer as recommended in the 2022 survey report.

The delayed report for the reptile habitat suitability assessment and mitigation guidance for ridge and furrow restoration is due by the end of January.

### VGS WRITTEN UPDATE

RESUME

TW circulated a report and minutes from the last VGS Committee meeting. This included the 2022 payment rate for Forest Grazing payments and stock numbers entered into the scheme.

### ENGAGEMENT AND INTERPRETATION OFFICER WRITTEN UPDATE

RESUME

The board studied the report supplied by the E & I Officer. This included details on the media coverage on the importance of New Forest Ponds, COP27, Wetlands and Sundew, Holly and education.

The board requested more information on the engagement projects and TW & JK to work with the E&I Officer to work on a strategy for the next 5 years. Action TW & JK

### HIWWT WRITTEN UPDATE

RESUME

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 under taken by contractors to treat non-native invasive species on the crown lands.

### ARCHAEOLOGY REPORT

RESUME

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 and woodland restoration sites. Ongoing projects include completing the processing of survey work conducted before the pandemic. This is hoped to be finished by March.

Planning is underway for the surveys which will complete the 'gap filling' exercise to complete the Heritage Mapping survey project.

The board were also supplied with a copy of the Fieldwork Report for Archaeological Watching Brief for Ridge and Furrow removal at Turf Hill Inclosure.

#### NFLAS WRITTEN UPDATE

The report summarised the work completed by the New Forest Land Advice Service over the past six months to support commoning in the New Forest and advice given on Legislation, regulations, land management, advice and rules relating to the HLS Scheme.

RESUME

#### FUTURE NEW FOREST ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP SCHEME UPDATE

JT reported that in December following a review, the new Secretary of State confirmed that phasing out of direct payments will continue and new environmental land management schemes will continue to be rolled out but instead of building a new Local Nature Recovery scheme the existing Countryside Stewardship scheme will be evolved to deliver the same ambitions. There are no changes to current plans for Landscape Recovery.

RESUME

#### AGM

TW is working with the E&I Officer to produce a short video highlighting the achievements of the HLS for 2021/ 2022 to include the Chairmans Speech and updates on the partnership projects.

2023 AGM proposal to hold in September. TW to suggest possible dates.

RESUME

Action TW

#### AOB

New Forest Show 2023 – OV asked whether the HLS could contribute towards the cost of the Verderers' display as it is educational. JT advised that a contribution could be made but only to that element which explained the work of the HLS.

RESUME

MoA for Partnership Agreement – The draft MoA has not been completed – CL requested the Partnership Agreement be revisited and updated rather than a MoA adopted. TW to discuss with NPA solicitor

Action TW

Cattle Supplement – OV requested an additional amount be made available for 2023 to incentivise the continuation of cattle keeping as numbers are reducing. The board agreed the VGS Committee could come up with a proposal.

Replacement of Items on the Asset Register – TW advised the board that the Agisters Livestock trailers are due for replacement and the VGS will need to budget for this in 2023.

New Forest Hounds Funding Request – The board had received a request from the Executive committee of the New Forest Hunt Club asking for HLS funding towards a new flesh wagon. This was seen not to fulfil the HLS objectives and was declined. TW to inform Hunt Master.

Action TW

Change of HLS Financial Year – JK requested the HLS change its financial year to match FE as it causes a lot of additional work to produce reports. The Board agreed this would make a lot of sense and make reporting easier in the future. The board agreed for TW to communicate with the Auditors and arrange for 2022/23 to be a 15-month period to the beginning of April.

Action TW

FCL request for meeting to discuss HLS comments on the Michelmore Report – TW Action TW  
to see if Wed 8<sup>th</sup> Feb was available to hold a Teams meeting after 2pm.

Meeting closed 12.00pm

**DATES FOR FUTURE MEETINGS 2023**

Wednesday April 26<sup>th</sup> – 9.30 Kings House  
Wednesday July 12<sup>th</sup> – 9.30 Kings House  
Wednesday October 25<sup>th</sup> – 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                       |
|                      |    |   |

*Lord Manners  
26 April 2023*

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Official Verderer