



**Verderers of the New Forest**  
**THE KINGS'S HOUSE**  
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Official Verderer  
 Edward Heron

16<sup>th</sup> August 2023

**MINUTES OF THE HLS BOARD MEETING HELD ON 4<sup>th</sup> August 2023**

<b>Voting Members</b>		
Edward Heron	OV	Official Verderer – Verderers of the New Forest (Chairman)
Alison Barnes	AB	Chief Executive – New Forest National Park Authority
Craig Harrison	DS	Deputy Surveyor – Forestry England (Via Teams)
<b>Non-Voting Members</b>		
<b>In Attendance</b>		
Tina Woodley	TW	VGS Administrator
Jackie Kelly	JK	HLS Project Manager – Forestry England

**APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

**RESUME**

- Apologies from Andrew Parry-Norton - CDA Representative
- Jenny Thomas - Natural England
- Mike Pittock - 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.

**MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING**

**RESUME**

The MoA for the extension period is still with the NPA Solicitor awaiting inclusion of comments from FE. TW will forward to voting members for approval of this internal agreement as soon as it is available.

The Verderers Court nominated the Official Verderer to join the board as Chairman and be the signatory for the HLS.

JK supplied updated delivery statistics that were used for the display boards at the New Forest Show

Recruitment is underway for the Monitoring Project Officer with interviews taking place at the end of July.

## PROGRAMME AND SUMMARY

RESUME

The board studied the latest Programme Register of spend to the end of June 2023 (QTR 1).

TW confirmed claims 33 & 34 from FE had been paid. Project spend forecasts currently include estimated costs for many of the sites planned for restoration this winter, these will be updated as quotes are agreed with contractors. All forecasts will be reviewed and updated for the October board meeting.

The board discussed the increase in project costs due to inflation and how the annual payment from RPA has not increased during the life of the scheme.

At the last meeting JT gave an indication that additional funding may be available through CS Capital Work Grants – JT has not reported to the board what CS Capital works grants may be eligible for claiming.

TW had met with the NPA Finance Officer to work out a methodology to reflect inflation in the budgets for the next three years and agreed to follow the Bank of England Calculator.

It was agreed to try and have a site meeting prior to the next meeting. JK & TW to arrange.

Action JK &  
TW

## FE UPDATE

RESUME

### Restoration of Lowland Heath; option HO2

#### Open Habitat Restoration

Previously felled timber will be cleared from Picket Mire. Contractors have completed management plans for Turf Hill/ Millersford, Dur Hill, Markway and Sluffers. Forestry England are reviewing the plans to identify priority actions that could be delivered through the HLS programme.

Other projects planned or ongoing include, timber clearance from Foulford Mire and Ravensnest when ground conditions are suitable.

A rolling programme of work to remove natural regeneration from 'thrown open' inclosures, including sites at Dunces Arch, Knightwood, Fawley, Marchwood, Longbeech and Dur Hill.

Work is planned this winter to clear collapsed willow at Holmsley and Fort Bog to benefit Slender Cotton Grass.

Consultation site visits are taking place to agree initial phase of work at Ober Heath to remove mature conifer from Open Forest. Sites with mature conifer at Matley Ridge and Turf Hill, and western hemlock at Woosons Hill are also being assessed.

#### Ridge & Furrow Removal and Stump Shearing

Planning is underway for the winter work programme 23/24 with sites at Dunces Arch, Turf Hill/Millersford and Ravensnest being prepared. Other sites may come forward for restoration this financial year, depending on the timing of harvesting operations.

#### Rhododendron Management

The summer spraying programme is underway, including sites at Cranes Moor, Vales Moor, Verely, Dur Hill, Old House, Burley Outer Rails and South Oakley. The NPA New Forest Rhododendron Recording Survey ran until the end of July with volunteers

and members of the public recording sightings of rhododendron in flower via a weblink on the HLS website. These records will feed into the work programme. Planning is underway for the winter cut and burn programme, which is due to start from Oct/Nov onwards.

#### Bracken Management

The programme for 2023 will again focus on forage harvesting operations due to the ongoing restrictions on using Asulam.

#### Holly Holm Management

Following the trial to encourage holly holm regeneration by removing grazing pressure for a period of time via temporary exclosures, a number of sites have been selected to continue this programme of work. Deer-proof fencing will be erected around selected holly holms where regeneration has been in decline. The pens will be in place for at least 5 years to allow time for holly to regenerate around the base and trunk. Proposed sites include Freeworms Hill (south of Fritham Plain), west side of Ocknell Wood, Seven Holms (west of Sluffers), Withybeds Bottom, Bolderwood Hollies, Berry Beeches and Potterns Ford.

Fencing work was due to start in late summer/ early autumn but is likely to be delayed due to difficulties sourcing chestnut stakes and posts. The price per metre has also increased sharply due to supply issues. FE are awaiting revised estimates on timing and proposed costs for the work.

#### Restoration of Wood Pasture & Parkland; Option HC13

##### Holly Pollarding

This is a rolling programme of work that is treating 'urgent priority' and 'priority' areas identified in the 2018/19 survey report by N. Sanderson. A number of sites will be selected for treatment in winter 2023/24.

##### Restoration of A & O Woodlands

The remaining felled timber in Woodcrates will be cleared in late summer (work was paused due to ground nesting birds in the area). Final staged payment will be made to the contractor on completion of the work.

The previously agreed restoration at Tantany wood is being planned for winter 23/24 (to be done in conjunction with Tantany Lawn).

##### Thinning A & O Plots

Sites at Bramshaw Wood and Brook Wood are being assessed for inclusion in this programme of work to thin old planting areas and regeneration pens to restore a more natural woodland structure. Agreed works are planned for winter 2023/24.

#### Restoration of Species Rich Grassland; Option HK7

##### Lost Lawns

Felled timber at Anderwood and Millyford Green will be cleared when ground conditions are suitable to complete lawn restoration at these sites. Tantany Lawn is planned for this winter. Consultation site visits have been arranged for Balmer Lawn and Stricknage Wood, with work hoping to take place winter 23/24.

##### Verge Restoration

The Verge Protection Officer continues with ongoing engagement with residents, visitors and partner organisations, responding to reports of verge parking and

requests for advice, monitoring sites where measures have been installed. Preparations are underway for the next tranche of verge restoration works, to include Matley and Holmhill Passage. Site visits are taking place to inform future work programmes and priorities for the Verge Restoration Project, including a review of informal car parking locations across the Open Forest.

## Wetland Restoration

### Repair and maintenance

The programme of wetland work for summer 2023 is well underway with repairs and maintenance works at the following sites;

Amberslade – repaired erosion nick point and bed level raised eroded stretch of channel

North Sluffers – bed level raised eroded stretches of channel. Temporary fence has been installed to help recovery of select areas that are vulnerable to damage from stock poaching.

Work is ongoing or planned at the following sites, subject to suitable ground conditions;

Shirley Holms Mire, Claypits Bottom, Deadman Bottom, Cowleys Heath East, The Noads Mire and Longbeech.

### Picket Bottom Mire

A small-scale wetland restoration project at Picket Bottom Mire is in progress to infill deep eroding nick point, bed level raise channel along enclosure edge.

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

A Forum meeting was held in May. Footprint Ecology updated attendees on the Restoration Plan they are developing, which is intended to be published online as a 'toolkit' with standalone chapters, method statements and protocols for wetland restoration. The proposed 'Criteria for Restoration' and 'Measures of Success' were discussed and agreed by consensus, subject to minor amendments. Footprint Ecology also presented feedback from the recent communications sub-group meeting, which will inform the Communications Strategy they are working on.

Forestry England presented an update on the HLS wetland programme, including the new restoration proposal for Picket Mire. There was general agreement that the proposed restoration aligns with the principles of wetland restoration that have been developed through the Forum, as set out in the draft Restoration Plan. Some Forum members attended an optional site visit to Picket Mire to learn more about the restoration.

### Heather Baling

A budget line has been added to cover the production of heather bales for future wetland restoration projects.



## Survey and Monitoring

### Specialist Species Surveys

Surveys are underway for the following species;

Brown diving beetle (*Agabus brunneus*) and New Forest mud beetle (*Helophorus laticollis*).

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).

Beaulieu dung beetle (*Liothorax niger*) survey sites to be re-visited in April and May 2023 as the survey was compromised by the unusually dry conditions last summer (as recommended in the 2022 survey).

Dartford Warbler – Repeat bird survey for Dartford warbler is underway (last done in 2018)

Nightjar – Repeat bird survey for Nightjar, results so far suggest a promising increase in Nightjar this year (last done in 2018).

A budget line for Bat surveys has been included in case they are required before tree felling.

### Botanical Survey – ridge & furrow sites

In 2021 a programme for monitoring vegetation started at four sites that were being restored from commercial forestry to open habitats. The first post – restoration survey will be carried out over summer 2023 at Matley Ridge. Post-restoration surveys for Turf Hill, Millersford and Dunces Arch are planned for summer 2024, as they are due to be restored in winter 2023/24.

### Botanical survey

Last year a new vegetation survey protocol was trialled at North Sluffers and Harvestslade to monitor wetland restoration projects. This involved mapping meso-habitats and assessing their quality, which showed that at 5+ years after restoration, these sites support a wide range of quintessential habitats. Similar post-restoration vegetation surveys will be carried out at Pondhead and Wootton in summer 2023.

### Wetland monitoring reports

Site-based monitoring case studies will be commissioned for North Sluffers and Harvestslade. In line with recommendations in the FWRF Evidence and Monitoring plan, these will combine data from various completed survey reports (including botanical survey, River Habitat Survey, fish and macroinvertebrates surveys) into a single succinct report for each site. The report will describe the site at -5 years after restoration in the context of habitats present and relevant measures of success.

### Water Hydrology

FE have piloted the use of remote telemetry units to measure water level and temperature with units installed through the Latchmore catchment and Dockens Water. Data will be reviewed and equipment to be either decommissioned or deployed to other sites.

### Riverfly Partnership

The citizen science volunteers are surveying 2 Riverfly sites again this year, Wootton (restored 2016-18) and Millersford (not restored). The monthly surveys are carried out from April to October. This is part of the Anglers' Riverfly Monitoring Initiative (ARMI) citizen science project, all data are uploaded to a national database.

## VGS UPDATE

RESUME

TW updated the board on the latest VGS spends illustrated on the Programme Register and the board studied the Verderers Spring Newsletter and the minutes from the June VGS Committee Meeting.

## ENGAGEMENT AND INTERPRETATION OFFICER WRITTEN UPDATE

RESUME

The board studied the report from the E&I Officer – The board discussed the importance of communications with the public on the interlinking works between the Forest Design Plan and the terrestrial restorations undertaken by the HLS. To highlight the rarity of Lowland Heath and Mires in Northern Europe and the carbon capture they are responsible for compared to trees. Why is the New Forest So Important? TW to discuss with the E&I officer on updating the Terrestrial pages on the website and a possible film to share the 'History of Landscape' in the forest to explain the shared messages in the FDP and the HLS.

Action TW

An additional media idea was discussed on the awareness of non-native species that have been introduced to the forest either intentionally or by escaping from private properties over the last century. The suggestion of a short film to spread the word on the work taking place to undo the harm that has been done in the past. E.g., "Through the eyes of our ancestors". TW to liaise with E&I Officer

Action TW

The board also thanked the E&I Officer for her help and support to create a very successful HLS Exhibition at the New Forest Show.

Action TW

## HIWWT WRITTEN UPDATE

RESUME

The report outlining the relevant activities of the New Forest Non-native Plants Project for the last quarter was studied by the board. This included the recording of invasive non-native plants, monitoring the control of invasive non-native plants, practical work undertaken by the project officer and volunteers on Open Forest and the work undertaken by contractors on Crown Land on Open Forest in 2023.

## ARCHAEOLOGY REPORT

RESUME

The HLS Archaeology and Heritage Team has in the last quarter continued with ongoing work and responding to new requests from the FE team. The Archaeology team met with the HLS team to discuss future planned works and inform new members of staff. The team has offered and agreed to provide additional advice and guidance on how to and when to seek heritage input when planning future HLS works and they ran through the current list of 14 possible sites which heritage advice would be sought in advance of work starting later in the year. On going projects include finishing to process the 2019-2020 survey data, conclude the Heritage Mapping survey and consolidate the data on the New Forest Heritage Map.

## NFLAS WRITTEN UPDATE

RESUME

The board studied the report from NFLAS highlighting the delivery for the 1<sup>st</sup> quarter of 23/24. This included delivering land advice and support to understand and comply with relevant good practices and HLS objectives.

## FUTURE NEW FOREST ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP SCHEME UPDATE

RESUME

No update received from NE – TW will contact JT and forward any correspondence to the board

Action TW

AGM UPDATE

RESUME

TW reported the AGM will take place at Minstead Village Hall on the 19<sup>th</sup> September. All stakeholders and interested parties have been invited. TW & JK to work with the E&I officer on media coverage and advertising as well as content support.

Action TW &  
JK

AOB

RESUME

NFLAS Funding request

The board discussed the future funding request from the NFLAS. AB supported the application but abstained from voting. The remaining 2 voting members of the board backed the funding request – agreeing to continue to support the NFLAS for the duration of the HLS rollover.

Action TW

2024 HLS Board Dates

TW to board members provisional dates by invitation and confirm dates by the end of August.

Action TW

Meeting closed 11.45 a.m.

**DATES FOR FUTURE MEETINGS 2023**

Wednesday October 25<sup>th</sup> – 9.30 Kings House (site visit before meeting – meet 8.30 car park)

**Proposed Dates 2024**

Wednesday January 31<sup>st</sup> – 9.30 Kings House  
Wednesday April 24<sup>th</sup> – 9.30 Kings House  
Wednesday August 14<sup>th</sup> - 9.30 Kings House  
Wednesday October 30<sup>th</sup> - 9.30 Kings House

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



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