



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

24th January 2025

MINUTES OF THE HLS BOARD MEETING HELD ON 22nd January 2025

Voting Members		
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
Non-Voting Members		
Andrew Parry-Norton	APN	CDA Representative
Jenny Thomas	JT	New Forest Nature Recovery Senior Adviser – Natural England
In Attendance		
Tina Woodley	TW	VGS Administrator
Charlotte Bartlett	CB	HLS Project Manager – Forestry England
Mike Pittock	MP	Head of Planning & Environment – Forestry England
Suzi Egleston	SE	Monitoring Officer – Forestry England

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

RESUME

All Present

The board welcomed Charlotte Bartlett as new HLS Project Manager and thanked Suzi Egleston for her hard work covering the role. Suzi has now returned to her post as Monitoring Officer. RESUME

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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.

RESUME

APN is a member of the VGS and a committee member of the CDA and a member of both the FFG and the FFG Sub Steering Group.

<u>MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING</u>	RESUME
None Arising	
<u>PROGRAMME AND SUMMARY</u>	RESUME
The board studied the latest Programme Register of spend to the end of December 24 (QTR 3).	
TW to add line onto PR showing Contingency and Reserve. TW and NPA Finance Officer to meet and discuss policy regarding Treasury and Investment of HLS reserves.	Action TW
See programme register and actual spend to date attached below.	
<u>FE UPDATE</u>	RESUME
APN and VRO to meet on site at Longcross to view options for verge protection.	Action APN
See report attached below	
<u>SCOPING OF POTENTIAL WETLAND RESTORATION SITES</u>	RESUME
The board discussed options of potential sites to be restored following the new Wetland Restoration Plan that is due to be launched shortly. A list of potential sights to be worked up concurrently and reserves to be ringfenced for these projects over the next 3 years.	
<u>FRESHWATER AND WETLAND RESTORATION FORUM UPDATE</u>	RESUME
JT reported that the plan is almost finished with just the Practitioners manual to be completed. The last meeting of the Forum to be facilitated by Footprint is in March. Footprint Ecology are giving a talk on the launch of the Wetland Restoration Plan at the HLS AGM next week. Hopefully the AGM will be well attended.	
<u>CAPITAL WORKS FUNDING</u>	RESUME
SE met with NE to discuss options that could be included as capital works. A register of projects will be compiled to be ready to apply for if required.	
<u>VGS UPDATE</u>	RESUME
TW gave a verbal update as the VGS committee meeting was postponed and is due to take place 5 th March.	
<u>ENGAGEMENT AND INTERPRETATION OFFICER WRITTEN UPDATE</u>	RESUME
See report attached below	
<u>HIWWT WRITTEN UPDATE</u>	RESUME
See report attached below	

ARCHAEOLOGY REPORT

RESUME

See report attached below

NFLAS WRITTEN UPDATE

RESUME

See report attached below

FUTURE NEW FOREST ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP SCHEME UPDATE

RESUME

JT reported no new news on future schemes has been released. The new Countryside Stewardship has been launched and is currently by NE invitation only. The first batch of these invitations have just gone out. No news on Landscape Recovery Scheme details.

JT meeting tomorrow with New Park Consultancy to discuss the PA2 study. This will hopefully be completed around late Spring.

AOB

RESUME

TW to organise with FE an HLS sight visit to Markway on the morning of the next board meeting. TW to send calendar invitations for the 2025 meetings. TW to look to see if the April date can be rearranged to avoid clashing with the Easter holidays.

Action TW

Meeting closed 12.00 p.m.

DATES FOR FUTURE MEETINGS 2025

Wednesday April 23rd – 9.30 Kings House

Monday July 21st - 9.30 Kings House

Wednesday October 29th - 9.30 Kings House

Delegated Actions to		
Tina Woodley	TW	VGS Administrator
Andrew Parry-Norton	APN	CDA Representative

Edward Heron
Official Verderer

Spend profile 2024-25 3rd Quarter

Register Serial number	Task Mgr	Project Title	Budget 2024- 2025	Revised Forecast 2024/25	Actual spend to 31.12.2024	Updated by	Comments
		Verderers Grazing Scheme STAFF					
1	TW	VGS Project Staff	£39,757.00		£12,292.27	TW	
2	TW	Administration	£10,000.00		£8,689.79	TW	
			£49,757.00		£20,982.06		
		Verderers Grazing Scheme					
	TW						2023 Cattle Supplement & 2024 VGS
3		VGS Grazing payments	£792,957.00		£792,431.16	TW	
4	TW	Sponsorship of Land Advice Service	£53,905.22		£53,905.22	TW	
5	TW	Small Grant fund	£15,000.00		£9,995.00	TW	
6	TW	Microchipping at Beaulieu Road Sales	£5,000.00		£0.00	TW	
7	TW	Reflective collars	£24,000.00		£13,900.00	TW	
8	TW	Agister Salary contribution	£57,000.00		£57,000.00	TW	
9	TW	Stallion Scheme	£17,737.00		£24,656.21	TW	New Grazing
10	TW	Bloodline Scheme	£0.00		£1,265.00	TW	
11	TW	Futurity Scheme	£8,000.00		£8,000.00	TW	
13	TW	NF Livestock Society (Marketing + £1,000 Foal Shows)	£9,000.00		£9,000.00	TW	
14	TW	NF Trust (Beaulieu Road Maintenance)	£6,500.00		£6,500.00	TW	
15	TW	NF Pony Enthusiasts Club	£1,500.00		£1,500.00	TW	
16	TW	Pony Welfare & Fallen Stock Programme	£25,000.00		£20,407.20	TW	
17	TW	Young Commoner training	£3,500.00		£3,500.00	TW	
18	TW	Drift Fencing	£19,000.00		£19,565.10	TW	
19	TW	Pound rebuild programme	£5,000.00		£6,169.12	TW	
91	TW	Agister Animal Handling Equipment & GWCT Curlew Grant	£130,546.00	£130,546.00	£93,691.64	TW	
		VGS Sub Total	£1,173,645.22		£1,121,485.65		
		VGS Grand Total	£1,223,402.22		£1,142,467.71		
		Higher Level Stewardship Overheads - STAFF COSTS					
20	TW	HLS Secretarial Support from Verderers	£15,812.00		£15,812.00	TW	
21	NPA	NPA Staff Costs	£27,594.00		£0.00	TW	
22	NH	FC Supporting Staff & Admin costs	£26,430.00		£14,307.53		
			£69,836.00		£30,119.53		
		Higher Level Stewardship Overheads - Other					
	NPA	Communications - Support	£32,086.00		£0.00	TW	
23	NH	Communications - Phones & Trackers	£2,000.00	£2,000.00	£1,036.70	JK	
24	NH	FC Office Overheads	£2,046.00		£2,046.00	JK	
21	NH	FC Staff Overheads	£10,000.00	£10,000.00	£9,404.01	JK	
93	NH	FC Vehicle Leasing	£22,854.14	£22,854.14	£17,840.98	JK	
		Non Native and Invasive Plant Control	£60,132.00		£30,327.69		
33	TW	Non Native plants Project	£37,000.00		£37,000.00	TW	
			£37,000.00		£37,000.00		
		Scheduled Ancient Monument					
32	NH	no projects planned	£0.00		£0.00	NH	
			£0.00		£0.00		
		National Park Authority					
71	NPA	Lidar Analyst	£44,571.00			TW	
73	NPA	Lidar Non-Staff	£9,423.00			TW	
			£53,994.00		£0.00		
		Redundancy Contingency					
60	TW	Project Staff	£4,524.57		£0.00	TW	
			£4,524.57		£0.00		
		Forestry England TERRESTRIAL RESTORATION					
63	NH	Open Habitat Restoration	£231,648.00		£65,379.00	JK	
1903	NH	Ridge & Furrow removal	£107,640.00		£4,014.02	JK	
65	NH	Rhododendron Control	£41,360.00		£22,140.00	JK	
66	NH	Bracken Control	£21,600.00		£17,934.00	JK	
2301	NH	Holly Holm Management	£21,600.00		£7,120.92	JK	
68	NH	Coppicing/Pollarding	£20,000.00		£0.00	JK	
2201	NH	Conifer removal from A&O woodland	£1,800.00		£1,800.00		
2202	NH	Thinning A & O plots	£10,824.00		£0.00		
69	NH	Lost Lawns	£38,352.00		£9,168.00	JK	
70	NH	Verge Restoration	£53,700.00		£4,629.60	JK	
100	NH	Heather Baling	£3,120.00		£0.00	NH	
			£551,644.00		£132,185.54		
		Monitoring (Terrestrial)					
2101	NH	Botanical Survey - R&F sites	£10,500.00		£0.00	JK	
2404	NH	Wetland monitoring surveys	£6,000.00		£0.00		
1902	NH	Woodlark (Repeat)	£11,000.00		£11,000.00		
			£27,500.00		£11,000.00		
		Monitoring (Wetland)					
2303	NH	Wetland Monitoring reports - Wootton, Harvestslade	£5,400.00		£0.00	JK	
102	NH	Bats	£2,000.00		£0.00	JK	
25	NH	Botanical Survey	£12,780.00		£0.00	JK	
104	NH	Fixed point photography	£500.00		£123.68	NH	
103	NH	Water Hydrology	£1,000.00		£300.00	NH	
105	NH	Riverfly Partnership	£500.00		£0.00	NH	
			£22,180.00		£423.68		
		WETLAND					
		Project Staff Costs					
57	NH	Terrestrial Works Supervisor Pb6a	£37,908.00		£22,881.05	JK	
60	NH	Contract Manager Pb4	£51,414.00		£6,983.98	JK	
61	NH	Terrestrial Restoration Works Officer Pb5	£40,635.00		£31,829.58	JK	
62	NH	Wetland Restoration Officer Pb5	£40,635.00		£34,650.07	JK	
622	NH	Monitoring Officer Pb6a	£40,635.00		£31,179.88	JK	
623	NH	Verge Restoration Officer Pb6a	£37,908.00		£31,143.60	JK	
2204	NH	Senior Wetland Restoration Officer Pb4	£29,500.00		£0.00	JK	
2206	NH	Works Supervisor Wetland Pb6a	18,954.00		14,757.52	JK	
			£297,589.00		£173,325.68		
		Wetland Restoration					
48	NH	Repair and Maintenance	£105,360.00		£43,659.18	JK	
33	NH	Penny Moor	£153,600.00		£5,175.51		
2401	NH	Furzey Lodge Mire	£34,500.00		£0.00		
2402	NH	Furzey Lodge Mire & Rans Wood	£96,600.00	£63,668.81	£63,668.81		
42	NH	Hawkhill Mire	£32,880.00		£0.00		
2403	NH	Ravensnest	£54,720.00		£21,482.40		
1801	NH	Anses Wood	£37,440.00	£46,331.54	£46,331.54		
			£515,100.00		£180,317.44	0.00	
		T&C Planning Costs					
51	NH	Wetland Restoration Planning	£0.00		£0.00	NH	
			£0.00	£0.00	£0.00		
		Total Habitat Restoration	£834,869.00	£0.00	£354,066.80		
		Total FE spend all serials	£1,477,343.14	£34,854.14	£541,887.56	Claims 38 & 39 & 40	

FINANCIAL SUMMARY

Planned Spend Estimate		Actual Spend to Date	
Total VGS Spend	£1,260,402.22		£1,179,467.71
HLS Overheads Staff Costs	£69,836.00		£30,119.53
Non Native plants & SAMS	£37,000.00		£37,000.00
Monitoring	£49,680.00		£11,423.68
Project Staff Costs	£302,113.57		£173,325.68
Terrestrial & Wetland Restoration	£1,066,744.00		£312,502.98
T & C Planning costs	£0.00		£0.00
NPA	£53,994.00		£0.00
TOTAL Planned Spend	£2,839,769.79	TOTAL Actual Spend	£1,743,839.58

Income from NE		Actual Income from NE	£2,033,229.35
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End of year payment	£2,033,229.35	End of year payment	£2,033,229.35
Bugeted in-year Reserve 2024	-£806,540.44	In-year Reserve	£289,389.77
B/fwd Reserve from 2023	£2,415,149.95	B/fwd Reserve 2023	£2,415,149.95
Budgeted accumulated Reserve	£1,608,609.51	Accumulated Reserve	£2,704,539.72

Education Payment - Annual payment			
NPA	Educational Access - payment per visit	£5,190.00	£5,190.00

Spend profile: 2024-25					
Register Serial No.	Project Title	Budget Apr24-Mar25	Revised Forecast	Actual spend to 31.12.24	Comments / Proposed restoration sites
HLS Overheads - STAFF COSTS					
22	FE Supporting Staff & Admin costs	26,430.00	26,430.00	14,307.53	Vacant since October
60	Project Manager Pb4	51,414.00	51,414.00	6,853.96	
61	Terrestrial Restoration Officer Pb5	40,635.00	40,635.00	31,829.58	
57	Works Supervisor Pb6a	37,908.00	37,908.00	22,881.05	
62	Wetland Restoration Officer Pb5	40,635.00	40,635.00	31,829.58	
622	Monitoring Project Officer Pb5	40,635.00	40,635.00	35,627.83	Includes TRA costs for Project Manager role
623	Verge Restoration Officer Pb6a	37,908.00	37,908.00	29,416.14	
2206	Works Supervisor Pb6a (0.5 FTE)	18,954.00	18,954.00	14,757.52	
Sub-total		294,519.00	294,519.00	187,633.21	
HLS Overheads - Other					
23	Communications - phones and trackers	1,000.00	2,000.00	1,036.70	
94	Forestry England - Office Overheads	2,046.00	2,046.00	2,046.00	
93	Forestry England - Vehicle Leasing & Business related mileage	20,000.00	22,854.14	17,840.98	
21	FE Staff Overheads	5,000.00	10,000.00	9,404.01	
Sub-total		28,046.00	36,900.14	30,327.69	
Sub-total Overheads		322,565.00	331,419.14	217,960.90	Overhead Expenditure
Historic Environment					
32	No projects planned	0.00	0.00	0.00	No projects planned
		0.00	0.00	0.00	
Option HO2 Restoration of Lowland Heath					
63	Open Habitat Restoration	231,648.00	231,648.00	65,379.00	Natural regen removal: Markway, Dur Hill, Knightwood, Longdown, Ipley, Wooson's Hill Mature conifer removal: Ober Heath. Other sites are also be considered for inclusion in this programme.
1903	Ridge & Furrow	107,640.00	107,640.00	4,014.02	Stump shearing and/or removal of ridges and furrows after harvesting: Highland Water, Ipley, North Sluffers
65	Rhododendron	41,360.00	41,360.00	22,140.00	Summer spraying programme: Acres Down, Allum Green, Black Knowl, Broomy Lodge, Dunces Arch, Highland Water Inclosure, Hinchelsea Bog, James Hill, Knightwood Inclosure, Little Wootton, Matley, Milkham, Pilmore Heath, Shave Wood, Studley Wood – Claypitts Bottom, Swan Green, Turf Hill/Millersford and Wooson's Hill /Barrow Moor. Winter cut & burn programme: Sites planned into the programme so far include Allum Green, Dur Hill, Fritham, Hawkhill, Shobley, Swan Green and Foulford
66	Bracken Control	21,600.00	21,600.00	17,934.00	Forage harvesting: rolling programme, Ryetec: Dunces Arch, Turf Hill/Millersford, Highland Water, Anderwood
2301	Holly Holm Management	21,600.00	21,600.00	7,120.92	Deer-proof fencing for regeneration pens around holly holm sites: Freeworms Hill (south of Fritham Plain), west side of Ocknell Wood, Seven Holms (west of Sluffers), Withybeds Bottom, Bolderwood Hollies, Berry Beeches.
Sub-total		423,848.00	423,848.00	116,587.94	
Option HC13 Restoration of Wood Pasture & Parkland					
68	Coppicing/Pollarding	20,000.00	20,000.00	0.00	Holly management programme to benefit lichens: rolling programme (sites TBC, selected from N. Sanderson report)
2201	Restoration of A&O woodlands	1,800.00	1,800.00	1,800.00	Removal of conifer and natural regen from A&O woodlands: sites TBC Timber clearance: Woodcrates
2202	Thinning A&O plots	10,824.00	10,824.00	0.00	Programme to thin regeneration plots in A&O woodlands: Bramshaw Wood Timber clearance: Brook Wood
Sub-total		32,624.00	32,624.00	1,800.00	
Option HK7 Restoration of Species Rich Grassland					
69	Lost Lawns	38,352.00	38,352.00	9,168.00	Removal of scrub and natural regeneration from sites identified in the Lost Lawns Report (N. Sanderson): Balmer Lawn phase 2 Timber clearance: Tantany, Balmer Lawn, Stricknaghe
70	Verge Restoration	53,700.00	53,700.00	4,629.60	Verge restoration project
Sub-total		92,052.00	92,052.00	13,797.60	
Survey and Monitoring					
1902	Woodlark (repeat)	11,000.00	11,000.00	11,000.00	Repeat bird survey (last done 2019)
2101	Botanical Survey - R&F sites	10,500.00	10,500.00	0.00	Post-restoration surveys at Matley, Dunces Arch and Turfhill/Millersford
102	Bats	2,000.00	2,000.00	0.00	Budget line to cover the cost of bat surveys if they are required before tree felling
25	Botanical Survey	12,780.00	12,780.00	0.00	Post-restoration surveys (quadrat data): Wootton, Pondhead Pre-restoration survey: Penny Moor
2303	Wetland monitoring reports - North Sluffers, Harvestslade	5,400.00	5,400.00	0.00	Site-based monitoring case studies: North Sluffers, Harvestslade
2404	Wetland monitoring surveys	6,000.00	6,000.00	0.00	Budget line to cover the cost of additional monitoring surveys if required
104	Fixed point photography	500.00	500.00	123.68	Budget line to cover consumables for camera equipment
103	Water Hydrology	1,000.00	1,000.00	300.00	Budget line to cover consumables for monitoring equipment
105	Riverfly Partnership	500.00	500.00	0.00	Budget line to cover costs for Riverfly surveys
Sub-total		49,680.00	49,680.00	11,423.68	
Wetland Restoration					
48	Repair and Maintenance	105,360.00	105,360.00	43,659.18	Small-scale repairs: Shirley Holms Mire, Islands Thorns, Ober Water
33	Wetland restoration sites	153,600.00	153,600.00	5,175.51	Penny Moor
42	Wetland restoration sites	32,880.00	32,880.00	0.00	Hawkhill Mire
1801	Wetland restoration sites	37,440.00	46,331.54	46,331.54	Anessa Wood
2401	Wetland restoration sites	34,500.00	34,500.00	0.00	Furzey Lodge Mire
2402	Wetland restoration sites	96,600.00	63,668.81	63,668.81	Furzey Lodge Mire-Rans Wood
2403	Wetland restoration sites	54,720.00	54,720.00	21,482.40	Ravens Nest Inclosure
100	Heather Baling	3,120.00	3,120.00	0.00	Heather bales for future wetland restorations.
Sub-total		518,220.00	494,180.35	180,317.44	
Operational Expenditure		£1,116,424.00	£1,092,384.35	£323,926.66	Operational Expenditure
TOTAL Expenditure		£1,438,989.00	£1,423,803.49	£541,887.56	TOTAL Expenditure



Actions from HLS Board Meeting held on 16/09/2024

- None required

Overview of habitat restoration delivered Apr to Dec 2024:

HLS project	Habitat restoration work delivered Apr to Sep 2024
Open habitat restoration	Mature conifer clearance at Ober Heath (5.8 ha). Removal of non-native conifer and western hemlock from Woosons Hill (13 ha) and Markway Lawn (9 ha). Birch and pine seedling regeneration removal from Longdown (29 ha). Birch, gorse and pine regeneration removal from Dur Hill (22 ha).
A&O (Ancient and Ornamental) woodland restoration	Timber cleared from Woodcrates.
Ridge & furrow	Highland Water Inclosure complete (7 Ha). In progress in Ipley Inclosure, and North Sluifers Inclosure.
Rhododendron	Spraying programme completed. Sites included: Acres Down, Alum Green, Black Knowl, Hinchelsea Bog, James Hill, Knightwood Inclosure, Milkham, Highland Water Inclosure, Fritham, Turf Hill, Matley, Shave Wood, Woosons Hill and Markash Wood, Little Wootton and Dunces Arch. Cut and burn programme is in progress. Sites completed so far: Dur Hill, Alum Green.
Bracken control	Cut and collect from Highland water (three areas), Turf Hill and Millersford and Dunces Arch (12 ha total).
Holly coppicing/pollarding	Work in progress.
Lost lawns project	Balmer Lawn in progress
Verge restoration	Minor works completed at Canterton Lane, Broomy, Rufus Stone, Emery down, Bull Hill, Furzey Lane, Blissford Hill track, Harthill house, Hinchelsea, South Weirs. Car-free ditching work has started at Longcross and Black Bush. Bolton's Bench to Matley project due to start last week of Jan.
Wetland restoration and repairs/maintenance	Restoration work completed at Anses Wood, Pennymoor, Furzey Lodge/Rans Wood, Furzey Lodge Mire, Hawkhill Mire, Island Thorns and Ravensnest Inclosure. Repair work completed at Shirley Holms, Island Thorns and Ober Water.

HLS Forestry England Progress Report

Updates should be read in conjunction with the FE HLS Budget Forecast (Annex A).

Budget Update

Claim 40 was issued in January. An updated FE HLS budget forecast is attached (Annex A) summarising Forestry England actual spend for Q1, Q2 and Q3 (01 April to 30 December 2024) and project spend forecasts to end of March 2025.

Staff Update

The HLS administration officer post became vacant in October. The application deadline has now closed and candidates are being sifted. Interviews for the post are planned for the beginning of February.

The Project Manager is now in post (January) and the covering Project Manager has returned to their substantive post as Monitoring Project Officer.

Restoration of Lowland Heath: Option H02

This option aims to encourage the restoration of lowland heathland, including both dry and wet heathland, and mire habitats on the Open Forest. Such sites are likely to have become degraded by scrub, bracken, secondary woodland encroachment or inappropriate drainage. Management will help to restore and strengthen the vegetation mosaics characteristic of lowland heathland, and thus enhance the integrity of the historic landscape character of the area.

Open habitat restoration: PR serial no. 63

The HLS Scheme is funding the restoration of lowland heath on sites that have been used for plantation forestry. This programme of works includes removal of mature conifer, clearance of felled conifer and removal of natural regeneration, on areas of wet and dry heathland open to grazing livestock.

The following projects are ongoing or in preparation for 2024/25:

- **Natural regeneration removal:** Rolling programme of work to remove natural regeneration from ‘thrown open’ Inclosures will continue in Sep 2024-Feb 2025.
 - Removal of non-native conifer and western hemlock has already been completed at Woosons Hill (13 ha) and Markway Lawn (9 ha), and birch and pine seedling regeneration removed at Longdown (29 ha).
 - Removal of birch and gorse from Dur Hill (22 ha) has been completed.
 - Removal of pine and birch regeneration has been completed at Knightwood (4.7 ha).

- Work to remove Pine/ conifer/ birch regeneration is ongoing in Ipley and Markway Inclosures.
- **Mature conifer removal:** Mature conifer has been removed from 5.8 ha at Ober Heath, a line of mature conifer was removed from Dur Hill, and a line at Knightwood helping restore this area back to open heathland. Rake and burn of brash has been completed at Ober Heath. Conifer removal is also planned North Slufers.

Ridge & furrow removal and stump shearing: PR serial no. 1903

The HLS Scheme is funding the restoration of lowland heath on sites that have been used for plantation forestry. This programme of work includes the removal of ridges and furrows, and shearing of stumps to restore areas of wet or dry heathland, currently open to grazing.

- Highland Water has been completed - forestry drains have also been infilled. North Slufers and Ipley Inclosures are underway.

Rhododendron management: PR serial no. 65

The HLS Scheme funds a rolling programme of work to control non-native rhododendron that is encroaching on open habitats. Different methods are used, depending on the size of the plant; smaller plants are targeted through foliar spray, while larger bushes (>1.2 m in height) are cut down and arisings burnt.

- This year's spraying programme has now finished. All sites were completed: Acres Down, Alum Green, Black Knowl, Hinchelsea Bog, James Hill, Knightwood Inclosure, Milkham, Highland Water Inclosure, Fritham, Turf Hill, Matley, Shave Wood, Woosons Hill and Markash Wood, Little Wootton and Dunces Arch.
- Planning is underway for the winter cut & burn programme, which is due to start over the next few weeks. Sites planned into the programme include Alum Green, Dur Hill Railway and Inclosure, Markash Wood, Fritham, Shobley, Dibden. Alum Green, Dur Hill Railway and Inclosure and Markash have been completed. Fritham, Dibden and Shobley in progress. Contact has been made with Hampshire Highways and they have agreed to clear the Rhododendron growing onto our land from the A35 by Alum Green, and Hythe bypass by Dibden.

Bracken management: PR serial no. 66

The HLS Scheme funds a rolling programme of work on areas that have been restored to open habitat where bracken is becoming over-dominant and outcompeting other native species, thus reducing species diversity.

This year bracken was cut and collected from three areas of Highland water, Turf Hill and Millersford and Dunces Arch (12 ha total). Anderwood has been deferred to 2025 due to wet ground conditions.

Holly holm management: PR serial 2301

This is a one-off project following on from a successful trial to encourage holly holm regeneration by removing grazing pressure via temporary enclosures. 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.

Fencing work was due to start in late summer/early autumn 2023 but was postponed to 2024 due to difficulties sourcing chestnut stakes and posts. Fences have been erected around Seven Holms (west of Slufers), Freeworms Hill (south of Fritham Plain), Ocknell Wood (west side), Withybed Bottom, Bolderwood Hollies and Berry Beeches.

Restoration of Wood Pasture & Parkland: Option HC13

The aim of this option is to restore wood pasture (including the Special Area of Conservation (SAC) habitats of pasture woodland, riverine woodland and bog woodland in the Open Forest) to favourable condition. This applies where land has been planted with conifers or where Scots pine has spread and trees or other non-natives need to be removed.

Holly pollarding: PR serial no. 68

HLS is funding the restoration of A&O woodlands through a programme of work that aims to reduce the shade from dense holly to benefit epiphytic lichens. This is critical work as the old growth pasture woodlands support an internationally important lichen assemblage.

A rolling programme of work is targeting sites highlighted in a 2018/19 Holly Management and Epiphytic Lichen Conservation Survey Report conducted by Neil Sanderson as 'urgent priority' and 'priority' areas, encompassing 29 woodland areas. Over the last four years 51 sites have been worked on in 21 of the woodland areas. Once the programme has achieved its targets, a review will evaluate the completed work and identify next steps. Contracts have been awarded and holly pollarding will commence over the next few weeks.

Restoration of A&O woodlands: PR serial no. 2201

HLS is funding the restoration of ancient and ornamental (A&O) oak and beech woodlands by removing conifer trees and other non-natives. Forestry England applies the following principles put forward by Natural England: fell any conifers shading veteran trees; fell regenerating conifer; fell conifer growing amongst young oak and beech; and restore glades or edges of lawns

and heathland where conifer have colonised open areas. This will also allow the woodland to naturally expand in future.

The small amount of remaining felled conifer in Woodcrates has been cleared.

Other A&O woodland sites will be assessed for inclusion in future work programmes. Possible future sites include Bramshaw Inclosure.

Thinning A&O Plots: PR serial no. 2202

HLS is funding a programme of work which aims to restore a more natural woodland structure in old planting areas and regeneration pens in A&O woodlands. Felled timber at Brook Wood will be cleared when ground conditions are suitable.

Other A&O woodland thinning sites are being assessed for inclusion in future work programmes.

Restoration of species-rich grassland: Option HK7

This option is targeted at dry and wet grasslands and associated permanent and temporary ponds in the Open Forest that are potentially rich in plant and associated animal life. They are sometimes on difficult ground and may have suffered from issues such as drainage, invasive species (including bracken, scrub and non-native species), eutrophication and under/overgrazing.

Lost lawns: PR serial no. 69

HLS is funding the restoration of species-rich grassland that has been encroached by scrub and invasive species. This involves a rolling programme of work targeting sites identified in the Lost Lawns Report (N. Sanderson) to restore glades or edges of lawns and heathland.

The following work is ongoing or in preparation for 2024/25:

- Felled timber at Tantany, Stricknage and Balmer Lawn has been cleared.
- The second phase of agreed works at Balmer Lawn has started.
- The removal of remaining birch at Anderwood Lawn is being planned for this winter.

Verge Restoration: PR serial no. 70

HLS funds a Verge Restoration Officer (VRO) to raise awareness of the importance of the verges which are a designated feature of the New Forest's SSSI (Site of Special Scientific Interest). The VRO actively engages with local communities and visitors, patrols and assesses SSSI verges across the HLS agreement area, and plans and oversees practical measures to protect and restore the verges from the damaging impacts of vehicles.

Work was carried out over the summer at the following sites:

- Rufus stone: two newly created lay-bys have been closed off.
 - Hinchelsea: A barrier was installed to close access onto open forest and ground nesting bird area and dragon's teeth were installed to protect the eroded verge.
 - Canterton Lane: Improvement measures (wooden dragon's teeth) and barrier replacement.
 - Emery Down Culvert: Dragon's teeth installed.
 - Repair work at Broomy, Brockenhurst and Emery Down.
 - Furzey Lane: parking area closed off.
 - Bull Hill: Bell mouth reduced in size.
 - Barrier installation to prevent further erosion to large area used for unauthorised parking.
- Work is in progress at Longcross and Black Bush plain to deliver car-free ditching on both sides of the road.
 - Boltons Bench to Denny Campsite: Forestry England has developed a proposal to protect and restore the verge between Bolton's Bench car park and Denny Campsite from unauthorised parking. The proposed work includes car-free ditching, bringing forward old measures closer to the road where possible and installing new dragon's teeth in areas not suitable for ditching. This work will be commencing in the last week of January 2025.
 - Other sites are in the planning stages including Long Beech, Bramshaw Wood, Sluifers Inclosure, Ivy Wood, Ladycross Lodge, Cott Lane, Shirley Holmes, Setley Pond, Mogshade-Bolderwood.

Wetland Restoration

Where habitats are unfavourable as a result of drainage operations (such as in riverine and bog woodland, heathland and mire habitats), restoration of a more natural physical, geomorphological and hydrological regime by agreed management is required. This might include removal of structures which prevent seasonal inundation, raising of (over-deepened) stream bed levels, restoration of braided channels (watercourses with many small channels) and reinstatement of natural meanders. Such works are undertaken as part of the ongoing programme of wetland restoration projects and are guided by the restoration plan agreed by the Freshwater and Wetland Restoration Forum (FWRF).

Repair and maintenance: PR serial no. 48

Previously restored wetland sites may need further interventions to help restore natural processes. Forestry England carries out an ongoing programme of work to monitor restored sites, identify any issues and implement works to address them.

Repairs and maintenance was completed at the following sites:

- **Shirley Holms Mire** - minor nick point repairs (postponed from 2023 due to unsuitable weather conditions).
- **Ober Water (at Markway)** - cut off exposed stakes, bed level raise and reprofile short section of bankside.
- **Islands Thorns** - repair nick point and raise bed level for a short stretch.

Other wetland sites: PR serial numbers 33, 1801, 42, 2401, 2402, 2403

A programme of mire and stream restoration work that aims to restore the natural hydrology of an area, improve the condition of wet habitats, protect streams and mires from further erosion, help to manage flood risk and increase resilience to drought.

The following sites were completed this summer. Sites requiring consultation plans were submitted to Verderer's and approved Dec 2023.

- **Anses Wood** - Infilled eroding section of channel, repaired nick points and restored remnant meanders.
- **Penny Moor** - Infilled artificial drain, removed infrastructure (2 bridges), added in replacement ford crossing where needed, put up temporary fencing to protect livestock from, stabilised breach in scheduled ancient monument (Bishop's Dyke) to protect it from future vehicle damage.
- **Furzey Lodge Mire/Rans Wood** - Removed spoil, reinstated meanders and bed level raised the channel.
- **Furzey Lodge Mire** - Repaired nick points in channel feeding into Inclosure.
- **Hawkhill Mire** - Repaired nick points in channel, replaced culvert with gravel ford, pressed in stakes and removed temporary fence from previous restoration work.
- **Ravensnest Inclosure** - Infilled drains using spoil from banks.

Future wetland sites:

The Forestry England team are now looking at future possible restoration sites, and will be looking to determine their feasibility over the next few weeks.

Update: Forest Freshwater & Wetland Restoration Forum (FWRP)

The Forest Freshwater and Wetland Restoration Forum (FWRP) was set up as an independent and advisory body focused on strategic and long-term freshwater and wetland restoration priorities in the New Forest National Park. Some example objectives include:

- To assist member bodies planning restoration by sharing information, experience and advice,
- help facilitate communication between all stakeholders,
- set strategic level objectives and

- review the Freshwater and Wetland Restoration Plan which creates a framework for delivery of restoration projects.

Work is ongoing to finalise the draft Restoration Plan and develop the Communications and Engagement Strategy. A workshop looking at wetland restoration techniques was undertaken with forum members involved in restoration delivery on 16th October. Footprint Ecology have synthesised the information collected during this, into a manual of techniques which will form a section of the final Restoration Plan. They will be presenting an overview of wetland restoration in the New Forest and the work of the FWRF, at the HLS AGM.

Heather Baling: PR serial no. 100

Two hundred heather bales were produced in 2023/24 Q4 for future wetland restoration projects.

Work is being planned to harvest more heather bales over the next few weeks.

Survey and Monitoring

This includes a programme of specialist species surveys - as directed by Natural England - and a monitoring programme to support our restoration work. Examples of previous specialist species surveys undertaken include those conducted for large marsh grasshopper, brown diving beetle, New Forest cicada and various New Forest spiders. Previous reports can be found [here](#).

Woodlark (repeat): PR serial no. 1902

A repeat bird survey for Woodlark has been completed this summer, and found that Woodlark numbers this year were the highest ever recorded for the SPA (260 territories within the SPA and a further 64 outside the SPA).

Bat: PR serial no. 102

Bat surveys are conducted to detect the presence of bats where work is planned in areas likely to disturb bat roosting sites. These surveys ensure that appropriate measures can be taken to minimise disturbance and protect crucial bat habitats. No bat surveys have taken place over the last quarter.

Botanical survey: PR serial no. 25

Botanical surveys are being conducted on our wetland restoration sites to assess the vegetative response to the restoration of a more naturally functioning watercourse. A new vegetation survey protocol has been developed to ensure it is practical, but provides useful data. This has been trialled on four sites where restoration has already taken place (North Sluifers,

Harvestslade, Wootton and Pondhead) and one where restoration has been carried out this year (Penny Moor).

The vegetation survey reports for North Sluifers and Harvestslade have been finalised with information about the pre-restoration condition of these sites. The surveys found that at 5+ years after restoration, both sites support a wide range of quintessential habitats.

The same protocol was used to carry out meso-habitat mapping at Pondhead and Wootton in 2023, The remaining vegetative survey work was carried out this summer and the report is in progress.

A pre-restoration survey of the habitats present at Penny moor was also completed before the restoration took place this summer. Follow up surveys will be commissioned to assess how the restoration work has impacted the habitats and vegetation.

Botanical surveys - ridge & furrow sites: PR serial no. 2101

Following the same survey protocol as that developed for the wetland sites, botanical surveys are being conducted on our heathland restoration sites to assess the vegetative response to conifer removal. Four sites have been selected (Matley Ridge, Turf Hill, Millersford and Dunces Arch).

Baseline surveys were conducted for all sites in 2021, and an initial post restoration survey conducted at Denny in 2023. This summer (2024), post-restoration surveys have been completed for all sites. Vegetative responses varied between sites, however, the surveys broadly found that while there was a reduction in overall vegetation cover and increase in bare ground (a consequence of the initial disturbance), overall species-richness increased with smaller herbs and grasses typical of heath and acid grassland more frequent post-restoration. At Denny, where restoration took place a year earlier, there was a trend towards an increase in dwarf shrub cover in previously bracken dominated areas, but an increase in bracken cover in previously open areas.

Wetland monitoring reports: PR serial no. 2303

Case studies on site-based monitoring have been commissioned for Wootton and Harvestslade. These will combine data from various monitoring streams (e.g., botanical surveys, geomorphological surveys and fixed point photography surveys) to create a succinct narrative of change report for each site. They will build on the suggestions presented in the Freshwater and Wetland Restoration Forum Restoration Plan. Their aim will be to describe the site at 5+ years post restoration in the context of habitats present and relevant measures of success, in a way that's accessible to the general public.

Fixed point photography: PR serial no. 104

A fixed-point photography programme is run by the HLS Monitoring Project Officer to document visible habitat changes following restoration.

This year the programme has been updated and improved by creating an app that allows photos to be taken in the field and automatically uploaded to a geographical information system (GIS). This makes it easier and more efficient to take repeat photos.

Water Hydrology: PR serial no. 103

Monitoring water hydrology helps document changes in flow regime and, the impact of river restorations on flow levels and rates.

Previously, various water level monitoring methods have been trialled, including the use of water level gauges connected to IoT (Internet of Things) devices to continuously capture and stream water level data to a database. Unfortunately, poor signal in The Forest limited their success.

The HLS monitoring project officer is currently liaising with the Environment Agency (EA) who have agreed to assist with monitoring water levels when needed.

Riverfly Partnership: PR serial no. 105

Over the last nine years, the HLS scheme has supported the citizen science Riverfly Partnership Project. Volunteers are trained to identify and survey specific groups of freshwater invertebrates, whose diversity and numbers can tell us about the overall health and characteristics of our streams. More information and recent updates can be found [here](#).

This year, our citizen science volunteers have surveyed 2 Riverfly sites (Pondhead and Millersford) from April to October. The volunteers have finished their sampling for the year and the data is being analysed and reviewed.

NEW FOREST NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

Report to HLS Board: January 2025

Jonathan Low, Communications Assistant / HLS engagement officer

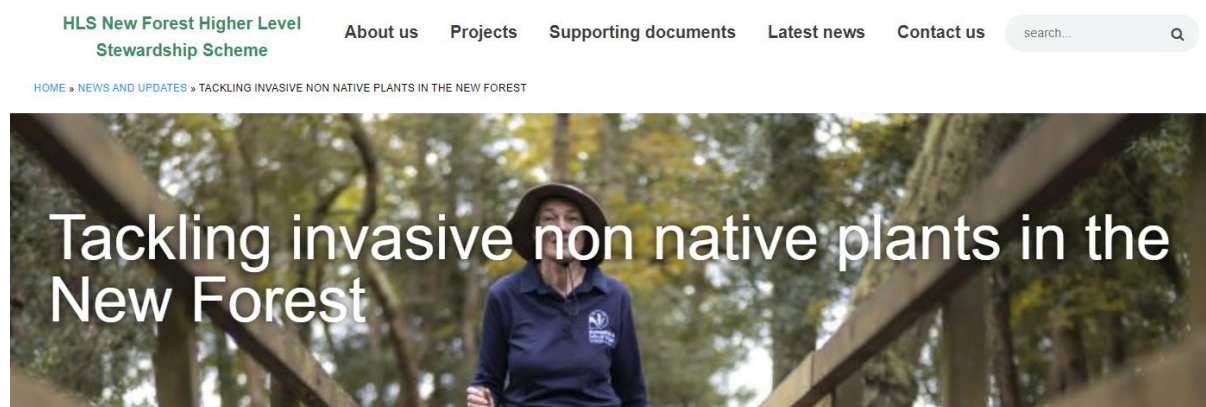
Media coverage

BBC programme Countryfile visited the area at the start of January to film with various organisations in the New Forest, including Forestry England to look back at some of the heathland restoration work carried out in the Forest and highlight the benefits and impact of this. They also interviewed commoners about future funding.

Web updates

Maria Court, senior communications assistant at the NPA, conducted an interview with Catherine Chatters to talk about her role as project officer for the New Forest Non-Native Plants Project.

The HLS scheme provides funding towards the project.



The New Forest Higher Level Stewardship (HLS) scheme provides funding towards the work co-ordinated by Catherine Chatters in her role as project officer for the New Forest Non-Native Plants Project.

Hosted by Hampshire & Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust, the Project aims to stop the spread of invasive non-native plants through advice, practical control, research and awareness-raising.

Since the Project was launched in 2009, Catherine has been on a mission to tackle one of the most significant threats to the New Forest's important habitats and the species they support.

Although they may look attractive, invasive non-native plants such as Himalayan Balsam are a threat to the delicate balance of the New Forest's fragile ecosystems, particularly its important wetland habitats, as seeds can easily travel downstream, colonising riverbanks and displacing native flora.

Woodlark survey

The 2024 survey report was uploaded to the HLS website.



New Forest Woodlark (*Lullula arborea*) survey 2024

Higher Level Stewardship Agreement
The Verderers of the New Forest
AG00300016

5 November 2024



Botanical survey

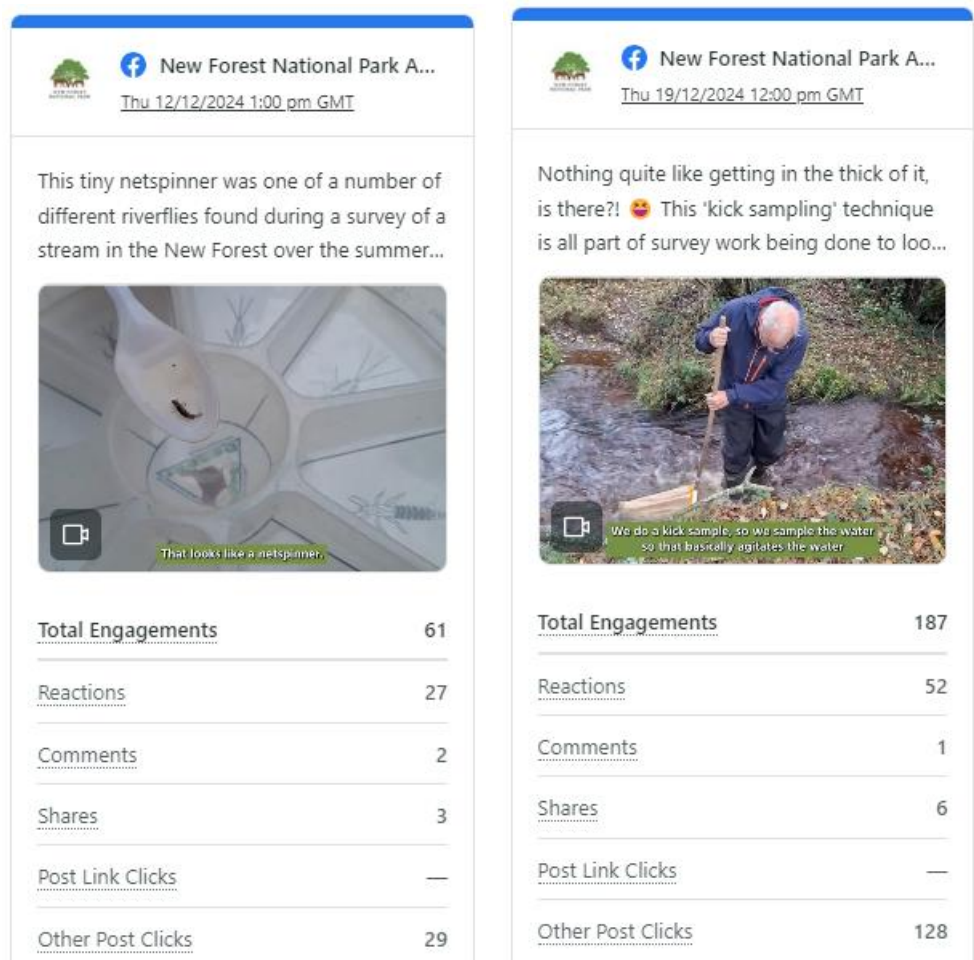
Harvestslade and Slufers 2022 surveys were uploaded to the HLS website.



Social media posts and engagement

Several social media posts were published in relation to FE volunteers undertaking riverfly monitoring.

They included video footage captured from a site visit.



Overall, there were more than 2,000 engagements on HLS posts over social media from October to mid January.

There were nearly 56,000 impressions and more than 150 users clicked on links in posts, with an engagement rate of nearly 4%.

Meetings

The HLS AGM takes place on Friday, 31 January at the Verderers' Hall.

There will be a presentation about the update on the New Forest Freshwater and Wetland Restoration Plan from Footprint Ecology.

Susan Smith, Suzannah Egleston and Charlotte Bartlett (FE), Tina Woodley (Verderers), Jonathan Low and Hilary Makin (NPA) met up to discuss a comms strategy and plans for HLS moving forward into 2025.

Jonathan will set up a Sharepoint document to allow others to notify of any photo / video opportunities for comms.

Coming up

Ongoing FE projects including verge restoration and wetland restoration and we are planning comms around this to show the results of older schemes.

There will be a new HLS website, as part of the NPA website being renewed.

This will require an 'audit and streamlining of the existing HLS website to work out what content needs to be retained, what can be removed and any new content required.

The archaeology team at the NPA is carrying out data consolidation work and aiming to bring the current HLS heritage database (which holds over 4,300 records) up to industry standards. The goal is to bring all New Forest heritage data together.

The Awakening Festival, led by the NPA with a range of partners, takes place in March to highlight the climate and nature emergencies. This includes a series of events, talks, workshops and initiatives to showcase why the New Forest is special and increase people's understanding of the issues the Forest faces.

Comms around stallion release and new foals is also being planned for the spring.

The next HLS comms meeting will take place in early March.

NEW FOREST NON-NATIVE PLANTS PROJECT REPORT TO THE NEW FOREST HIGHER LEVEL STEWARDSHIP SCHEME BOARD MEETING TO BE HELD ON 22 JANUARY 2025

This report outlines relevant activities of the New Forest Non-Native Plants Project since the previous report dated 18 October 2024 which was submitted for the Higher Level Stewardship (HLS) Scheme Board meeting held on 30 October 2024.

Hampshire & Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust (which hosts the New Forest Non-Native Plants Project) is very grateful for the funding provided by the New Forest HLS scheme for the control of invasive non-native plants within the Open Forest on the Crown Land.

Work undertaken by contractors on Crown Land on the Open Forest in 2024

Control of Japanese knotweed

- One herbicide treatment undertaken by contractor adjacent to Hillview, Linwood. £85 + VAT. Work undertaken on 17 September 2024. 3 x very small plants found and treated along fence line. Invoice submitted on 23 September 2024.
- One herbicide treatment undertaken by contractor between Burley and Bransgore. £125 + VAT. Work undertaken on 17 September 2024. 8 x 20-30cm stems found and treated. Invoice submitted on 23 September 2024.
- One herbicide treatment undertaken by contractor off Cott Lane, Burley. £165 + VAT. Work undertaken on 16 September 2024. 5 x 20-30cm stems found and treated. Invoice submitted on 23 September 2024.

Control of American skunk cabbage

- One herbicide treatment undertaken along Mill Lawn Brook downstream of Rooks Bridge. £160 + VAT. Work undertaken on 26 June 2024. Invoice submitted on 3 July 2024.
- One herbicide treatment undertaken upstream of A337 (downstream of Harcourt Wood). £160 + VAT. Work undertaken on 3 July 2024. Invoice submitted on 3 July 2024.

Control of Yellow Azalea

- Herbicide treatment and cutting undertaken by contractor on Open Forest in vicinity of Old House, near Burley. £90 + VAT. Work undertaken on 17 September 2024. Invoice submitted on 23 September 2024.
- Herbicide treatment undertaken by contractor on Open Forest at South Oakley. £70 + VAT. Work undertaken on 18 September 2024. Invoice submitted on 23 September 2024.
- Herbicide treatment undertaken by contractor on Open Forest in Busketts area. £65 + VAT. Work undertaken on 17 September 2024. Invoice submitted on 23 September 2024.

Control of Cotoneaster and Berberis

- One herbicide treatment of Cotoneaster undertaken by contractor in vicinity of former WWI Airfield at East Boldre. £160 + VAT. Work undertaken on 12 September 2024. Invoice submitted on 23 September 2024.
- One herbicide treatment of Cotoneaster undertaken by contractor in vicinity of former WWII Airfield at Beaulieu Heath. £3,150 + VAT. Work undertaken on 4, 10, 11, 12, 17 and 18 July 2024. Invoice submitted on 23 September 2024.
- One herbicide treatment of Cotoneaster undertaken by contractor in vicinity of the former WWII Airfield at Stoney Cross. £2,950 + VAT. Work undertaken on 9, 11, 12, 13 and 16 September 2024. Invoice submitted on 23 September 2024.
- One herbicide treatment of Cotoneaster undertaken by contractor at Eastern side of Lyndhurst. £95 + VAT. Work undertaken on 9 September 2024. Invoice submitted on 23 September 2024.
- One herbicide treatment of Cotoneaster undertaken by contractor near Bramble Hill Hotel. £280 + VAT. Work undertaken on 11 July 2024. Invoice submitted on 7 August 2024.
- One herbicide treatment of Cotoneaster undertaken by contractor to north of Hatchet Pond. £120 + VAT. Work undertaken on 12 September 2024. Invoice submitted on 23 September 2024.
- One herbicide treatment of Cotoneaster undertaken by contractor in vicinity of Hatchet Moor car park and Little Hatchet Pond. £165 + VAT. Work undertaken on 12 September 2024. Invoice submitted on 23 September 2024.
- One herbicide treatment of Cotoneaster undertaken by contractor at Hatchet Triangle. £270 + VAT. Work undertaken on 12 September 2024. Invoice submitted on 23 September 2024.
- One herbicide treatment of Cotoneaster undertaken by contractor to west of Hatchet Gate. £200 + VAT. Work undertaken on 12 September 2024. Invoice submitted on 23 September 2024.
- One herbicide treatment of Cotoneaster undertaken by contractor in vicinity of Rans Wood car park. £480 + VAT. Work undertaken on 16 September 2024. Invoice submitted on 23 September 2024.
- One herbicide treatment of Cotoneaster and Berberis undertaken by contractor in vicinity of Setley Pond. £165 + VAT. Work undertaken on 9 September 2024. Invoice submitted on 23 September 2024.
- One herbicide treatment of Cotoneaster undertaken by contractor on Setley Plain. £165 + VAT. Work undertaken on 9 September 2024. Invoice submitted on 23 September 2024.
- One herbicide treatment of Cotoneaster undertaken by contractor to north of A31 near Minstead. £265.40 + VAT. Work undertaken on 18 July 2024. Invoice submitted on 19 July 2024.

- One herbicide treatment of Cotoneaster undertaken by contractor at Pilmore Gate Heath and Acres Down. £280 + VAT. Work undertaken on 20 June 2024. Invoice submitted on 23 September 2024.
- One herbicide treatment of Cotoneaster undertaken by contractor at Boundway Hill. £120 + VAT. Work undertaken on 9 September 2024. Invoice submitted on 23 September 2024.
- One herbicide treatment of Cotoneaster undertaken by contractor near Piper's Wait car park £65 + VAT. Work undertaken on 11 July 2024. Invoice submitted on 7 August 2024. Contractor also treated one Cotoneaster plant that he discovered on the edge of the car park.
- One herbicide treatment of Cotoneaster undertaken by contractor near Wilverley Lodge £430 + VAT. Work undertaken on 11 September 2024. Invoice submitted on 23 September 2024.

Control of Parrot's Feather

Early summer herbicide treatments, late summer herbicide treatments and interim herbicide treatments undertaken by contractor at East End and Hincheslea Bog.

- Early summer treatment £573.30 + VAT
- Late summer treatment and interim treatments £573.30 + VAT

Kevin Ackerman of Food & Environmental Ltd emailed the Project Officer on 6 June 2024 to say that when he and his colleague were in the vicinity of Hincheslea Bog on 5 June 2024 they took the opportunity to do a monitoring visit and, although they 'didn't probe too far', they found no Parrot's Feather which was very encouraging. Kevin intends to check the sites thoroughly and undertake the first round of herbicide treatment 'in the next couple of weeks'.

The early summer herbicide treatment was undertaken on 21 June 2024. Kevin emailed the Project Officer later that day to report as follows:

Hincheslea Bog

"Good news from Hincheslea. Very little Parrot's Feather - a small, not very dense, patch near the small willow island south of the causeway and approx 10-15 stems in the channel beyond the open water. A few small patches on the wet ground to the east of the bog itself, nothing to the north of the causeway. Very pleasing!"

East End

"...a few small patches in under the trees as expected but less than this time last year". Whilst on site the contractors were approached by one of the New Forest Keepers (Ben) with whom they had a really good chat; Kevin reported that Ben provided "very positive feed-back".

The invoice was submitted on 24 June 2024.

The interim treatment was undertaken on 4 September 2024. Kevin emailed the Project Officer on 5 September 2024 to report:

“East End Pond - Looking good. Eight stems of Parrot’s Feather found in the area to the east of the pond under the trees. These were spot sprayed as they were in livestock footprints and difficult to remove by hand. The area was heavily poached but the water level in the pond was low giving us good access. We will check again in early October.

Hincheslea Bog - Water levels are very high on site, and it is very soft under foot. No Parrot’s Feather spotted to the north of the causeway, which is good. We found small fragments freely floating in the water to the south of the causeway (hand removed). There were two small plants growing in the bank to the extreme east of the water close to the causeway (spot sprayed) otherwise very little Parrot’s Feather visible from the causeway; however, on walking/wading around the rear of the open water we did find three distinct areas of Parrot’s Feather (all sprayed). Whilst [Parrot’s Feather is] still there, this is still a very encouraging result as it is hugely reduced this year compared to previous seasons. We didn’t find any Parrot’s Feather further down through the willow carr. There were some patches to the south-east of the water body on the open wet ground; these seems to move around as we could see previous evidence of our control and, apart from the odd very small plant, these areas were clear and this part of the bog is very heavily poached by stock. One disappointing area of Parrot’s Feather we found was to the east of the water body on the far side of the soft channel coming down the slope. This area has been clear for several years but we did find a sparse patch of Parrot’s Feather approx. 1 x 2m (area sprayed). In summary very good progress at Hincheslea this year, but still needs monitoring”.

The late summer treatment was undertaken on 15 October 2024. Kevin emailed the Project Officer on 16 October 2024 to report:

“East End Pond - Clear of Parrot’s Feather. I was really pleased with this as it has been very frustrating to have the little patches popping up. Again, I don’t think we are quite there yet, but a positive end to this year’s treatments.

Hincheslea Bog - No Parrot’s Feather to the north of the causeway which is really good as it has been clear all year. Again (as per last visit) a few free-floating fragments hand removed from the main body of water. These must be being broken off by livestock or dogs swimming, and I am more inclined to think livestock, as there is very limited Parrot’s Feather present now and not where the dogs generally go. The only rooted Parrot’s Feather found was to the rear of the small willow island (a patch approx. 0.5m²) and odd single stems through the reeds at the rear of the water at it flows towards the willow carr. Approx 20 stems. Checking the wet area to the east of the main body, again heavy poaching by livestock, but much less Parrot’s Feather than during our last visit with just odd stems in previously treated areas. approx. 10 small stems in total. I think there has been really positive progress on this challenging site again this year, with the main body of water clear and just small areas around the perimeter. Still the big challenge is the physical spread of the plant by livestock and dogs. We had some good engagement with the public who were interested and gave really positive responses, which is always encouraging”.

The invoice was submitted on 16 October 2024.

Control of Evening Primrose and Purple Toadflax

- One herbicide treatment on Open Forest at Shepard’s Gutter car park. £65 + VAT. Contractor visited on 3 separate occasions but did not find any Evening Primrose or Purple Toadflax. Invoice submitted on 23 September 2024.

Control of Gaultheria

- One herbicide treatment undertaken by contractor south of Fletcher's Hill in May or June 2024. £565 + VAT. Work undertaken on 20 June 2024. Invoice submitted on 3 July 2024.
- Two herbicide treatments undertaken by contractor on island in pond on Broomy Plain (one treatment in April 2024 and one treatment in May or June 2024). £1,195.39 + VAT. First treatment undertaken on 8 May 2024; invoice submitted on 9 May 2024. Second treatment undertaken on 21 June 2024; invoice submitted on 24 June 2024.

Wet, unsettled weather during April 2024 resulted in the first treatment having to be delayed until early May. Kevin Ackerman of Food & Environmental Ltd emailed the Project Officer on 8 May 2024 to confirm that the first herbicide treatment of the Gaultheria had been undertaken that day on the island in the pond on Broomy Plain. Kevin reported as follows:

"Dear Catherine

Perfect weather! The first treatment is all completed, we were surprised how much was actually on the island, I would guesstimate 40% coverage and quite a few small plants. We treated at the recommended rate of 10l/Ha-1 and used Topfilm at the highest rate rather than the Mixture B. We were as careful as possible to limit control to just the Gaultheria, but also very thorough, spraying all leaves. I think there will be a notable impact to the Gaultheria on the island. I will put a note in the diary to revisit in 4-5 weeks, I will also forward the spray records."

Kevin emailed the Project Officer on 21 June 2024 after he had undertaken the second treatment of the Gaultheria on the island in the pond on Broomy Plain; he reported as follows:

"....the first Gaultheria treatment looks to have worked very well with just a few leaves near the base of a few plants needing re-treatment."

Additional work undertaken by contractor during 2024

During October 2024 the Project Officer requested a quote for herbicide treatment to be undertaken during 2025 to control two Cherry Laurel bushes and a conifer on the Open Forest in the vicinity of the former WWII Airfield at Stoney Cross. The contractor responded on 17 October 2024 and offered to dig up the plants free of charge during autumn 2024 whilst *en route* to Sussex, as he considered it would be quick and efficient and would limit use of herbicide as part of his company's 'integrated plant management approach'. The Project Officer accepted this offer and provided a site risk assessment and the 'constraints and hazards' map which had been prepared by Forestry England. The work was completed free of charge on 22 October 2024.



The two Cherry Laurel bushes and conifer recorded by the Project Officer during Cotoneaster monitoring in vicinity of former WWII Airfield at Stoney Cross on 2 and 5 October 2024 and dug up by contractor on 22 October 2024.

Planning the work to be undertaken by contractors during 2025

On 22 May 2024 and 6 & 8 October 2024 the Project Officer requested quotes from contractors for control work to be undertaken on behalf of the New Forest Non-Native Plants Project at relevant sites on the Open Forest during 2025.

Control of Yellow Azalea

- One herbicide treatment to be undertaken by contractor at Blackensford Bottom. £98 + VAT.

Control of Japanese knotweed

- One herbicide treatment to be undertaken by contractor adjacent to Hillview, Linwood. £98 + VAT.
- One herbicide treatment to be undertaken by contractor between Burley and Bransgore. £125 + VAT.
- One herbicide treatment to be undertaken by contractor off Cott Lane, Burley. £155 + VAT.

Control of American skunk cabbage

- One herbicide treatment to be undertaken downstream of A337. £120 + VAT.

Control of Cotoneaster, Berberis, Montbretia, Variegated Yellow Archangel

- One herbicide treatment of Cotoneaster and Berberis to be undertaken by contractor in vicinity of former WWII Airfield at Beaulieu Heath. £3,495 + VAT.
- One herbicide treatment of Cotoneaster to be undertaken by contractor in vicinity of the former WWII Airfield at Stoney Cross. £3,650 + VAT.
- One herbicide treatment of Cotoneaster to be undertaken by contractor near Bramble Hill Hotel. £280 + VAT.
- One herbicide treatment of Cotoneaster to be undertaken by contractor to north of Hatchet Pond. £150 + VAT.
- One herbicide treatment of Cotoneaster to be undertaken by contractor in vicinity of Hatchet Moor car park and Little Hatchet Pond. £150 + VAT.
- One herbicide treatment of Cotoneaster to be undertaken by contractor at Hatchet Triangle. £250 + VAT.
- One herbicide treatment of Cotoneaster to be undertaken by contractor to west of Hatchet Gate. £98 + VAT.
- One herbicide treatment of Cotoneaster to be undertaken by contractor in vicinity of Rans Wood car park. £625 + VAT.

- One herbicide treatment of Cotoneaster to be undertaken by contractor in vicinity of Setley Pond. £165 + VAT.
- One herbicide treatment of Cotoneaster to be undertaken by contractor on Setley Plain. £165 + VAT.
- One herbicide treatment of Cotoneaster to be undertaken by contractor to north of A31 near Minstead. £265.40 + VAT.
- One herbicide treatment of Cotoneaster to be undertaken by contractor at Pilmore Gate Heath and Acres Down. £150 + VAT.
- One herbicide treatment of Cotoneaster to be undertaken by contractor at Boundway Hill. £98 + VAT.
- One herbicide treatment of Cotoneaster to be undertaken by contractor east of Avon Water, £567.63 + VAT.
- One herbicide treatment of Cotoneaster to be undertaken by contractor south of Wootton Bridge. £84.52 + VAT.
- One herbicide treatment of Cotoneaster to be undertaken by contractor by post box at Emery Down. £85.92 + VAT.
- One herbicide treatment of Cotoneaster to be undertaken by contractor at East Boldre (SZ 36806 99295). £220 + VAT.
- One herbicide treatment of Cotoneaster, Montbretia and Variegated Yellow Archangel to be undertaken by contractor near North Gate car park. £195.26 + VAT.
- One herbicide treatment of Cotoneaster to be undertaken by contractor near Shatterford car park. £379.28 + VAT.

Control of Parrot's Feather

Herbicide treatments to be undertaken during early summer, mid-summer and late summer by contractor at Hinchslea Bog, East End and Silver Stream.

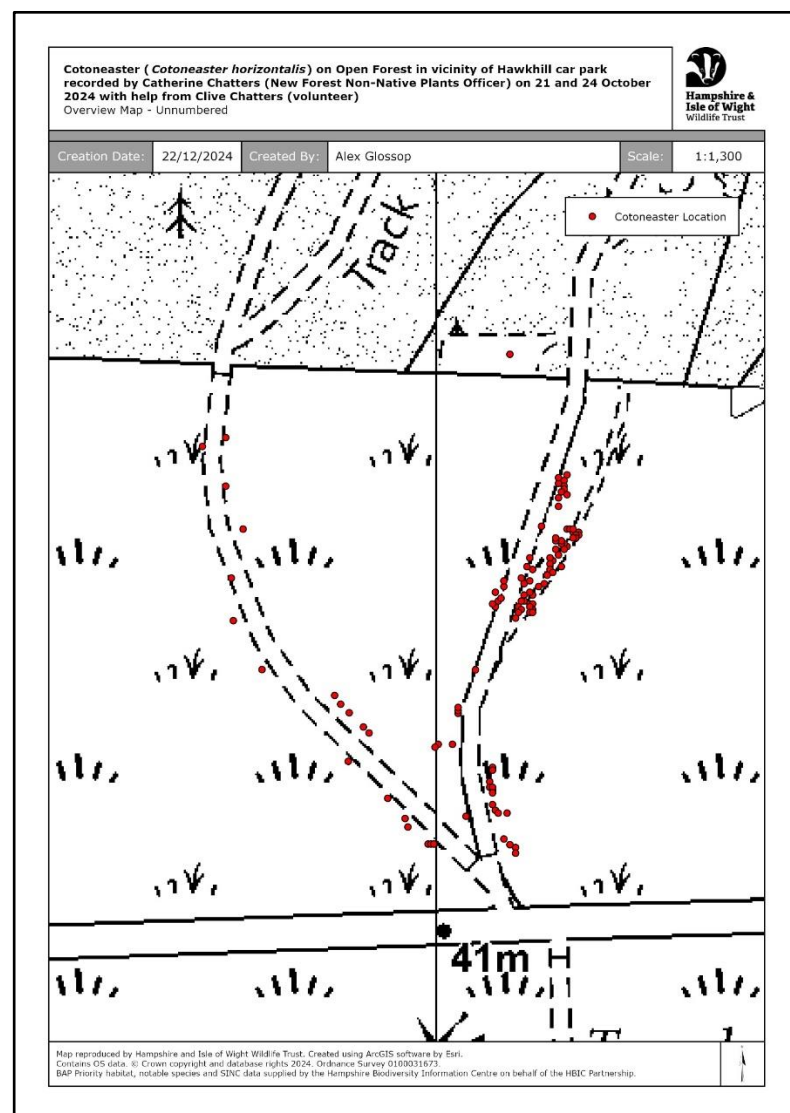
- Early summer treatment £573.30 + VAT
- Mid-summer treatment £573.30 + VAT
- Late summer treatment £573.30 + VAT

Control of Gaultheria

- One herbicide treatment to be undertaken by contractor south of Fletcher's Hill in May or June 2025. £595 + VAT.
- Two herbicide treatments (first treatment in April 2025 and second treatment in May or June 2025) to be undertaken by contractor on Markway Lawn, near gate into Rhinefield Sandy's Inclosure. £370 + VAT.

Recording invasive non-native plants

Recording Cotoneaster in vicinity of track to Hawkhill car park



Following a report from John Norton (HIWWT Flora Group committee member) of Cotoneaster growing on the Open Forest in the vicinity of the access track leading to Hawkhill car park, the Project Officer surveyed the area on 21 October 2024 and (with help from volunteer Clive Chatters) on 24 October 2024.

Wall Cotoneaster *Cotoneaster horizontalis* was recorded growing in a number of locations near the gravel track and areas of concrete, as indicated on the adjacent map.

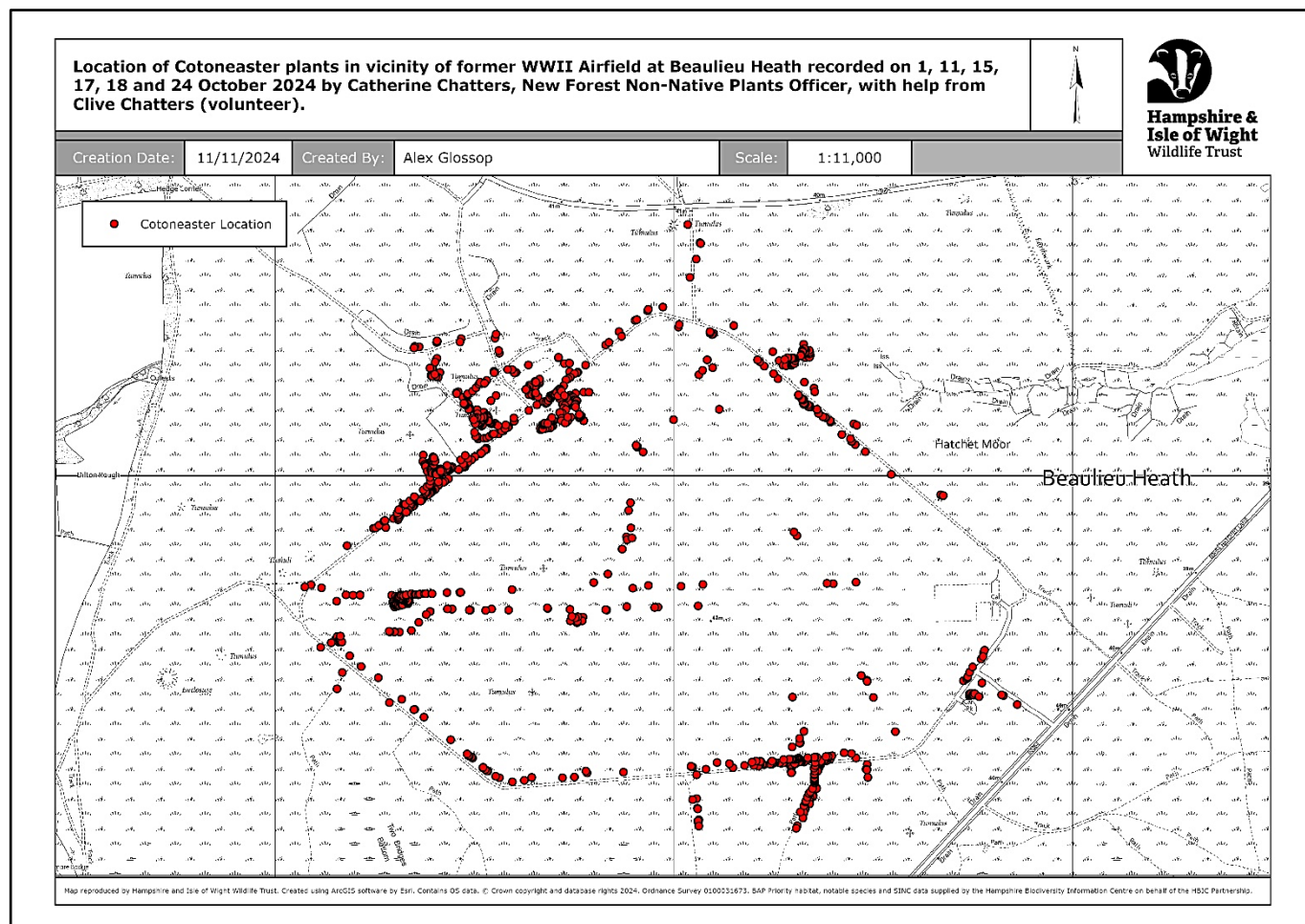


Typical mature, prostrate *Cotoneaster horizontalis* recorded on 21 October 2024 growing near concrete in the vicinity of the access track leading to Hawkhill car park

Monitoring the control of invasive non-native plants

Monitoring control of *Cotoneaster* on Beaulieu Heath

On 24 October 2024 Clive Chatters (volunteer) helped the Project Officer to finish monitoring the control of *Cotoneaster horizontalis* in the vicinity of the former WWII airfield on Beaulieu Heath.

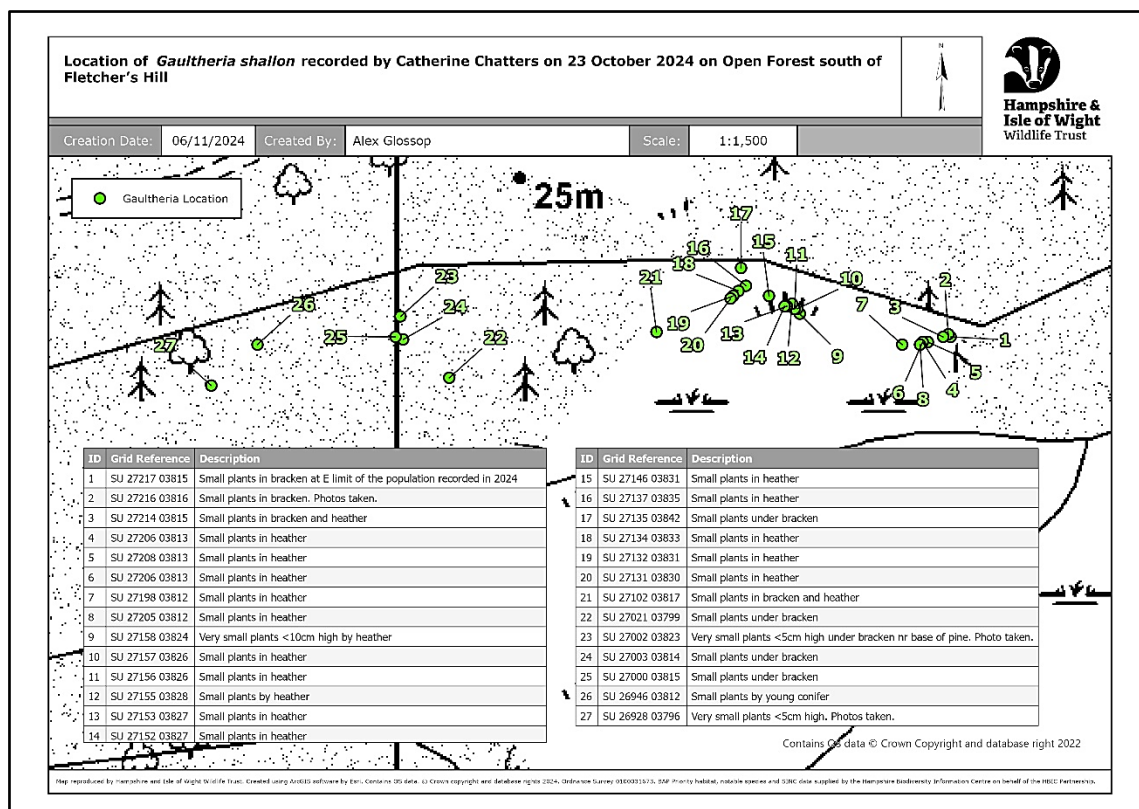


Monitoring control of Gaultheria

On 23 October 2024 the Project Officer monitored the Gaultheria population on the Open Forest south of Fletcher's Hill Inclosure, following herbicide treatment undertaken during 2024.



Typical small Gaultheria plants recorded by the Project Officer on the Open Forest south of Fletcher's Hill Inclosure during the monitoring visit on 23 October 2024

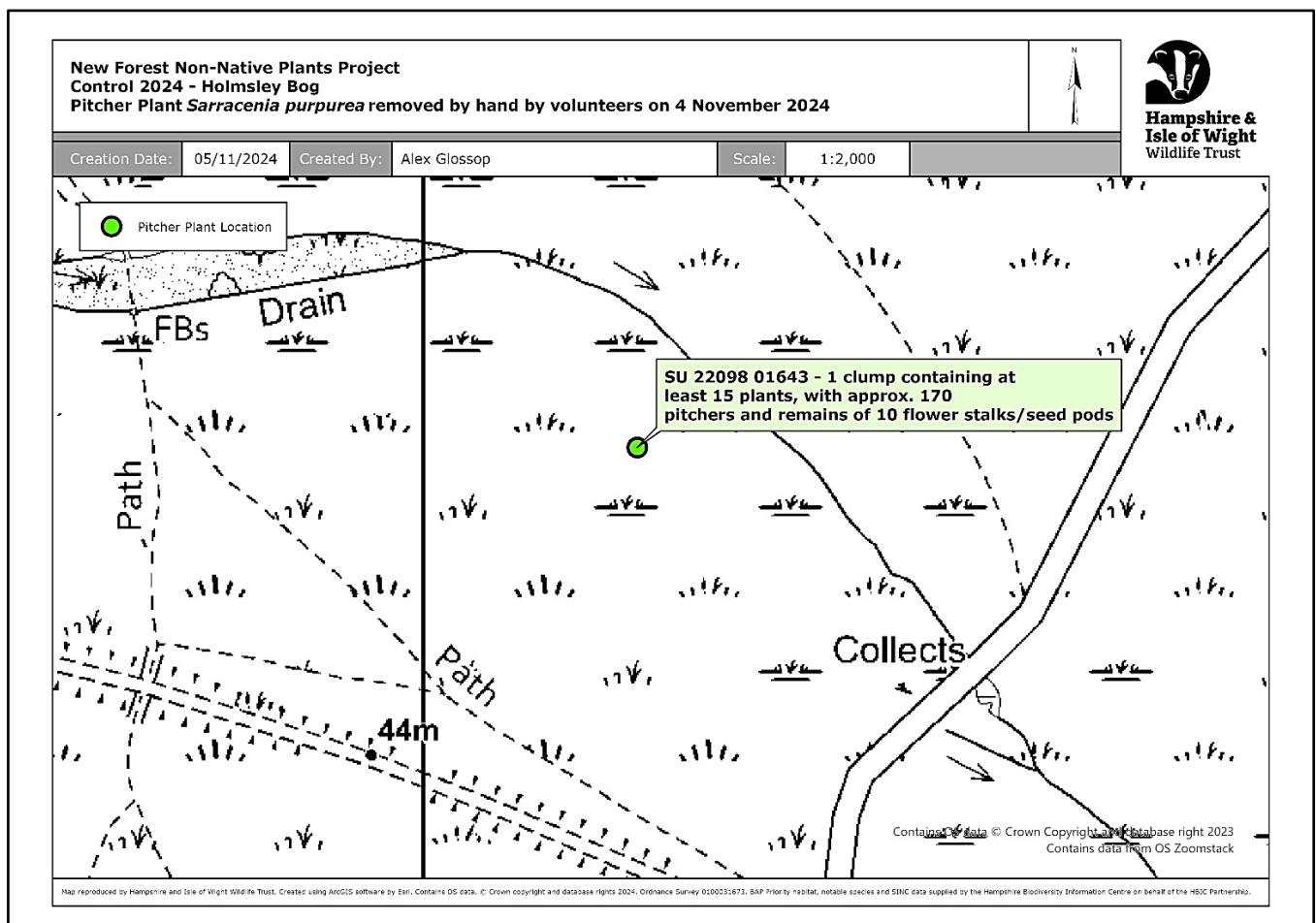


Monitoring the control of Pitcher Plants at Holmsley Bog

On 4 November 2024 volunteers Jane Smith and David Smart helped the Project Officer to monitor the control of Pitcher Plants *Sarracenia purpurea* at Holmsley Bog. One substantial Pitcher Plant clump was found, comprising at least 15 separate plants, approximately 170 pitchers and 10 flower stalks/seedheads. No other Pitcher Plants were found at this site during 2024.



Pitcher Plant clump found during monitoring visit to Holmsley Bog on 4 November 2024



Monitoring the control of Pitcher Plants downstream of Wootton Bridge

On 4 November 2024 Jane Smith and David Smart also helped the Project Officer to monitor the site downstream of Wootton Bridge where Pitcher Plants had been controlled in previous years. No Pitcher Plants were found here in 2024.



Jane Smith and David Smart during the monitoring visit to the site downstream of Wootton Bridge on 4 November 2024

Control of invasive non-native plants

Control of Pitcher Plants at Holmsley Bog

On 4 November 2024 volunteers Jane Smith and David Smart dug up the substantial Pitcher Plant clump which had been discovered during the monitoring visit to Holmsley Bog.



David Smart and Jane Smith with the Pitcher Plant clump dug up at Holmsley Bog on 4 November 2024

Acknowledgements

Thanks to Aleksandra Piekarska (former Planning and Environment Officer, Forestry England) and Elina Vainio (Environment GIS Technician, Forestry England) for preparing maps relating to work undertaken on the Open Forest by contractors on behalf of the NFNNPP during 2024.

Thanks to Alexander Glossop (Assistant GIS and Data Officer, HIWWT) for preparing the maps on pages 8, 9, 10 and 11 of this report.



The New Forest Non-Native Plants Project, hosted by Hampshire & Isle of Wildlife Trust, is very grateful to The Verderers and the New Forest HLS Board for the continued financial support given by the New Forest Higher Level Stewardship Scheme.

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15 January 2025

LiDAR and Archaeology Report

January 2025 Board Meeting

Report by: Gareth Owen

HLS Archaeology and Heritage Team:

Since the Oct' 2024 Board meeting the team has been continuing with ongoing works and responding to new requests from FE HLS Team.

The team received seven new requests, concluded three and progressed ongoing request for advice, Data Packs (Heritage Impact Assessments) and site mark-ups ahead of ground works for Verge Protection/Restoration, Trees & Scrub Clearance and Stream/Wetland Restoration. Presented here for the Board's consideration is a summary of works undertaken.

A review of work undertaken since the previous report:

For most requests received the team conduct an initial Desk Based Assessments followed by, in most cases, a site visit prior to submitting the Data Pack. Where appropriate the team will then conduct Watching Briefs and/or Monitoring Visits as work progresses.

Stream/Wetland Restoration:

Four requests received including Longdown Mire and Ipley Inclosure, Anderwood and Millyford Bridge. Work has progressed on these along with Anderwood and Longdown Mire Data Packs sent.

Verge Protection/Restoration

One request received, for several sites including Longcross Plain, Long Beech, Bramshaw Wood, Cott Lane Burley, Setley Pond - Race Plain - Setley Plain and Slufers – Bolderwood. Initial responses sent for Longcross Plain and Long Beech.

Trees & Scrub Clearance including Bracken harvesting

One request received for Knightwood Inclosure. Work has progressed on this site along with Slufers Inclosure.

Lost Lawns

No requests/enquiries during this period.

Rhododendron Cut & Burn

One request received, for several sites including Dur Hill, Fritham, Alum Green and Shobley for which advice has been provided.

NEW FOREST LAND ADVICE SERVICE

Report to HLS Board meeting January 2025

Progress and Work Programme 1st October to 31st December 2024

Report by: Rhys Morgan / Sam Loades

This report summarises the work completed by the New Forest Land Advice Service to support commoning in the New Forest from 1st October to 31st December 2024

- **Proactive work with commoners** to deliver land management advice and support to understand and comply with relevant practices such as Good Agricultural and Environmental Condition and HLS related objectives.

15

- **Advice to commoners** where HLS land adjacent to their holdings is being affected by inappropriate operations or management, to advise and promote best practice land management.

4

- **HLS Commoner Training program**

Rhys has been in discussions Alex Crook Pilgrims Vets regarding several topics over the course of 2025 – 26. Organising has been underway to provide a suitable location for all forest commoners geographical and seating capacity.

Tina will be sending out an Eventbrite invite created to all the commoners. As this is a substantial number, I have capped this at 75 for bookings to retain a small enough group of commoners for asking questions and hopefully having discussion on the topic of cattle keeping for open forest grazing. However, we will be able to re condenser numbers once the adverts are up and running and may even repeat if needed across the year.

The subject of Cattle has been subdivided into 2 evenings, further into the year other topics will be including NF Ponies and Pigs + additional events. The first 2 events are planned for February and March 2025.

The CDA are also aware of the events, there will be a representative updating on the evening back to the commoners.

I'm also in communications with the NF Cattle/Pony society and the Young Commoners regarding the future events.

- **Non-HLS funded time but linked to commoners within the overall NFLAS project.**

- **New forest Southern cluster**

This item is separate to the HLS funding but have included to represent the cross over NFLAS has with projects supporting commoners across the forest.

November Cluster event run – 50% of the group are commoners - wintering and breeding waders with the cluster area. I am aware several found the talks interesting and learnt new knowledge on protecting important species.

Soil and carbon testing has also been completed with 10 holdings, majority being commoner tenants. Information gathered will be fed back to the group in Q4 CSFF regarding education program to protect the local environment.

- **FIPL**

Commoners have been successful within the past HLS quarter: Livestock handling equipment/ farm machinery/ diversification / education. opportunities and Rainwater harvesting tanks for water resource protection.

- **WEIF**

one commoner's holding has been successful with grant funding to improve water mgt across farm. This will support water quality improvements for the local area and SSSI.