



23rd March 2015, 10.30-12.10pm, Humberhead Peatlands, Natural England, Unit 1a, Green Tree Warehousing, Tudworth Road, Hatfield, DN7 6HD

Attendees: Jeff Bloor (JB), Matt Blissett (MB), Paul Duncan (PD), Sue Plaxton (SP)

Apologies: Tim Allen (TA), James Freeborough (JF), David Hinchliffe (DNH), Helen Kirk (HK), Melissa Massarella (MM), Caroline Steel (CS),

Support staff: David Hargreaves (DPH), Amanda Lane (AJL)

1. Minutes of Last Meeting and Matters Arising

The minutes of the last meeting held on 20th February 2015 were proposed by JB as a true narrative and seconded by SP.

The meeting was not quorate and the following discussions were conducted on that basis by the steering group members present.

Actions from the last meeting - PD

No.	Action description	Status	Covered under Agenda Item no.
1	Funding for mid-point audit of LIFE+ project	Ongoing	N/A
2	Felling Licence	Ongoing	4
3	Communication Strategy	Ongoing	4
4	LIFE+ project revised milestones	Completed	4
5	Report on project milestones and spend	Ongoing	3
6	Contact Craig Benson, JBA Consulting, regarding timesheet documentation.	Ongoing	4
7	Signing of Partnership Agreement	Completed	N/A
8	Provide Steering Group with overview of Cumbria project	Completed	N/A

2. Terms of reference - SP

SP reported that she had contacted Melissa Massarella and her line manager, Jane Stimpson, to progress the sign-off of the Steering Group ToRs by DMBC. During the meeting SP received an email from MM stating that the ToRs were being looked at by Scott Fawceus, Assistant Director for Legal, due to the recent issues surrounding the TMWLMP but anticipated sign off soon. **Action 1:** SP agreed to continue to progress the sign-off of the ToRs with DMBC through MM. SP confirmed that she had received confirmation from CS that she would be accepting the ToRs.



3. Inception Report – PD and DPH

PD confirmed that he had received comments from HK and JB on the draft inception report forwarded to the Steering Group members on Friday 20th March. PD invited DPH to take members present through the inception report.

DPH talked members through each page of the draft Inception Report. JB provided comment and suggested text to replace the text on page 3, reference problems encountered with the Thorne Moors Water Level Management Plan, and the subsequent Action Plan. JB also updated members that the TMWLMP Action Plan has been progressed.

PD informed members present that he is now chairing the TMWLMP Steering Group and the group is being reformed, in terms of membership and schedule of meetings. MB asked if letters had gone out to inform/invite steering group members on to the Group. **Action 2:** PD to check with the TMWLMP Project Manager if letters have gone out.

JB provided a correction to page 10 of the draft inception report - it should read that the WLMP covers Thorne Moors. He also picked up on the mention of progress reporting on page 17, reiterating that these need to be clear and that it is a priority that the Steering Group know the purpose of these reports - they are to track and monitor project progress and actions. He stressed that the progress reports should be quarterly and includes maps of work proposed and underway, for consideration by the Steering Group.

DPH informed members that the draft inception report would be updated and sent to the UK EU Monitor, Lynne Barratt, for her comments. He anticipated that the inception report would be posted to the EU by the 2nd April 2015.

4. Progress update (key milestones/operational activities) - DPH

DPH tabled a Gantt chart at the meeting of actual and proposed milestones for the LIFE+ project from April 2015 – December 2016, taking in the mid-point reporting point of June 2016. He used the Gantt chart to update members on progress in relation to the project sub actions as follows:

- Action A2 (Review of the Humberhead Peatlands National Nature Reserve Site Management Plan) it was suggested that SP would identify a site, along with PD, JS and JC.
- Action A3 (Re-confirm all consents, permissions and felling licences are in place) PD and DPH updated members on the felling licence. A site visit was made to Thorne Moors by the Forestry Commissions, with JS and DPH in attendance, on the 11th March 2015. The requirement for an EIA was discussed and this may still be required. A timetable with NE will be agreed by the next felling season. MB suggested that the felling licence can be a grey area in relation to the classification of scrub, with anything less than 4” diameter and at chest height being deemed as scrub. JB asked if the



Forestry Commission are aware of the urgency attached to obtaining this licence. DPH reassured members that they were. MB asked who NE was dealing with at the Forestry Commission, and was it Chris Grice, as he had dealt with him when obtaining their licence which had taken 2 years to secure. DPH confirmed that this was the case so MB suggested that if NE called a meeting with Chris Grice he would join them to share and discuss lessons learned from their experience to help support the licence process. **Action 3:** DPH to organise a meeting with Chris Grice at the Forestry Commission and invite PD and MB to help progress the felling licence. JB suggested that the delays in obtaining the felling licence were unacceptable and he picked up on a comment made by HK in her feedback on the draft inception report regarding the need for an independent assessment of the impact of the scrub clearance. PD confirmed that NE was satisfied with agreements being followed with regards to the scrub clearance.

- Action C1 and C2 (Remove 234 hectares of birch-dominated scrub on Hatfield Moors SAC and 338 hectares of birch-dominated scrub on Thorne Moors SAC to reduce evapo-transpiration losses and increase the amount of nesting habitat available for European nightjars) JB reiterated that this requires a clear plan of the proposed number of hectares that will be cleared each month, with progress reporting on the actual cleared, along with mitigation, where necessary. **Action 4:** DPH to produce a plan for consideration by Steering Group.
- Action C4 (Install weirs on arterial ditches, install peat plugs/plastic dams on compartments with cutting and baulk topography, and internal bunding on uncut, drained area of Hatfield Moors) JB repeated that this project sub action requires quantities identified for each month, as in the previous sub action. **Action 5:** DPH to produce a plan for consideration by Steering Group.
- Action C5 (Peat plugs, bunds and weirs to optimise water levels for bog restoration on milled areas on Thorne Moors) DPH reported that JBA are working on this project sub action. There was some discussion on the level of works required, including progress against target and the power generation for the pumping station. **Action 6:** DPH to discuss progress on pumping station with JBA. There was a suggestion from SP and JB that the TMWLMP Steering Group and LIFE+ Project Steering Group should meet on the same day but with the TMWLMP Steering Group meeting before LIFE+ due to the stringent reporting requirements of the LIFE+ project. DPH also reported that he would meet with Craig Benson at JBA to check that they were complying with the Common Provisions, including, if required, completion of EU timesheets. DPH informed members that the Partnership Agreement signed between JBA and NE was rigorous, including the obligations of each partner, as specified in the EU Common Provisions. **Action 7:** DPH said he would send a copy of the EU financial information on costs to JB.
- Action D1 (radio-track European nightjars to investigate their response to the bog restoration works and monitor the overall population increase from the current range of 80-88 territorial males present over the last five years) PD reported that Lucy Ryan, a PhD student from York University would be



carrying out some of this work and that funding was being pursued to get her on site early.

- Action D2 (use Common Standards Monitoring and the assessment of invertebrate assemblages populations, as indicators of the success of the bog restoration works) MB confirmed that he had met with Ashley Buchan, PhD student, from Edinburgh University, and that she would be starting her work as soon as the season begins.
- Action D3 (Install water-level data-loggers to monitor changes to the hydrology across the moors) DPH reported that data logging would continue after installation, as it appeared on the Gantt chart that this finished at the end of October 2015.
- Action D4 (Assess and report on the socio-economic impact of the project and its contribution to ecosystem function) JB asked what the socio-economic impact would be. SP suggested that it may encourage tourism with more people visiting the sites. JB commented that there if there is a commitment to increase visitor numbers to both Thorne and Hatfield Moors then improvements to access are required. JB gave the example that access through Remple Lane, Hatfield Woodhouse is very poor and the car park is muddy, as is Boston Park. SP said that the Landscape Partnership is looking at access improvements more generally, including a viewing platform and bridge. JB suggested that access improvements to Thorne Moors should feature in the AfterLIFE+ Plan.
- Action E1 (Engagement with local communities) SP said that the actions taking place on the Landscape Partnerships are similar to those for the LIFE+ project and that there was synergy between the two. JB asked how all these projects 'hang together'. SP said that it is her job to identify and present how the projects fit together. SP suggested that she would undertake some work to look at how the actions and efforts for each project could be combined.
Action 8: SP said that she would convene a meeting in April bringing together the interested parties from the Landscape partnership, Humberhead Peatlands LIFE+ project and the Cumbrian Bogs Life+ project to work on a joint communication plan for engaging with communities, including allocating roles and responsibilities.
- Action E2 (Networking with other peatland restoration projects) DPH reported that initially this would be with Cumbrian Bogs Life+ project and Landscape Partnership.
- Action E4 (Produce project publications and website) SP reported that due to Government restrictions on individual project websites the LIFE+ project would be utilising the Humberhead Levels website. SP and TA are currently awaiting the costings for the website which will come under North Lincolnshire Council jurisdiction. SP explained that it will appear as if the LIFE+ project has its own website but the functionality of the site will allow it to link with other projects that come under the Humberhead Levels umbrella website. SP confirmed that the website will be able to host twitter, blogs and a calendar of



events. Linking with the Humberhead Levels website will help to take forward the AfterLIFE+ Plan.

- Action F2 (Purchase of equipment and vehicles) DPH reported that not all the monies have been spent as only 2 out of 3 vehicles have been purchased. He went on to let members know that the chippers had been hired rather than being purchased as this was more cost effective. However, he may need to ask the EU Monitor if a budget transfer was required to record them accurately for the requirements of EU financial reporting.

DPH concluded by confirming that there had been no major changes from the Common Provisions. MB asked for clarification on the hectares cleared as outlined on page 8 of the inception report, and JB requested that the Steering Group are clear on hectares cleared by the Estate Workers and contractors. **Action 9:** DPH to clarify quantities and reporting structure as in action 5, outlined earlier. PD also suggested that the project report should have a table summarising where we are with each individual sub actions e.g. no. of noticeboards, newsletters, etc.

5. Any Other Business – PD

DPH asked the members if he could go ahead and invite the Project Manager for the Cumbrian Bogs Life+ project to the next meeting of the Steering Group. PD suggested that this was acceptable, as an observer, particularly since their attendance was a requirement as part of the Common Provisions for this project. **Action 10:** DPH to invite the Project Manager for the Cumbrian Bogs Life+ project to the next meeting of the Steering Group.

JB informed the members that he would be stepping down from the LIFE+ Project Steering Group at the end of March. PD thanked JB for his contributions, including his help and support for the project.

- 6 Date of Next Meeting:** The members present at the meeting suggested, if the other members were happy, to hold the next meeting of the Steering Group on Friday 26th June 2015, 10.30-12.30 at Humberhead Peatlands Office, Hatfield, Doncaster.