



14.30-16.30, 12th January 2015, Hatfield Moors NNR Office, Unit 1a, Green Tree Warehousing, Tudworth Road, Hatfield, DN7 6HD

Attendees: Jeff Bloor, Paul Duncan, Sue Plaxton, Helen Kirk, Melissa Massarella, David Hinchliffe, Darren Whittaker

Apologies: Caroline Steel, Matt Blissett, Tim Allen, Paul Burtwistle, James Freeborough

1. Minutes of Last Meeting and Matters Arising

The minutes of the last meeting held on 10th November 2014, were agreed as a true and accurate record.

Actions from the last meeting - PB

Actions 1-2 (Terms of Reference) – on the agenda.

Action 3 – unfortunately, due to competing work commitments and the need to focus on completing the LIFE recruitment, SP had not had time to follow the PR launch with a newspaper feature in liaison with HK.

Action 4 (SP to check key milestones table to ensure no omissions). Brought forward to next meeting.

Action 5 (meeting with the Monitor) - on the Agenda

2. Terms of Reference – SP

SP circulated the latest version of the Terms of Reference which, having undergone various amendments should be signed off after the next meeting. **Action 1:** all to check the latest version of the document and email SP with final amendments prior to the next meeting.

3. Thorne WLMP update - JB

In the last meeting, under AOB, KK informed members that the Thorne WLMP was undergoing an Audit, due to be completed by early December. In mid-December, DE IDB Finance Committee held a meeting to discuss the findings from the draft report. As a result, the Plan was suspended for a few days pending further information. Work continued in January following receipt of outstanding information. However, a further meeting with the Finance Committee is planned in January to discuss an action plan to remedy key issues. These concern governance, lack of audit trail and spending profiles. The Thorne WLMP Advisory Group and Doncaster MBC will receive the final audit report very soon and a meeting will be called. JB confirmed that DMBC have not been involved in the audit. Although it is expected that the outcome of the audit will not affect the LIFE project, the risks cannot be discounted until an Action Plan has been agreed and implemented.



JB said that there are outstanding issues to resolve that will ensure better governance of the project now and beyond its lifespan. JB also thought that maintenance funding would be available to continue work for the next 50 years. Members of the steering group requested further clarity about this funding. **Action 2** JB to provide an update on the Thorne WLMP audit including funding in the next SGM.

4. Progress Update - JS

JS joined the meeting to provide a progress update:

a. Recruitment

All posts have been offered. Some staff have started employment but others are awaiting pre-employment checks. These are undertaken by an Agency for NE and can take a few weeks. One of the two foremen, Mark Outhwaite is in post. There will soon be five Estate Workers, working as a single team and initially with some contractors. A chipper has been hired for them to use and is working well. The second foreman is due to start employment by mid-February. The reason for the delay is because the original candidate had turned down the job offer, having received a better offer from his current employer. The Project Manager, David Hargreaves is likely to start in a week, subject to completion of pre-employment checks. He was Conservation Manager for the Yorkshire Wildlife Trust and more recently, Project Officer working on a Peatlands restoration project in the Peak District National park. The Monitoring Officer, Richard Smith is due to start on 2nd February. He is working his period of notice with his current employer. Pre-employment checks are ongoing for the Admin Officer, Amanda Lane. It is estimated that she will be in post by end of January/early February.

Some of the core NNR staff have moved to other posts within NE leaving a gap in the team. Although confirmation has been received that these posts will be replaced, it may be on a fixed-term basis. Recruitment cannot begin until the Business Case has been approved by senior management.

In preparation for the new LIFE team joining NE, office furniture has been ordered and additional fob keys. Ordering of telephones and computer equipment is in progress as well as chainsaws and vehicular equipment. A chipper has been rented.

b. Key Milestones

The Partnership Agreement is due to be completed, signed and submitted to the EU by March. JS made an initial draft of the document which needs to be sent to NE procurement/legal personnel and DE IDB for comments. **Action 3:** JS to send AB and JB the draft document ASAP.

The Inception Report is also due to be completed by March and submitted to the EU. It was thought that as David Hargreaves is due to start soon, this will be one of his first tasks. SP and JS will have information that can be sent to him for



incorporation into the document. **Action 4:** SP to look up the Inception Report template to see what is required in order to assess how much time it may take to complete.

SP reported that progress with letting an independent contract for a bespoke LIFE website had stalled due to Cabinet Office rules. NE is required to utilise the Gov.uk website where information about the portfolio of externally-funded EU projects are placed. NE has requested Cabinet Office to allow the LIFE logo to be shown on Gov.uk. Whilst awaiting a decision, as an interim measure, a link to the LIFE website is included.

It was acknowledged that the Gov.uk website was limited in terms of style and accessibility, so SP is exploring a bespoke website for the Humberhead Levels Partnership. This could contain a web page about the LIFE project as well as the place to include electronic newsletters, Twitter etc, it will be less formal than Gov.uk in written style, reaching wider audiences and promoting the partnership angle.

Action 5: SP to update the LIFE monitor about the website and send a link to steering group members when the Gov.uk web page is available. **Action 6:** SP to progress a web page for the HLP website and obtain a quote.

SP had been advised by colleagues to think about the audience for the website and how people are using social media. For example, is a website sufficient or do they use other media such as local Twitter groups? Janet Canning works with NNR volunteers and may know more. **Action 7:** Ensure engaging our audiences/social media is on the agenda for the next meeting as it will require some thought.

The LIFE newsletter has not yet started and is something that the new Project Manager should sort out when in post.

JS also reported progress as follows:

- Timesheets were being completed for the LIFE project using NE's recording systems.
- Scrub clearance was happening on Hatfield with Mark, the new Foreman involved and work being overseen by Darren and Steve.
- The water loggers are being trialled by Darren.

It was acknowledged that the LIFE team and their work must dovetail with the work undertaken by JBA/the contractors for Thorne WLMP, It is important to ensure clear communication between the projects, avoiding potential confusion or duplication.



5. Meeting with the Monitor (including notes from SPs notebook not relayed at the meeting)

SP reported back on the meeting with LB, JS, JB and KK which took place on 18th November at Foss House in York.

Lynne Barrett, the Monitor, advised that extensions of time to LIFE projects were fairly common and can be granted, provided the reasons are clear and it is flagged up in the Inception Report.

LB went through other administrative requirements including timesheets where NE staff have contributed their time which have to be completed and signed on a monthly basis.

The Partnership Agreement between the Co-ordinating Beneficiary (NE) and Associated Beneficiary (DEIDB) must clearly show funding mechanisms for clearly accountability of LIFE funds/match funding.

The Partnership Agreement and Inception Report must be completed by the end of March.

The detailed notes of the discussion (not discussed at this meeting are attached as Annex 1).

The next inception meeting is due early May 2015.

6. AOB: None.

7. Date of Next Meeting: 10.30-12.20, 20th February 2015, Hatfield NNR office



Annex 1

Further notes of First Meeting with the LIFE Monitor on 18th November 2014

A discussion was held about the LIFE project falling behind schedule, mainly due to delays in recruitment which in turn could impact on the site work. The following advice and guidance was given by LB during the meeting:

- Everything needs to be encapsulated in the Inception Report including progress against planned milestones and what has not been achieved explaining why delays have occurred and how these have been managed. The EU LIFE website has a toolkit for guidance.
- Info about the PR launch, Press Releases and other articles should be included in the Inception Report.
- Inception Report and Partnership Agreement must be completed by March 2015. A thorough assessment of revised timescales and requests for extension of time should wait until the mid-term report is due.
- Funds can be moved between budget lines provided they are 10% or under and no more than 30,000 euros, otherwise written permission is required.
- A HLP website can be funded out of LIFE provided it was clearly linked to the LIFE project and because the HLP is linked into seeking future maintenance for After LIFE i.e. beyond the EU funding timescales. The HLP also has links to complimentary projects involving the NNR and community engagement which adds value to the LIFE project 'Actions', but this needs to be included in the inception report.
- A summary of spend should be included at the end of the inception report including; costs to date and forecast on projected spend. The toolkit on the website contains indicators that also need including in the report as well as what is hoped will be achieved.
- The Partnership Agreement must be completed in March and should show 'how' funds are collected i.e. the contractual procedure. This must be agreed between the Co-ordinating Beneficiary and Associated Beneficiary.
- A visit to another EU project involving bog restoration should be made during the project lifespan. Examples of similar projects can be found in Ireland and Active blankets bogs in Wales.
- It was agreed that it would be a good idea for the Cumbrian LIFE project to develop a Communications Strategy for the Humberhead Peatlands to demonstrate value for money and sharing of best practice. Particularly relevant as they have a full time Communications Officer starting soon, whereas Humberhead Peatlands does not have one.