



**Monday 10<sup>th</sup> October 2016, 10.30-12.30, Humberhead Peatlands, Natural England, Unit 1a, Green Tree Warehousing, Tudworth Road, Hatfield, DN7 6HD**

**Attendees:** Helen Kirk (HK), Tim Kohler (TK), Melissa Masserella (MM), Roger Mitchell (RM)

**Apologies:** Paul Duncan (PD), Caroline Steel (CS), David Hinchliffe (DNH), Matt Cox (MC), Tim Allen (TA), James Freeborough (JF)

**Absent:** Cllr Sue Wilkinson (SW)

**Support staff:** David Hargreaves (DPH), Amanda Lane (AJL), Ed Brightman (EB)

Discussions/Key Points	For Action By
<p><b>1. Welcome and Introductions - HK</b></p> <p>HK welcomed members to the meeting and informed them that in the absence of PD she would Chair the meeting. Apologies were noted.</p> <p>HK acknowledged that the meeting was not quorate and the following discussions would be conducted on that basis by the steering group members present. The Steering Group has no formal authority in respect of the project and can only make recommendations.</p>	
<p><b>2. Minutes of Last Meeting and Matters Arising – HK</b></p> <p>HK assumed members had read through the minutes from the previous meeting and asked for any inaccuracies. She then took members through the actions from the previous meeting, and the following was noted:</p> <p><u>Action 1 – Volunteer base to support the Project’s AfterLIFE monitoring works</u> – TK advised that discussions had taken place to look at developing a volunteer base, building their capacity to support the Project’s AfterLIFE monitoring works, and that further discussions were planned to progress this further.</p> <p><u>Action 2 - Habitat Regulations Assessment (HRA) for the Water Level Management Plan</u> – TK informed members that the HRA has now been approved for the pumping station on Thorne Moors.</p> <p><u>Action 3 – Confirmation on associated beneficiary contracts/invoices for LIFE+ project can be viewed by Steering Group</u> – HK asked for an update on this action in the absence of PD. TK said that he was unable to provide any further details. HK asked that this action be recorded as ‘ongoing’.</p>	<p><b>Action 1:</b> TK to continue to look at developing a volunteer base to support the Project’s AfterLIFE monitoring works.</p> <p><b>Action 3:</b> PD to find out, as a matter of urgency, when the DE IDB associated beneficiary contracts and invoices for LIFE+ project can be viewed by the Steering Group</p>



<p><u>Action 4 – Roger Meade report</u> – TK said that he had located the report, read and reviewed it. In addition, he had discussed the report with PD and TK was currently looking at how it could be progressed, particularly in terms of funding. HK asked why it had not been brought to the science monitoring sub group for them to offer advice and help, in terms of bringing added value. TK said that he would go back to PD to progress further.</p> <p><u>Action 5 – Invitations list to steering group members</u> – AL confirmed that this action was complete.</p> <p><u>Action 6 – Provide link to LIFE+ website</u> – AL confirmed that this action was complete.</p> <p><u>Action 7 – Obtain VAT exemption letter from DE IDB to forward to the EU</u> – DPH stated that he was still awaiting the letter and will chase with the IDB. He clarified that a self-certificate will not suffice as it has to be a letter from HRMC and confirmed that the letter was not needed until the end of the project.</p> <p><u>Action 8 – JBA’s process reference replacement of buckled plastic piles</u> – TK said that he had discussed the process for replacement of buckled plastic piles with DW at JBA. TK reported that if the dams failed then this was covered within the terms of the contract. DW said that JBA would be following up with the contractors, this season, with regards to any buckled plastic piles. HK asked what was the guarantee on the life of plastic piles. TK said that the manufacturer’s guarantee for plastic piles was 30 years on the materials but not necessarily on the manufacturing.</p> <p><u>Action 9 – LIFE+ Project Manager to provide a presentation on recent visit to Denmark</u> – HK noted that this was on the agenda.</p>	<p><b>Action 4:</b> TK to progress his discussions further with PD.</p> <p><b>Action 5:</b> DPH to request VAT exemption letter from DE IDB to forward to the EU.</p>
<p><b>3.Key Milestones/Operational Activities – DPH</b></p> <p><b>Project Performance Report - DPH</b></p> <p>HK asked DPH to take members through the LIFE+ Project Performance Report for the period 1<sup>st</sup> July – 30<sup>th</sup> September 2016 by providing an update on progress. He stated that he would focus initially on progress that was on amber or red.</p> <p><u>Action A1</u> – Project establishment. DPH gave members an update on the position with estate worker team attrition. One estate worker has now left the team to take up a role with the current contracting team carrying out the scrub clearance on Thorne and Hatfield Moors. This means that there are currently two estate workers in post, with 3</p>	



additional estate workers due to join the team in October and November. Two of the positions will be filled by two external candidates, with the third position being offered to our apprentice, Claire Hayden. DPH confirmed that this would bring the estate worker team back to five members, ideally fitting in one crew cab. HK asked why the estate workers were leaving. DPH suggested that it was for a variety of reasons, including repetitive work role, salary (more pay offered from external contractors) and career progression. HK asked how this might be stabilised in the future. DPH informed members that proactive work had been undertaken by extending the estate worker hours and employing them during the summer months to undertake other tasks, such as rhododendron spraying. He said that he hoped that an extension to the project might help with stabilising the estate worker team.

HK asked whether a contingency, such as offering a bonus to those that stayed to the end of the project had been considered. DPH suggested that this would be nice but did not know whether this had been considered.

HK asked whether apprentices had been considered as an option to help with recruitment, considering that the current apprentice was now taking up the role of one of the estate workers. DPH repeated that the salary budget had not altered and that it would have to cover, if an extension was granted, the existing staff salaries, potentially to December 2017. He also stated that training and development had and would continue to be used to support staff retention. TK also stated that the volunteer budget had been mostly allocated but maybe it could be looked at as a means of supporting another apprentice. He said that the NNR was looking and keen to recruit another apprentice. HK asked whether any of the salary savings due to staff vacancies would be picked up by the contractors. DPH confirmed that most of the salary budget was allocated up to the end of December 2017. However, funds could be moved from one category to another, as the project progresses and it is clear what areas of the project are under/over spent. He clarified that any movement of budget between different categories of the project would require authorisation by the European Commission. DPH went on to state that there might be monies left from the scrub clearance works but that there was also water level management works still required on Hatfield Moors which required funding. He reiterated that this would all depend on match funding but was confident that these monies would be available. He assured the members that he is constantly reviewing the project's budget and actual spend, and that due to the nature of the project finances were a fluid situation.

Action A2 – Management Plan. TK informed members that the



management plan was behind schedule as it was due for completion by 30<sup>th</sup> September. He reported that he is making progress but that it is slow. TK said that a draft of the management plan is available and that the delay was due to transferring the data and information across to the NE electronic system. TK said that he was happy to send members a copy of the draft as it currently stood.

Action C1 and C2 – Scrub control. DPH informed members that the tender for scrub clearance works on Thorne and Hatfield Moors had been let. He said that two tenders had been returned, via the framework tender process with rates ranging from £290,000 - £880,000. The contract had been awarded to the lowest price – ELMS Contractors. DPH informed members that this was not the same contractor that had carried out the work in 2015/16 so close monitoring would be carried out by the Assistant Managers. HK asked whether there were any clauses in the contract for non-delivery. DPH explained that a timetable was in place for delivery which was tied into the framework tender process, which included withholding payment for any work not carried out according to the requirements of the contract, and with the potential for termination of the contract. He went on to say that the contract had been constructed so that the work was divided up, and will deliver an additional 50 hectares of scrub clearance to what is required. DPH explained that the contractors know the site well and are much more hands-on.

Action C3 – Rhododendron spraying – DPH explained that 46 hectares has been sprayed. He said that he suspected that it would be a constant battle over the years combined with battling the water levels to keep it under control. He went on to explain that some of the rhododendron is high and seedling growth is ferocious and cannot be sprayed at the current rate. He suggested that some areas of rhododendron will need re-targeting. DNH, via HK, asked how much of last winter’s scrub had been resprayed. DPH confirmed that three quarters of the rhododendron cut last season had been sprayed.

Action C4 – Plastic piling and steel dams on Hatfield Moors. DPH confirmed that the installation of the plastic piles was now complete, with 35 completed by the estate workers. He said that Keith Fillingham would be working on installing the larger plastic dams. DPH reported that Mott McDonald, through a NE framework contract is currently working on design and specification of steel tilting weirs for New Porters Area. The tender and works would not be completed until 31<sup>st</sup> July 2017. DPH clarified that the works are for three dams with the refurbishment of a further two. He said that the size of the structures were smaller than the steel tilting weir at Blue Bridge on Thorne Moors. The refurbishment of the dams would allow the increase in flow as it is currently too slow. He went on to say that once the costs were

**Action 6:** TK to update members on the revised date for the completion of the Management Plan.



determined for this work he could then go on to calculate what bunding could then be done. HK asked for the timeframe. DPH reported that he is going out to quote and envisaged the work taking place in September 2017 ensuring that it did not impact on the nightjars and bird breeding season.

Action C5 and C6 – Peat bunds and construction of pumping station on Thorne Moors. DPH explained that there were a total of six contracts in place for these works and they were all going ahead. He stated that three of the contracts were to finish off works from last year, two were to work on the bunding and damming and one contract was for the pumping station. HK asked whether the three contracts to finish off works from last year had incurred any penalties. TK said that they had not as the reason being that the water levels had been too high.

Action D1 – Radio tracking nightjars. DPH reported that the second season had now finished and a report was due from Lucy Ryan (LR), PhD student by the 1<sup>st</sup> November 2016. TK went on to say that 5 birds had been tagged on Thorne Moors and 5-6 birds on Hatfield Moors. The initial findings were that the birds on Thorne Moors are staying on or close to the Moors, and that LR felt that this was due to the feeding area, including making use of Green Belt, colliery and the allotments. Some of the birds were using surrounding farmland and other patches of habitat. TK said that he has met with DMBC to discuss the implications of the birds foraging movements outwith the Moors. He went on to state that LR and her University Supervisor, Kate Arnold, were in discussions with EOn to fund LR's final year of work. This was particularly relevant in light of the reduction in nightjar numbers in 2015. TK also went on to state that the University is restricted to the data they release due to Intellectual Property Rights (IPR), related to publishing LR's work before her PhD is complete. However, once LR's work has been published the data will be released. HK asked if the headlines/highlights could be released without infringing any IPR. TK agreed that the detail is important to NE, DMBC and partners, and also EOn and future development works and would look in to this. HK went on to say how positive this work that it would be an excellent legacy for the project.

Action D2 – Use of Common Standards Monitoring. DPH reported that analysis of baseline information from the 2015 invertebrate samples has started, using Natural England's new analysis package for invertebrate assemblages, called 'Pantheon' however there are errors in the software that need resolving.

Two sessions of follow-up invertebrate sampling were carried out in May and July 2016, producing 64 samples. He said that the apprentice has started sorting these samples and it is planned to send these out to

**Action 7:** TK to look into whether the headlines/highlights could be released from LR's work without infringing any IPR.



specialists for identification by the end of November 2016. Field data from baseline vegetation monitoring in February / March 2016 are due to be analysed by the end of January 2017. Drone aerial photography was carried out in May 2016. This has completed full aerial photography of Thorne, Hatfield and Crowle Moors for the period 2013-2016. DPH said that means of producing suitable mapping will be arranged by the end of November 2016.

HK asked about how specialist feedback had been used on what had been found, particularly in terms of setting it within the local, regional and national context. She said there was concern that some of the 'goodies' will be missed if just reliant on using software with a limited sample. TK suggested that raw data could be made available to partners. HK went onto say that there was concern with any possible slippage with the timescales for the software and confidence in its interpretation. She also said that it assumes that Richard Smith (RS) is relying solely on software for analysis but if interpretation is being used then it needs to be open for discussion amongst experienced experts with extensive local, regional and national knowledge of key species and assemblages of Lowland Raised Mires present in the Humberhead Levels. TK said that he would ask RS to get a copy of the data to the Steering Group members.

Action D 3 – Supply and installation of water-level data loggers. DPH reported that the installation of the dipwells has been further delayed until October/November 2016. HK asked why the delay has it was due by the end of July. He said that a tender for the supply of 44 dataloggers has been prepared by Defra procurement over the summer and will close on 4 October. There was an issue as we were unable to specify what dataloggers and only that we required similar dataloggers. DPH went on to say that the existing network of dataloggers, 16 on Thorne and 10 on Hatfield (these are the existing automatic JBA data loggers), have been collecting data continuously since November 2013; these dataloggers are due to be downloaded w/b 10th October. TK said that he was unsure about the length of time the dataloggers will measure. He reassured members that at the end of the project a system for monitoring the dataloggers will be in place. He explained that a manual system had been put in place but when the previous Senior Reserve Manager was in post the use of the system had fallen by the wayside. He also explained that there were problems with the automated system as it requires a level of technical skills to download the data and that staff had not had the training.

Action D4 – Socio-economic impact and ecosystem function investigation/report. DPH informed members that the baseline was now complete and currently being edited. The report would be available by October 31<sup>st</sup> 2016 and circulated to Steering Group

**Action 8:** TK ask Richard Smith to forward a copy of the data to the Steering Group members.

**Action 9:** DPH to circulate Socio-economic impact report to Steering Group members.





members.

Action E1 – Engaging with the local community. DPH reported that three events have been held, but attendance had been patchy. He has asked the EU LIFE+ Desk Officer if he can reduce the target to six from nine, with three more events to be undertaken once the management plan has been finalised. DPH said that engaging with the community through community events was on the agenda for discussion.

Action E2 – Engaging with other projects. DPH said that he would be providing members with a presentation of the visit that he and RS had recently made to Denmark later in the meeting. He went on to say that a reciprocal visit by 15 Danish colleagues took place in September and the monitoring officer (RS) had attended the Cumbria BogLife conference in October. DPH informed members that he would be attending the IUCN Peatlands Programme conference at the end of November, and on the 18<sup>th</sup> October NNR and LIFE+ Project staff will be visiting the newest NE LIFE project at Fenns, Whixall & Bettisfield Mosses to share practical restoration techniques and practice emerging from our LIFE+ Project.

Action E3 – End of project conference. DPH said that a successful Mid Term celebration was held on the 16th September and also a very successful Mid Term workshop was held on the 27th September. He said that AL would provide a detailed overview of these events later in the meeting.

Action E4 – Project website and publications. DPH reported that Moorspace Issue 5 is due to be completed by the end of the week with delivery by the end of October. He said that further production will be re-scheduled to coincide with the project extension, if our application is agreed. He also told members that new information boards have all been completed and are erected on site. And the web site is now live and positive feedback has been received from the EU monitor.

Action F2 – Purchase of equipment and vehicles. DPH reported that Defra procurement has slowed the purchase of a ATV tracked vehicle; as it was initially by DEFRA procurement to EA fleet procurement , who after two months decided that they could not procure the vehicle via their Fleet contract (their normal route) and would resort to the three quotes route. This is currently being obtained before an order can be placed. DPH confirmed that the funding for the ATV will come from capital savings and will be another project legacy.

Action F3 – Audit. DPH informed members that he has not yet received any feedback yet from KPMG following the audit of the mid-point sample.

**Action10:** AL to invite steering group members



**Proposed extension**

DPH informed members that he had received permission to make an application for an extension to the project from the EC. He said that the request had to be made online and he would be working on the application this week. DPH said that he was proposing a nine month extension up to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2018, subject to monies being available in the budget. He went on to say that with regards to the date that staff finished on the project would be conducted on a sliding scale, dependent on where their input was needed. He also said that the date staff left would also have a bearing on the date for the 'end of project conference'. DPH suggested that a sub group was formed to look at the planning for the conference. He gave an overview of the Cumbria BogLife Conference that had taken place a week earlier and that inviting colleagues from similar European projects would be advantageous in terms of sharing practice. HK, MM and RM asked what would be ready for dissemination that could be shared with delegates at the 'end of project conference'. MM suggested having an extra meeting of the steering group to discuss the purpose and audience for the conference, along with format and content. HK asked members present for a suggestion on dates. The group proposed meeting on Monday 21<sup>st</sup> November from 11:00 - 12:30. HK asked AL if she would inform the rest of the steering group members about the proposed meeting date.

to 'end of project conference' planning meeting on Monday 21<sup>st</sup> November 2016.

**Water Level Management Plan**

HK asked members to look at the note that they had received from PD in the papers for the meeting. The note related to the delay in works on the pumping station for Thorne Moors. In addition, HK read through the latest email that she had received from PD. HK asked if RM had any further information that he add to update the group. RM said that he did not have any details and unfortunately was unable to advise the group. DPH suggested that the issues were between JBA and DE IDB so did not directly relate to the project. TK reiterated that JBA are now back on Thorne Moors and that due to the delays the contractors had requested a mobilisation plan.

**Scrub Clearance proposals**

HK asked Ed Brightman (EB), Assistant Project Manager to join the meeting. She introduced and welcomed him to the group. EB tabled copies of the Thorne and Hatfield Moors Contractor Working Area Maps for members to consult during the agenda item. He told members that these were the same maps that the contractors were working towards. EB explained that on the whole the numbers on the maps were relevant to the running order in which the works would be





carried out, and priority had been given to numbers 1-5. He then went into the details of each numbered compartment, the method being used and dates when work will commence, as follows:

No.	Method	Date
1	Hand cutting on Pony Bridge Marsh East – Thorne Moors. This was due to start on 19/09/2016 but the methods were being reviewed.	Completed by the end of the contract
2	Mulching works with some hand cutting – Thorne Moors. This was due to start on 19/09/2016 but another machine had been brought it to work through Packards.	As above
3	Mulching works on Hatfield Moors	17/10/2016
4	Hand cutting on Hatfield Moors	17/10/2016
5 & 6	Hand cutting on Thorne Moors	24/10/2016
7	Mulching and hand cutting on Thorne Moors	28/10/2016
8	Mulching on Thorne Moors	26/12/2016
9	Mulching on Thorne Moors	23/01/2017
10	Mulching and/or hand cutting on Goole Moors	02/01/2017

EB said that the general method was mulching works, followed by the team carrying out hand cutting. He also confirmed that the contractors would be working the three days between Christmas and New Year.

HK asked if an adder assessment had been carried out on the areas that were due to be cleared. TK said that Steve Hiner (SH) has been involved in consultation over these areas.

EB said that the Estate Worker team are working on the south east corner of Pony Bridge Wood, carrying out chipping in denser areas, moving the chipper through and carrying out stump treatment.

HK suggested that there was a lot of fencing in Packards and had this been considered in terms of where the contractors were working. TK said that the plan had been designed to avoid the fencing.



EB finished by stating that the maps showed gross areas rather than them being vegetation maps.

HK asked how the wetter conditions would impact on nightjars. DPH suggested that the wetter conditions would have an impact but that there were sufficient areas, immediate to the cut areas, that over time would re-establish as favourable areas for nightjars. HK suggested that anecdotal evidence does support this. TK went on to suggest that there is concern over Packards as this a favoured by nightjars, according to LR's work to date. He clarified that a meeting is in place to discuss this.

TK said that area 7 on EB's map was the area in which nightjars did not leave the Moors to feed and he was not ruling out the potential to buy land near this area, clearly dependent on funds being available.

TK discussed the churring male survey for nightjars and suggested that this will continue. He also said that potentially LR's data for nest sites and territorial areas will be used and compared with the data from the churring male survey. TK stressed the importance of the survey, in terms of it giving an indication of trends over time. He said that the curve of the last 15-20 years has risen, reached a plateau and crashed. He felt that LR's nightjar work would help to better understand how nightjars are using the site and help to estimate if enough habitat was being provided. MM confirmed that discussions were taking place with regards to the nightjar data and how this might influence nightjar policy and how future developments might be approached in terms of mitigation and funding.

**Mid Term Events**

AL gave an overview of the two recent mid-term events held – Mid Term event held on Friday 16<sup>th</sup> September as a follow-up to the launch. This event was attended by local councillors and partners who were provided with an overview of the project progress to date, including a visit to Thorne Moors to see the works completed or in progress. AL confirmed that 46 people had accepted an invitation with 36 attending on the day. AL provided a breakdown of the event costs, in Euros:

Description	Amount (Euros)
Venue	101.61
Buffet	379.35
Refreshments	24.39
Mini Buses	758.70



AL went on to provide members with an overview of the Mid Term Workshop which took place on Tuesday 27<sup>th</sup> September at Thorne Rugby Club and then with onsite workshops on Thorne Moors. The event was aimed at conservationists from across the country.

AL reported that a total of 85 people returned booking forms requesting a place on the workshop. A total of 71 delegates attended the event from across the country, as detailed below.

Organisation	Number of delegates
National Trust	5
Wildlife Trusts	8
DE IDB	1
Thorne and Hatfield Conservation Forum	1
Doncaster Naturalist's Society	1
JBA	2
Little Woolden Moss Reserve	2
Committee on Climate Change	2
Rosilin Research Centre	1
Consultants	6
Individuals (e.g. residents)	7
DMBC	1
Universities	4
Natural England (14 LIFE+ & NNR)	22
National Trust	5
Moors for the Future	2
Myerscough College	1

AL went onto table a report that detailed the delegate's responses to each workshop and an overview of the cost of hosting the day.



<p><b>Presentation on trip to Denmark</b></p> <p>DPH provided the members with a presentation on the visit that he and RS made to Lille Vildmose, Denmark in May/June 2016.</p> <p><b>Community Engagement</b></p> <p>DPH suggested that further community events could be planned and that there was the budget to cover these. He asked if members had any ideas on what they felt could be delivered, particularly with an emphasis on delivering events in Moorends and Thorne. Members came up with the following suggestions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bio Blitz – also suggested in an earlier SG meeting by Julian Small, previous Senior Reserve Manager.</li> <li>• An event(s) held in Moorends with the opportunity to shuttle visitors on to Thorne Moors.</li> </ul> <p>DPH invited members to contact him with further ideas/suggestions and the involvement that they would like in the events.</p>	<p><b>Action 11:</b> Steering Groups members are invited to DPH with further ideas/suggestions on community engagement events that could be run, along with the involvement that they would like to play.</p>
<p><b>4. Any Other Business – HK</b></p> <p>HK invited members to put forward any other business items.</p> <p>RM informed members that he had a number of copies of the ‘Thorne Moors Birds and Man’ book, if members were interested to let him know.</p>	
<p><b>Date of next meeting</b></p> <p>HK asked members if they were still happy for the meetings to take place on a Monday. Members present agreed.</p> <p>The next meeting will take place at the Humberhead Peatlands office on Monday 23<sup>rd</sup> January 2017 from 10:30 – 12:30.</p> <p>The meeting finished at 13:15.</p>	