

Commons Report for Parish Council Meeting – 18th July 2018

1. Volunteer Group Tasks

Volunteer tasks undertaken by Norfolk Conservation Corps (NCC) and Norwich Environmental Weekenders (NEWS).

Tasks Completed (since last report)

<u>Date</u>	<u>Location</u>	<u>Volunteer Group Task Completed</u>	
10/06/18	Uggate	NCC	Balsam sweep of whole common and Bracken clearance from Deadman's Hill
15/07/18	Alderford	NCC	Path clearance and bracken topping

Tasks Planned (exact dates and tasks to be confirmed)

12/08/18	Uggate	NEWS	Cutting/raking of grassland
##/09/18	Alderford	NCC	tbc

2. Management Plans

Surveys being undertaken to help inform the Management Plan strategies. Should be completed in the next month or so and then the draft management plans can be completed and a public consultation event will be arranged.

3. HLS Agreements

See Finance report for financial transactions. Application request for new scheme (Higher Tier: Countryside Stewardship) to be requested in January 2018 (to be submitted in April 2019 subject to confirmation).

4. Uggate Common

Ponies are doing well. We could do with a couple of new livestock checking volunteers – If anyone is able to commit to a regular day (preferably on a week day) to check that the ponies are ok, that would be very helpful. No experience required – basic training in livestock checking would be provided.

Contractors working on behalf of UK Power Networks cut back trees from beneath the power lines on 08/06/18 and in doing so caused damage to the boardwalk. They did not inform the Parsh Council of the work, neither did they inform Natural England, which they also should do, to ensure that the work is carried out in an appropriate fashion and damage to sensitive parts of the SSSI is not caused. A complaint was lodged with UKPN and the contractor attended site the following week to fix the damage. An apology was received from UKPN and an assurance that the Parish Council and Natural England would be consulted prior to any future works.

NCC volunteers attended site on the 10/06/18 and did a sweep of the main site to find and remove non-native Himalayan Balsam. Less foud than in previous years and very little re-emergance has been found since. Also removed bracken from the emerging heathland area on Deadman's Hill. (cost – NCC expenses). NCC charge expense at a cost of £3.00/man day (increased from £2.50/man day from April 2018), which is still incredibly good value and their help is much appreciated.

No further contact from Marriott's Way Heritage Trail Project regarding potential application for funding for a circular walk at Uggate (including proposals for making the boardwalk fit for purpose) – meeting to discuss proposals was arranged for 11th-13th July but no response to message requesting confirmation. Local residents to be consulted prior to any decision.

Next volunteer task at Uggate on 12th August (with NEWS) provisionally set for cutting/raking up of the grassland at the entrance to the common. Any help from local residents would be much appreciated.

5. Alderford Common

Still no one has been found yet to take on grazing within the fenced area for the coming year. The path down to the fenced area was cleared by NCC volunteers on 08/07/18 to make it easier for a gazier if found. The potential to move the ponies from Uggate for a short period is still being considered. A number of the fence posts have rotted at the base and will need replacement. To be scheduled in for one of the tasks later on in the year.

The remnants of a couple of fires have appeared recently on the grassland within the fenced area and the seat next to the pond has been damaged by fire. Fires are not allowed on the common, unless undertaken under supervision and for conservation purposes and are a particular danger to this sensitive habitat in the current extremely dry conditions. Please report any suspicious activity to a member of the Parish Council if noticed.

Contractor (George Taylor) attending site on 13/07/18 to treat the re-emerging stand of Japanese Knotweed near the road. Further treatments are likely to be required. Will also be going to Uggate to do some stump treatment on the areas of fen previously cleared of scrub. Cost likely to be in the order of a couple of hundred pounds.

Some of the footpaths have been cleared but others are being enveloped by bracken that will need cutting back again.

Steve Williams – July 2018

Swannington with Alderford and Little Witchingham Parish Council