

Commons Report for Parish Council Meeting – 19th September 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</u>	<u>Task Completed</u>
12/08/18	Upgate	NEWS	Raking up of cuttings from grassland
09/09/18	Alderford	NCC	Cutting and raking of bracken and scrub in fenced area

Tasks Planned (exact dates and tasks to be confirmed)

14/10/18	Upgate	NEWS	Coppicing of gorse and control of scrub and bramble
##/11/18	Upgate	NCC	tbc

2. Management Plans

Draft plans should be available by mid-October ready for review and public consultation.

3. HLS Agreements

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

4. Upgate Common

All ok with the Ponies. No new volunteer pony checkers have come forward, despite request for help in previous report.

Vet and Farrier visit due in the next month – date to be confirmed. Agreement has been obtained with NWT to move the ponies over to Alderford at this time to enable the grazing of Alderford and give Upgate a rest for a few months. Period to be determined dependent upon monitoring of effects at both sites.

Grassland at northern end of common was cut on 06/08/18 (thanks to Michael Bye for agreeing to undertake this at no cost), slightly earlier than ideal, but arranged based on the availability of volunteers to rake up the cut grass and considered ok considering the dry summer meant that most plants had already seeded. The NEWS volunteers attended site on 12/08/18 to rake up the cuttings, depositing some in a pile in the woodland and some on the bonfire site.

Meeting held on site on 01/08/18 with an officer from Norfolk County Council (Marriott's Way Heritage Trail Project) regarding their potential application for funding for a circular walk at Upgate (including proposals for making the boardwalk fit for purpose). Situation complicated by the current boardwalk not following the official public footpath route shown the definitive footpath map! Officer will consult with other County Council staff members to explore possibilities prior to suggesting possible options. Consideration may need to be given to replacing the two ends of the boardwalk that lie on the official public footpath using project funding with possible rerouting of the rest of the official footpath on higher ground to the south of the present boardwalk as a simple path. Currently awaiting suggestions/proposals from the County Council to allow for parishioner consultation prior to any decision being made.

Next volunteer task at Upgate arranged for 14/10/18 (with NEWS) provisionally set for coppicing of gorse and control of bramble and scrub on the valley fen margins.

5. Alderford Common

Contractor (George Taylor) attended site on 13/07/18 to treat the re-emerging stand of Japanese Knotweed near the road. Also undertook further stump treatment at Upgate on the areas of fen previously cleared of scrub (cost £120).

Meeting held with Gazing Manager for NWT and Dave Weaver on 02/08/18 to discuss possibility of moving ponies from Upgate for a temporary period. Agreed to trial commencing at the next Vet/Farrier visit provisionally arranged for the end of September.

Volunteers from NCC attended site on 09/09/18 to cut and rake off bracken and scrub from the fenced area. One of the 6" turning posts was found broken and the fence had collapsed. New fence post bought from PLG (cost £19.20) and new post to be installed and fence fixed with the help of Dave Weaver on 16/09/18 prior to ponies arriving. Smaller intermediary posts that have rotted at the base to be replaced early in New Year during a future volunteer task (anticipated cost <£50).

Some clearance of the main footpaths undertaken.

Steve Williams – September 2018

Swannington with Alderford and Little Witchingham Parish Council