

# Commons Report for Parish Council Meeting – 20<sup>th</sup> November 2019

## **1. Volunteer Group Tasks**

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

**Date**            **Location**            **Volunteer Group**    **Task Completed**

### ***Tasks Completed (since last report)***

15/09/19	Ugate	NCC	Raking and removal of grass cuttings from grassland
20/10/19	Alderford	NCC	Cutting and raking access track and in fenced area, clearance of fenceline and scrub removal from an area of grassland

### ***Tasks Planned (exact dates and tasks to be confirmed)***

08/12/19	Ugate	NEWS	Clearance in power line rides and scrub coppicing/ pond clearance (tbc)
##/12/19	Alderford	Corporate	Clearance of bracken and scrub from chalk grassland (tbc)
12/19 – 02/20		NEWS/NCC	tbc

## **2. Management Plans**

Mapping for draft plans being completed. Consultation on hold pending clarity on future funding schemes that may require amendments to current drafts.

Footpath tree safety audit instructed – awaiting response on timing. Contractor involvement may be required where any diseased/damaged trees are identified that pose a risk to public safety along footpaths.

## **3. HLS Agreements**

HLS agreement extension offers received from the RPA for both Ugate and Alderford Commons. These offer an extension of our existing extended HLS agreements and associated funding for a further year (from 01/06/20 until 31/05/2021) on the basis that we continue to manage the land parcels in accordance with the existing agreements.

The forms needed to be signed and returned by 20/11/19 (prior to the next meeting and so councillors were asked if this course of action was desirable and majority consent was returned – subject to ratification at next meeting). Consent to carry on the existing management is required from Natural England and these consents were applied for and granted. Agreement extension forms have been signed and returned along with the required Natural England consents and so our current funding stream has been extended to 31/05/2021.

Annual funding for management received through the HLS agreements is £2,075.50 for Alderford and £2,948.45 for Ugate. All commons related expenditure comes from this funding.

## **4. Ugate Common**

Ponies returned from Booton on 29/10/19 and volunteer checkers have resumed daily checking. The rest from grazing appears to have been beneficial, although there has been an increase in bramble and birch that will need management.

The grassland was cut on 08/09/19 (thanks to Michael Bye) and the cuttings were raked and removed by a group of NCC volunteers on 15/09/19.

Next task on 08/12/19 (NEWS) will concentrate on scrub and bracken clearance in and around the power line rides and associated scrub areas and further pond maintenance. Future winter tasks will address scrub regrowth in the fenced fen, transition and heathland, coppicing of selected scrub and clearing back of areas of holly where it is encroaching on and shading out the Beck. Contractor may be needed depending upon volunteer availability.

## **5. Alderford Common**

Grazing licence for Alderford signed by the PC and NWT ready for grazing trial for limited period in January 2020.

Task on 20/10/19 (NCC) involved some cutting and raking around the car park, along the access track and within the fenced area, clearance of scrub encroachment from along the fenceline and removal of scrub from an area of the grassland.

In December (dates tbc), a 2 day corporate volunteer task will be held which will involve scrub and bracken clearance from an area of the chalk grassland.

Future winter tasks to include any work necessary to complete the corporate tasks, maintenance around the ponds and coppicing of areas of scrub within and outside of the fenced area. Contractor may be needed depending upon volunteer availability.

**Steve Williams – November 2019**

**Swannington with Alderford and Little Witchingham Parish Council**