

# Commons Report for Parish Council Meeting – 15<sup>th</sup> January 2020

## **1. Volunteer Group Tasks**

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

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

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

04/12/19	Alderford	Openreach	Clearance of scrub from chalk grassland
08/12/19	Uppgate	NEWS	Clearance in power line rides and scrub coppicing/ pond clearance
12/12/19	Alderford	Openreach	Clearance of scrub from chalk grassland

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

19/01/20	Uppgate	NCC	Clearance of birch scrub from fen, transition and heath
Feb/March	Alderford	NCC	Coppicing of scrub - tbc
01/03/20	Alderford	NEWS	Clearance around pond glades - tbc

## **2. Management Plans**

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

Footpath tree safety audit instructed for both Alderford and Uppgate commons – to be undertaken in late January (cost of £400). Contractor may be required where any diseased/damaged trees are identified that pose a risk to public safety.

## **3. HLS Agreements**

HLS agreement extensions in place until 31/05/2021. Remittance received from RPA for Alderford HLS Agreement relating to 2019 on 23/12/19 (£2075.50).

## **4. Uppgate Common**

Task on 08/12/19 (NEWS) involved scrub and bracken clearance in and around the power line rides and cutting back of scrub/vegetation and some shading trees from ponds (Bottomless and Cub). Some cutting back of holly from Beck also undertaken along with coppicing of some hazel and hawthorn. Thanks to parishioners Michael Bye and Terry Self for helping out during the morning.

Meeting held with contractor George Taylor on 05/01/20 regarding some fallen trees that are hung up and overhanging the fenceline and require specialist removal. Work scheduled subject to confirmation at end of January/beginning of February.

Future winter tasks will address scrub regrowth in the fenced fen, transition and heathland, coppicing of selected scrub and further clearing back of areas of holly where it is encroaching on and shading out the Beck.

## **5. Alderford Common**

Some clearance of scrub/bracken on the chalk grassland was undertaken by two small volunteer groups from BT Openreach on 04/12/19 and 12/12/19 as part of corporate volunteer days. Thanks to Steve Cook (NEWS coordinator) for organising.

Meeting held with new NWT Grazing Officer on 20/12/19 to discuss requirements to enable late winter grazing by cattle for an experimental period. 4 British White cattle to be moved onto Alderford in early February for approximately 4-6 weeks, subject to monitoring of suitability/impact. NWT requested that some overhanging blackthorn be removed from the access track and immediately inside the fenced area to allow for vehicular access and turning. This was also brought up by previous graziers who struggled with access. Contractor George Taylor asked to complete these works along with finishing off the clearance on the chalk grassland not completed by the Openreach volunteer groups in addition to the tree works at Uppgate. Estimated cost based on 3 no. days for 2 men and equipment of approximately £750.

Signs to be erected at all entrance gates to inform of grazing activity. **Cattle will need checking on a daily basis. Please contact Steve Williams if you are able to help with checking the cattle for the short period that they will be on site. No previous experience necessary!**

Future winter tasks to include maintenance around the ponds and coppicing of areas of scrub within and outside of the fenced area.

**Steve Williams – January 2020**

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