

Commons Report for Parish Council Meeting – 17th March 2021

1. Volunteer Group Tasks

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

<u>Date</u>	<u>Location</u>	<u>Volunteer Group</u>	<u>Task Completed</u>
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Tasks Completed (since last report)

Volunteer groups not currently operating during national lockdown.

Tasks Planned (exact dates and tasks to be confirmed)

Volunteer groups not currently operating during national lockdown. Possible date from NEWS either 13th or 27th June, subject to confirmation.

2. Management Plans

No further action.

Footpath tree safety audit instructed but still not yet completed due to pandemic (anticipated cost of £400).

3. HLS Agreements

A further extension of the existing HLS agreements for Uppgate and Alderford commons was offered by the RPA from 01/06/2021 until 31/05/2022. The acceptance forms have been signed and returned (confirmation of receipt received).

As part of this process, consent for the management activities covered by the HLS agreements must be obtained from Natural England. Consent applications were submitted and Natural England have consented for continuation of the existing management until 31/05/2024 (ie for 3 more years). This covers the likely time scale to allow for implementation of the new Environmental Land Management (ELM) scheme, which suggests that further extensions of the existing HLS schemes are likely to be offered.

Claim forms for 2021 have been received from the RPA that will need to be submitted prior to 17/05/21.

4. Uppgate Common

The grassland where cars park and the footpath along the Beck have both cut up considerably following the wet weather over the last few months. A decision still needs to be made regarding the future boardwalk replacement/ alternative solution/ rerouting of path to drier ground etc).

In the absence of any of the volunteer groups operating, some partially fallen trees within the woodland have been cleared and scattered scrub cleared over various weekends by myself and various parishioners.

The Wynch's Way information board that fell down due to rotten supporting posts has not yet been replaced and re-erected, but will be in the coming weeks.

Future volunteer tasks will hopefully be able to recommence in the summer.

5. Alderford Common

Water levels at Alderford are very high and certain parts of the enclosed pit are underwater, which would have made grazing difficult, even if NWT had been in a position to graze the site this winter/spring. Hopefully this can be planned for later in the year.

Parishioners have cleared some of the fallen trees and I have done some clearance on some of the footpaths. A site meeting (arranged by Helen) was held on the 12/03/21 with CGM to discuss and obtain quotations for cutting the official footpaths (Footpath FP10) and the Wynch's Way footpath leading from Station Road down into the fenced area. Footpath FP 10 needs realigning to the official route as detailed in Mark's footpath document (06/09/2020) prior to any regular maintenance occurring – to be actioned.

Thanks to the parishioners who undertook a litter picking exercise around the parish on 06/03/21, including the edges of the commons, which are particularly affected by casual littering from vehicles and fly-tipping.

There have been reports of increased activity in the area of the common previously used by BMX cyclists and a shelter has been made of pallets, damage caused and much litter has been left.

Future volunteer tasks will hopefully be able to recommence in the summer.

Steve Williams – March 2021

Swannington with Alderford and Little Witchingham Parish Council