

Commons Report for Parish Council Meeting – 21st July 2016

1. Volunteer Group 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>
19/06/16	Alderford	NEWS	Mowing around ponds (clearing of Balsam) bracken topping on grassland, around tumulus and paths
17/07/16	Alderford	NCC	Bracken topping on grassland, around tumulus and paths

Tasks Planned

31/07/16	Uppgate	NCC	Balsam removal and Boardwalk repairs
14/08/16	Uppgate	NEWS	tbc
##/08/16	Alderford	NCC	tbc
11/09/16	Alderford	NEWS	tbc
##/09/16	Uppgate	NCC	tbc

2. Management Plans

No further action

3. HLS Agreements

HLS income and payment details contained in Finance Report.

4. Uppgate Common

Ponies ok – Biannual NWT vet and farrier visit undertaken on 08/06/16. Hooves trimmed but no problems to report. More volunteers would be ideal (SW still to place request for volunteers in the Pilgrim).

Boardwalk – A number of options are available regarding the deteriorating boardwalk.

Option 1 – Remove existing boardwalk and leave as natural. It would be a low cost option and would negate the potential for ongoing costs. However, this would make the path very difficult to walk when wet and potentially be a barrier to access and designated walks (Winch's Way). Not considered a desirable option.

Option 2 – Replace existing boardwalk using a contractor. This is the highest cost option but is the most likely to result in a high quality construction with maximum longevity. 3 Contractors were approached and site meeting were held with 2 contractors (1 declined the invitation). Meetings held with Peter Frizzell Ltd (contractor used by NWT for boardwalk construction) on 17/06/16 and Matt Copplestone (local contractor who erected the pony corral) on 06/07/16. Matt subsequently declined to submit a quotation due to perceived difficulties for construction. Quotation received from Peter Frizzell Ltd for removal and replacement (omitting the last section over the pond near the bridge at the bottom of Swiffers lane but including an additional 6m section at the village end) with additional costs given for widening the narrow sleeper boardwalk sections either side of the bridge and connecting two sections that are currently separate, all as detailed below:

• Removal of existing 141m of boardwalk	£1,630.00
• Replacement of 123m (6 of the 7 sections) of boardwalk with wood	£12,420.00
• Replacement of 123m (6 of the 7 sections) of boardwalk with plastic	£30,155.00
• 10m new and widening 15m of the narrow sleeper sections near bridge (N side)	£1,040.00
• Widening 26m of the narrow sleeper sections near bridge (S side)	£1,580.00

The cost of replacing with longer lasting artificial boards may be prohibitive and the total for removal and replacement with wood is still in the order of £14k (excluding widening of narrow solid sections) which may not be possible to fund from existing reserves.

Option 3 – Remove and replace using volunteers/ community payback. Cost of materials (wood, bolts, mesh, nails etc) estimated in the order of £5,000. Additional costs associated with provision of portable toilet (if using community payback). This would only be achieved over an extended time period and would involve significant organisation/management and logistical issues associated with storage and transport. However, it could be funded from existing reserves. ... continued on next page

Recommendation:

Undertake temporary repairs by replacing the existing broken boards using a volunteer group (provisionally pencilled in for 31/07/16). Estimated material cost £200. Re-visit the potential to obtain grant funding for replacement. Funding may be possible from the Landfill Communities Fund as the Attlebridge Landfill is within 10 miles of the common. It might be possible to get funding to enable us to pay the contractor costs for replacement, which would be the ideal scenario, although the application will need to be put together and could take some time to process. Whitwell Common Trustees have recently obtained a £25k grant under the LCF scheme and so it would appear that this could be a viable option. If funding is unavailable we will need to either self fund (if viable) or use volunteers/community payback to replace the boardwalk section by section.

Contractor, George Taylor attended site on 06/07/16 to treat the regrowth on areas of clearance carried out on Deadmans Hill earlier in the year. Cost £97.00

Regarding invasive non-native plants, the Himalayan Balsam at Upgate has been kept under control over the last few years by the volunteer groups but scattered regrowth is occurring which will be dealt with during further tasks starting in July. The Crassula (New Zealand Pygmyweed) in the Hoss Pond remains a problem with no obvious means of eradication currently available.

The main footpaths are open, but a short section adjacent to the vehicular access track east of Willow Cottage has grown over and requires clearance.

As requested by the PC, the area to the west of Willow Cottage has not been mown except for immediately adjacent to the road and a footpath into the common.

The access track to Upgate Barn has a few potholes that could do with infilling, but the mown grassed areas used for parking appear to have virtually recovered from damage caused by parking cars when it was very wet. The grassed areas either side of the track will require cutting and the hay ideally removed by the end of the summer. Some of this can be achieved by hand as previously but a contractor may be required to clear the rest.

5. Alderford Common

The fenced grassed area has had a lot of clearance work done over the last year and on an ongoing basis, but could still benefit from some temporary grazing. NWT have provided some contacts that they work with who may be interested in grazing. SW still to contact them to see if something can be arranged for 2016.

The area of Japanese Knotweed has been treated again by George Taylor on 06/07/16. This seems to be working, but further treatment is likely to be required later in the year and also probably next year to ensure eradication.

The Himalayan Balsam around the pond near the road bridge has been mown/pulled by a volunteer group on 19/06/16 and further growth will be dealt with during future tasks.

The Crassula in this pond remains a problem but does not appear to have spread to other ponds so far.

The footpaths have been cut, but strong growth of bracken soon closes the paths up and so further clearance will be required over the summer.

No major action on the dirt bike jumps?

6. Swannington Common

Himalayan Balsam is returning in the uncut reed area and along the Beck. This will require pulling before it sets seed.

Steve Williams

July 2016

Swannington with Alderford and Little Witchingham Parish Council