

# Commons Report for Parish Council Meeting – 3<sup>rd</sup> May 2017

## **1. Volunteer Group Tasks**

Undertaken by Norfolk Conservation Corps (NCC) and Norwich Environmental Weekenders (NEWS).

16 volunteer task days completed in the past year (over 1000 man hours)

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

<b><u>Date</u></b>	<b><u>Location</u></b>	<b><u>Volunteer Group</u></b>	<b><u>Task Completed</u></b>
12/02/17	Upgate	NEWS	Tree removal around Bridge Pond and Scrub clearance – Deadman's Hill
05/03/17	Alderford	NEWS	Clearance of track to fenced area to allow access by grazier and scrub clearance/burning around small valley feature
19/03/17	Upgate	NCC	Scrub clearance around Bottomless Pond and on Deadman's Hill
23/04/17	Upgate	NEWS	Boardwalk repair – replacement of 50m of broken netting
<b><i>Tasks Planned</i></b>			
04/06/17	Alderford	NEWS	Bracken clearance from grassland (tbc)

## **2. Management Plans**

Management Plans will need completing for both commons to support application for new funding when the existing HLS agreements run out in May 2019. Draft plans will need to be produced by March 2019 when the application forms for agreements commencing January 2020 will be available. Final Plans will need sorting during application process following consultation with Natural England and other stakeholders (Parishioners etc). Need to establish how the plans will be delivered in 2018.

## **3. HLS Agreements**

Current HLS agreements end in May 2019. The new Countryside Stewardship scheme replaces the existing scheme, and is likely to result in a lower level of funding.

Annual claim forms for the two existing HLS schemes have been submitted at the end of April (latest submission date 15/05/17).

## **4. Upgate Common**

Ponies OK and in good condition.

Boardwalk – Broken netting was replaced by a volunteer group on 23/04/17. Cost of netting/staples/nails £66.90 (inc VAT)

Some shading trees were removed from around the Bridge Pond by a volunteer group on 12/02/17 and scrub removed from around bottomless Pond on 19/03/17.

Two large trees that fell into the Beck alongside the fenced area following a storm were mechanically removed by the IDB on 01/03/17 using the previously used access route to the north of the Beck. Other trees that fell within the woodland were cut up and removed by parishioners.

Additional Birch scrub was also removed from Deadman's Hill by volunteer groups on 12/02/17 and 19/03/17, the scrub burnt and ash removed.

## **5. Alderford Common**

More scrub was cleared from around the small valley feature within the fenced area by a volunteer group on 05/03/17.

Sheep (7 no.) were grazed in the fenced area between 14/03/17 and 17/04/17 by Martin Sillis. The sheep have been removed over the growing season, but hopefully will return for another grazing period in the late Summer/Autumn.

Ecology surveys have been carried out in February, March and April by consultants working on behalf of Dong Energy for the Hornsea Project 3 Offshore Windfarm cable route corridor. The route will not directly impinge on the common, but its planned proximity means that any potential effects need to be considered, hence the need to undertake surveys of birds, reptiles/amphibians, hydrology etc.

The small stand of previously treated Japanese Knotweed on the triangle at Alderford is starting to regrow and will require continued chemical treatment this year. Suggest re-engagement of George Taylor to undertake 2 or 3 rounds of treatment over the growing period (anticipated cost of around £50 per visit).

The footpaths on Alderford will soon start to overgrow and need regular clearance. Arrangement for path clearance as undertaken in previous years will need to be agreed.

**Steve Williams - April 2017**

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