



*Verderers of the New Forest
Verderers' Grazing Scheme
The Queen's House
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*Official Verderer
Lord Manners*

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**MINUTES OF THE VERDERERS' GRAZING SCHEME CONSULTATIVE GROUP
MEETING HELD ON 8th MARCH 2023**

Present:

Lord Manners (OV)	– Official Verderer
Mr R Deakin (RD)	- Elected Verderer
Mr Clive Chatters (CC)	- Natural England Appointed Verderer
Mr Dave Readhead (DR)	- Elected Verderer
Mrs T Woodley (TW)	- VGS Administrator
Charlotte Lines (CL)	- CDA Representative
Tom Hordle (TH)	- Young Commoners Representative
Jenny Thomas (JT)	- Natural England Representative
Leanne Sargeant (LS)	- Forestry England Representative

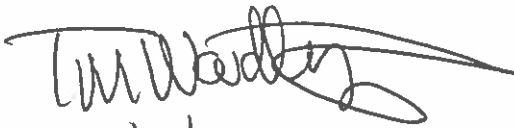
Item	Item	Action
1. Apologies	None	
2. Declarations of interest	RD, DR, TW, CL & TH declared membership of the VGS. RD & DR are members of the New Forest Livestock Society. RD & DR are members of the New Forest Stallion Syndicate RD, DR, TW, CL, TH & LS are members of the New Forest Pony Breeders and Cattle Society. RD, DR, CL & TH are committee members of the CDA CC is secretary for HIWWT and Trustee and Council member of the NFA	
3. Overview of past 12 years – CS – HLS - VGS	TW gave an overview of the transition from Countryside Stewardship to Higher Level Stewardship in 2010 and the role of the HLS Verderers Grazing Scheme Review Group until 2011 and the role of the VGS Advisory Group until 2014. From 2014 the VGS Management Committee has met a minimum of twice annually to decide VGS terms and conditions, small grant applications and adherence to scheme objectives. The VGS Management Committee reports directly to the HLS Board Committee.	
4. HLS – 5 Year Roll Over	The original HLS Agreement ran from 2010 – 2020 In 2021 and 2022 an offer of a 1 year extension to the scheme was received from the RPA very late in the year. This gave no opportunity to review or alter the planned spend for the following year. The Verderers HLS has been offered and the board accepted a 5 year extension to the current scheme at the current annual payment rate which was all that was on offer. It was also	

	<p>noted that the Verderers may switch to an alternative Stewardship scheme within the 5 years so long as a new scheme exceeded the environmental benefits of the current HLS.</p> <p>Over the 12 years that the HLS scheme has been running a reserve has accumulated due to prudent financial management and to planned projects not receiving planning permissions. This reserve had been held to cover existing commitments to projects if the current scheme came to an end. With the security of a 5 year extension comes an opportunity to review existing projects and allocate budgets within the Verderers Grazing Scheme. This meeting is to work through the projects and make recommendations to present to the VGS Management Committee or the HLS Board.</p>	
6. Future Commons contributions	<p>TW reported that last year The National Trust contributed to the VGS Bi lateral Grazing Agreement despite not being in an environmental scheme. The NT have not indicated their intentions for 2023 – TW and OV to open discussions with NT.</p> <p>The payment rate for Commons Contributions has remained at £28 per hectare for the current life of the scheme. The agreement states this amount can be reviewed annually- The group agreed that an increase in contribution should be requested from NT, HCC, Wellow Parish Council and Minstead Manor. TW to worked out the increase according to inflation since 2013 = £35.94 per hectare – should this extra £12K be applied directly to the Grazing Payment or distributed as a Small Grant Scheme for Commons Commoners as this option has not been available through the NFLAS in recent years?</p> <p>TW to work with HCC on contribution towards the rebuild of Ogdens Pound</p>	<p>Action TW & OV</p> <p>Action TW See Appendix A Action TW</p>
7. Consultation with commoners	<p>The group agreed the HLS AGM has served as an effective method of consulting with active and non-active commoners, New Forest stakeholders and the public. TW to organise the AGM for September 2023.</p>	Action TW
8. Cattle incentive Grazing Scheme Payment V herd number payment	<p>The group discussed an option of making a retrospective one off payment to Forest cattle owners as an incentive to retain grazing cattle.</p> <p>Concern that the number of cattle may fall below the target level set out in the agreement. Was there a way of arresting the decline – eg. Putting a patch on the problem until new schemes have evolved - with a look to the longer term of having an effective VGS that was a good model for future schemes. TW to run model figures based on an additional £200K distributed to cattle owners by the VGS LU method with a cap of 40 applied as well as a model based on distribution by herd number. To be available by the end of April. Such a payment has the support in principle of the HLS Board but that Board will need to review and approve any detailed proposal.</p>	Action TW See Appendix B
9. Cattle premium – forest run – judged by NFPB&CS	<p>Option of additional support to Forest type cattle – how to decide what is Forest type – TW to contact NFPB&CS to see if a breed description can be written – could the forest run breed show class be used as a method to inspect cattle suitability?</p>	Action TW

10. Encourage Pig owners	The group agreed that Forest commoners should receive additional support to enable them to keep pigs for mast. Change VGS Terms to increase the 1 st 20 x pigs put out for pannage to 0.6LU – additional pigs to receive 0.3LU. TW to inform commoners via newsletter and VGS application form.	Action TW
11. Compensation for death on forest – disposal costs	The increase in collection costs of fallen stock has risen. The group agreed to assist with this extra cost by a fallen stock payment of £100 being paid to commoners whose stock die unexpectedly on forest (excluding welfare reasons). In 2021 there were 83 non RTA related deaths and 92 in 2022. A claim form must be submitted along with receipt of payment to chosen collection company. Form must be signed by Agister – TW to create form and inform commoners via newsletter.	Action TW
12. New Forest Buying Group	A commoner had put forward a proposal for a Forest VGS buying group to be created to allow commoners to access better prices by buying in bulk by the creation of a membership. The group discussed the proposal and felt it was not something that could be supported within the current VGS framework. Members suggested the NFLAS or a Farm Cluster group set up a Commoners discount account with someone like Mole Valley Farmers. TW to report back to commoner.	Action TW
13. Annual Grazing Payment	The annual budget for the grazing payment has not increased since the start of the scheme. TW to run a model showing the increase linked to inflation per annum. Potential Increase from £462,000 to £592,957	Action TW Appendix C
14. Future Funding of NFLAS	TW informed the group that NFLAS were working on a proposal to secure continued funding post 2023. This will be presented to the HLS Board at the April meeting.	
15. Small Grant Scheme	The Small Grant Scheme budget is to remain unchanged for 2023.	
16. Micro chipping	The Microchipping budget to increase to £5000 annually as costs have increased. CL suggested that there were other ways to help support commoners with micro-chipping.	
17. Agister Salary	The HLS Board had previously agreed to increase the contribution towards Agister salary based on inflation per annum.	
18. Stallion Scheme	The cost of grazing for Stallions has increased – annual grant increase based on inflation per annum.	
19. Bloodlines & Futurity Scheme	The group studied the Bloodlines Scheme update which detailed the 7 stallions that have successfully joined the Verderers Stallion Scheme and sired nearly 600 rare bloodline foals. No further bloodlines scheme will be run during the 5 year roll over. The current intake of futurity colts is in their final year – no further funding post 2023.	

20. Pony Welfare Scheme	The success of this project has seen annual budget exceeded – budget agreed to increase to £15000 annually for the next 5 years.	
21. Drift Fencing	The cost of maintenance for the drift fencing erected in 2013/14 is set to increase – annual budget increased to link to inflation per annum.	
22. Pound Rebuilds	The final 4 pounds are due to be rebuilt in hard wood during 2023 – post 2023 annual budget to reduce to £5000.	
Date for next meetings	Reconvene by Easter. TW to arrange date.	Action TW
	Meeting closed 17.45	

T Woodley
VGS Administrator


19/6/23

6. Future Commons contributions – Appendix A

2022 LU Commons LU Value = £53.45

Model value per LU for 2023 = £69.28

Increase of £15.83 per LU

Or £12,721.07 extra in pot if small grant scheme set up

Cattle Incentive if applied to commons Cattle owners

Commons additional payments needed

Option A £55,620.60

Option B £50,000.02

Option A £79.80 x 640 cows

Option B £2631.58 X 19 unique herds

8. Cattle incentive Grazing Scheme Payment V herd number payment

Appendix B -

Examples

A/ Forest Cattle based on VGS model

2694 cattle LU's before capping at 40

£200,000.00 split
between 2506 LU's

extra £79.80 per cow split between 102 people

Total model = £153.81 LU per cow

B/ Forest Cattle based on herds

2506 LU's between 76 unique herd numbers

£200,000 divided between 76
= £2631.58 each herd

13. Annual Grazing Payment

Appendix C

TW to run a model showing the increase linked to inflation per annum.

Potential Increase from £462,000 to £592,957

