

Commons Report for Parish Council Meeting – 16th January 2019

1. Volunteer Group Tasks

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

Tasks Completed (since last report) none

<u>Date</u>	<u>Location</u>	<u>Volunteer Group</u>	<u>Task Completed</u>
--------------------	------------------------	-------------------------------	------------------------------

Tasks Planned (exact dates and tasks to be confirmed)

27/01/19	Alderford	NCC	tbc
----------	-----------	-----	-----

Feb 19 ?	Upgate	NCC	tbc
----------	--------	-----	-----

03/03/19	Alderford	NEWS	tbc
----------	-----------	------	-----

Mar 19 ?	Upgate	NCC	tbc
----------	--------	-----	-----

2. Management Plans

Draft plans mostly completed but waiting for decision on application to extend existing agreements as this will determine whether or not changes to existing management can be instigated. If extension is granted then new plans will have to support existing agreed management strategy.

Meeting held with Natural England at both sites on 22/11/18 to review site conditions. Positive outcome from reviews with confirmation that management of both commons is delivering in accordance with the respective HLS agreements and appropriate for their SSSI status. A few suggestions received regarding areas for possible improvement.

3. HLS Agreements

See Finance report for financial transactions. Delays in payment because of deregistering of mapping at Upgate have been rectified and past claims should now have been processed.

Applications for extension to the existing HLS Agreements for an additional year have been submitted as advised by Natural England. This is because of uncertainties relating to the Brexit process and there is likely to be opportunity to further extend depending upon what happens rather than apply for the new Countryside Stewardship scheme. The existing agreements end in May 2019 to the extension should prolong existing agreements until May 2020.

4. Upgate Common

All ok with the Ponies at Upgate. Two new volunteers (Sheila Foster-Hancock and Vaughan) have come forward to help with pony checking - thank you. Could still do with another volunteer to cover one day in the week as Trevor Nelson has had to step down for the time being.

Contractor to be approached to help clear excess scrub from transition (suggestion from Natural England to comply with prescriptions for that area of the site).

On-going management will continue to focus on the fenced area, ponds and grassland. Management of non-native invasive species (Himalayan Balsam and Crassula) will need to continue. Continued pulling over the years has almost eradicated the Himalayan Balsam but the Crassula on the Hoss Pond will remain a difficult problem to solve.

Funding for replacement of the boardwalk as part of the Marriotts Way project cannot go ahead and options will need to be explored in 2019 for alternative funding for repair / replacement or rerouting of path (existing path and boardwalk not on official line of registered footpath).

5. Alderford Common

No news regarding possibility of grazing at Alderford. Still need to sort out for 2019.

On-going management will continue to focus on the fenced area, ponds and also increasing the level of scrub management in scrub and transition areas to create a more diverse age range and structure as discussed with Natural England.

Management of non-native invasive species (Himalayan Balsam, Japanese Knotweed and Crassula) will need to continue,

Steve Williams – January 2019

Swannington with Alderford and Little Witchingham Parish Council