

Commons Report for Parish Council Meeting – 15th November 2023

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>
<i>Tasks Completed (since last report)</i>			
01/10/23	Alderford	NEWS	Scrub removal and cutting & raking of grassland in fenced area.
29/10/23	Uppgate	NCC	Cutting, treating and pulling of birch scrub on Deadman's Hill
<i>Tasks Planned (exact dates and tasks to be confirmed)</i>			
03/12/23	Alderford	NCC	tbc

2. Management Plans

No change.

3. HLS Agreements

No change.

4. Uppgate Common

Parking at Uppgate and the logs continue to be a divisive issue - to be discussed at meeting.

NCC volunteer group attended site on 29/10/23 and pulled small birch and cut and treated larger birch on Deadman's Hill. More birch still to remove as well as alder in the far northeastern corner. Contractor approached for availability to complete work that will not be finished by volunteer groups and provisional booked for February 2024.

Report of a pony in trouble received on 01/11/23. Following a check on its health, NWT were called out and the pony was deemed to be suffering from suspected laminitis. The pony has been medicated and is being monitored. Vet and Farrier due to attend on 29/11/23.

Decision to be made on replacement of the information board. Ongoing.

Next volunteer tasks not yet booked in but will be in 2024 and likely involve some pond management or further removal of scrub from Deadman's Hill/Fen and transition, depending upon weather.

5. Alderford Common

Natural England have requested permission to access the site to undertake a breeding bird survey in 2024. This will help with a review of management priorities for the site and follows on from the recent condition assessment.

The RSPB have been in contact re involvement with a wider initiative to try to benefit Turtle Dove that are regular visitors to the common. Waiting for a meeting to be arranged.

Contact made with a contractor with a view to rotational management of some blocks of scrub for the benefit of breeding birds. Provisionally booked in for February 2024.

The provision of grazing for the grassland needs to be arranged.

The results of the annual eDNA survey for great crested newts (GCN) has been issued by Pondnet. All ponds on the common have again been shown to contain GCN, which is a very positive compared to nationwide trends.

The clerk has obtained quotes from contractors to remove the "dangerous tree" threatening the highway that requires removal by 25/02/24 – Agenda item.

A new support for the information board in the car park is in progress.

The damaged kissing gate at the southeastern corner is functional but still needs to be replaced which will need to be undertaken by a contractor. Ongoing.

Next volunteer task on 3rd December will involve continued maintenance of the grassland and some pond maintenance, depending upon the weather. Future tasks to include pond maintenance and scrub management with probable need for additional contractor involvement.

Steve Williams – November 2023

Swannington with Alderford and Little Witchingham Parish Council