

Commons Report for Parish Council Meeting – 20th September 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>
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Tasks Completed (since last report)

20/08/23	Uppgate	NEWS	Raking and removal of grass cuttings from grassland.
17/09/23	Alderford	NCC	Scrub removal and cutting & raking of grassland in fenced area.

Tasks Planned (exact dates and tasks to be confirmed)

01/10/23	Alderford	NEWS	Scrub removal and cutting & raking of grassland in fenced area. tbc
Nov	Uppgate	NCC	tbc
Dec	Alderford	NCC	tbc

Management Plans

No change.

2. HLS Agreements

Ongoing discussions required regarding parking at Uppgate and possible removal of the area of grassland outside of the SSSI from the HLS agreement – Main agenda item.

3. Uppgate Common

Parking at Uppgate to be discussed as main agenda item (see above).

The grassland was cut by Michael Bye on 18/08/23 and the NEWS volunteer group came on 20/08/23 and raked and removed the cuttings.

Locks were placed by persons unknown on the kissing gates at the eastern end of the fenced area and were removed. Many signs have also been erected along the edge of the private woodland (Swannington Bottom Plantation) and a fence erected along the edge of Sandy Lane public right of way, presumably to restrict access to the private woodland to the rear of the common. The footpath that runs through the common behind the chicken farm and connects into Sandy Lane is not actually an official footpath and a section of it does cross the private woodland. and so erecting a fence and preventing access to this private land would seem to be within the law.

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

Next volunteer task in November will involve some pond management or removal of scrub from Deadman's Hill/Fen and transition, depending upon weather. Probable need for contractor involvement to complete these tasks or to undertake additional scrub management.

4. Alderford Common

Following the Natural England survey undertaken on 29/06/23, the Condition Assessment Summary of the grassland within the fenced area has been received and a copy forwarded to Councillors for comment prior to publication by NE. Generally good outcome with "unfavourable recovering" status maintained, with need for additional scrub management required to achieve "favourable" status.

A notice of a "dangerous tree" likely to affect the highway requiring removal was received from the County Council dated 25/08/23. This tree which has suffered from Ash Dieback is located on Broad Lane on the edge of the triangle at Alderford Common and will require removal by 25/02/24 – Main agenda item.

Footpath FP10 has been cut by the County Council and the access track and footpath to Station Road continue to be cut by CGM on behalf of the PC. Other paths on the common are overgrown but just about passable.

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 1st October will involve continued maintenance of the grassland. Future tasks to include pond maintenance and scrub management with probable need for additional contractor involvement.

Steve Williams – September 2023

Swannington with Alderford and Little Witchingham Parish Council