

Hazeley Heath Consultative Group 22/08/2017

Victoria Hall, Hartley Wintney

Present: Phil Maund (Hart DC, Chair), Kathryn Steele (Hart DC, Secretary), Therese Abbott (Easement holders), John Collman (Naturalist), Lindsay Mackay (Small land owners)

Apologies: Leigh Wallace (Hart DC), Mike Coates (RSPB), David Sexton (Mattingley Parish), Julian Bishop (Commoners)

1. Minutes from previous meeting

Minutes were considered and approved.

2. Matters arising

Hart Ponds - PM: Previously awaiting confirmation if consent is required for new ponds, consent is not required if an existing pond.

Letter from Mattingley Parish - PM: Hart and RSPB are awaiting a signed letter of consent for the PINS application from Mattingley Parish Council. This has been completed via LW and MC.

Natural England surveys - Action is outstanding for Matt Taylor (Natural England) to find out when the field units are due at Hazeley.

ACTION: PM

Bramshill crossing - PM: No change from 09/05/2017 meeting.

ACTION: LW/PM

Himalayan Balsam – PM: No enforcement available for neighbouring land on Hazeley streams and rivers. Hart can manage what they are responsible for. There is scope for an initiative such as volunteering to aid in the removal of Himalayan Balsam.

Fencing Application – PM: HART and the RSPB have met and chose the same specification and structures.

Naming of Features – JC: The features still require naming such as the scrapes. This is to be carried out during winter when there is less work on. HART and the RSPB to aid in choosing these alongside the management plan. Are these to be short coded names or site relevant names?

ACTION: PM/ JC

Surveys

1. Invertebrates – PM: moth data from 2009, Entomology data from 2014, Dragonfly and Damselfly data from 2016 to be referenced and managed via the management plan over five years.
2. Mammals – PM: previous survey data from 2011, new survey due the end of summer 2017.

ACTION: PM/ MC

LM: Local walker and herpetologist is interested in surveying on site.

ACTION: PM/ JC

PM: Met Dave Braddock on site to discuss the herpetology surveys.

LM: Questioned whether some Bracken is beneficial to the Adder population.

PM: Agreed with this and also benefits some ground nesting birds. Low adder sightings and management considerations will be incorporated in with the management plan.

Scrapes – PM: Not clear on which scrape is which due to the circumstances. Use the dense section to differentiate and monitor over the next few years under Chris Halls advice to see the benefit.

Fixed Point Photography - JC: Yet to meet to discuss points. Suggested sites that were part of the grazing trial seven years ago and can be compared with the management plan.

PM: Agreed with the above.

JC: Original map does not show the correct footpaths and woodland, some are missing or should not be on the map.

PM: Agreed with the above and noted the new system in place for mapping which is in place with Rushmoor BCs system. To use Magic Maps if this does not work how it is needed or to personally create the map if this does not work either. Marked and managed pathways preferred to prevent other unmanaged paths being created.

JC: Questioned the RSPBs work on this.

PM: Working with the RSPB, although yet to show their own maps, to combine work on this and to link the management.

ACTION: PM

3. Completed summer works

PM: Hart summer works were as follows:

- Bracken pulling in sensitive areas, such as the recently-cleared concrete winch ramp area. Spraying will be considered in problematic areas where it is growing more aggressively.
- Himalayan balsam removal near the River Hart.
- Ragwort removal along the main rides – some areas maintained for biodiversity.
- Weeding the scrapes of bramble and other pioneer species.
- Japanese knotweed sprayed near the layby.
- Rhododendron sprayed near the fire site.
- Correction - notice board replacement (August deadline) – new four sided panel board with information on the SPA, dog walking, grazing and the history of the heathland, expected April 2018.

JC: Positioning the board near the winch could cause damage to the board as the area is used for some unsocial behaviour.

ACTION: KS

PM: RSPB summer works were as follows:

- Bracken pulling, revisiting last year's areas, with some chemical treatment if necessary.
- Japanese knotweed treatment near Purdie's/Wedgewood - outstanding.
- Path clearance.
- Weeding the scrapes north of the police college track.
- Birch spraying near 2012/13 felling area.

3. Planned Winter Works

PM: Hart winter works are as follows

- Routine scrub bashing.
- Selective tree removal – removes barriers, encourages remnant heathland, 5/6 trees to be approved by the FC.
- Primrose patch young sycamore clearance.

- Scrub clearance around the Boardwalk.
- Coppicing at the Boardwalk – Islands created for reptiles (ie. Common Lizards)

LM: Questions if using treatments is suitable for the reptiles and aquatic environment.

PM: Confirms that the stump treatment, as localised, is suitable and will be carried out during the reptile hibernation period.

- Woodland edge to be moved back.
- Scrub removal where the RSPB and Hart land meet.
- Path clearance.
- Scrape creation.
- Gorse to be broken up.

PM: RSPB winter works are as follows:

- Gorse mowing on rotation
 - Scrub bashing
 - Fell mature birch near the Police Road to link previous felling
- JC: Agrees with this.

4. Summer Surveys

JC: Nothing in particular to report, information has been sent to PM and MC. Dartford Warbler breeding on Hart side for first time in a while but no nightjar. Yellow Hammer also not seen during the survey for the third year.

PM & JC: Agree this is a national trend.

JC: Shows the group the maps produced during the surveys of main species and minor species. Questions how the RSPB record their surveys.

PM: Asked for copies of these maps, in particular for the management plan.

PM: Reptile survey has been carried out. Not many reptiles were found, although this could be down to the extremely hot weather conditions. Young Common Lizards and Adders were found, PM not too concerned. Has been catered for in the management plan.

5. Future Monitoring – Rapid Condition Assessment

JC: HIWWT use this method for cost and time effective monitoring, requiring one member of staff and using one day annually. Tested on Hazeley and will need adapting to the particular site (ie. Molinia is not catered for in the survey, Hazeley contains molinia). CJ to discuss further with the HIWWT.

PM: Will trial this properly in 2018 with a Hazeley specific plan in the coming months.

ACTION: PM/ JC

6. Fencing application to PINS

PM: Application is finished. Awaiting confirmation from Hart planners for the viewing platform before it is sent out. Fencing specification amended with John from Footprint Ecology:

- Three round wires spaced apart to prevent animals getting caught, not barbed wire
- Costs less
- Less able to withstand climbing and cutting
- Mild steel wire

LM: Questioned how this new spec will be strained, wire stretches, will ratcheting be used?

PM: Wire stretches but ratcheting could be used and mentioned to the contractor. Easier to repair plan wire.

PM: Operative date needs to pass. Public have opportunity (28 days) to send in feedback and comments, inspector makes a decision on whether to progress. Awaiting consent to advertise notice.

JC: When will the notice be available?

PM: When confirmation on the platform is received. Signed document by Adam Green on behalf of the RSPB. Suggested Mattingley Matters for the advert.

TA: Suggested Mattingley Matters is no longer running. Whitewater Magazine may be more beneficial.

PM: Will be looked into. Needs to canvas as many people as possible.

ACTION: PM

5. Management Plan

PM: It is difficult to use the Atkins plan as information is spread across different parts of the document. Plan for the Hart side to be simplified and broken down to:

- Lowland Heath
- Disturbed grassland (the landfill)
- Woodland
- Scrub and Gorse
- Invasives (ie. himalayan balsam, goatweed, laurel and rhododendron)
- Access and recreation
- Drainage and open water
- Historical features
- Interpretation

All are of equal importance with particular indicator species being included in the management plan.

- Nightjar
- Dartford warbler
- Woodlark
- Reptiles
- Silver studded blue
- All species are UK Biodiversity Action Plan and heathland habitat species

Other components of the management plan:

- What is a requirement for the site
- What is already existing on the site
- If harvest mice and dormice are recorded from the 2017 survey these will be added to the management plan
- Tree removal, scrape creation, bracken removal and grazing among others
- Monitoring: how and when this will take place

PM: Asks for any suggestions to add to the management plan or any concerns

JC: What is the time frame?

PM: 5 years (ideally 10 or more), countryside stewardship and other prescriptions allow for this

JC: Can you have a management plan with no money? Where is this coming from and how much?

PM: Finding, the base Atkins plan to quote for works. Annual and short plan is unsure of funding. Good idea from the grazing project. Something to work towards with room to change.

JC: What work are the RSPB doing?

PM: Mike collaborated on the plans, RSPB has their own plan and team and both plans will collaborated on, RSPB plan is outstanding.

JC: The SSSI citation is based on vegetation, should an indicator plant be on the main species list

PM: Agrees with this, what should be chosen?

JC: Bog asphodel is the main species for the Hart side

PM: Agrees with this. We have to work with the information available and there should be information on how to incorporate this.

LM: Does the site have rare heather?

PM: Not necessarily, it has cross-leaved which is good for silver studded blue. The existing heather has been opened up, cutting of molinia to heather height as Dave suggested butterflies prefer open habitats.

8. Date of next meeting

It was agreed by all present that the next meeting should be 21st November 2017 from 10am onwards. PM to book this in.

ACTION: PM