



**Notes from Humberhead Peatlands LIFE+ Project Steering Group Meeting,
10:30am, 8th September 2014, Humberhead Peatlands NNR Office.**

Present

Tim Allen – North Lincolnshire Council
Jeff Bloor – Doncaster East IDB
Paul Duncan – Natural England
David Hinchliffe – Thorntree IDB
Helen Kirk – Thorne and Hatfield Moors Conservation Forum
Ken Knight – Doncaster East IDB
Melissa Massarella – Doncaster MBC
Julian Small – Natural England

Apologies

Caroline Steel – Lincolnshire Wildlife Trust

1. Welcome and Introductions

KK raised a point of order and that the first action should be the appointment of a Chairman.

JB proposed, **KK** seconded that Paul Duncan be the Chair of the Steering Group, and that Helen Kirk be vice-chair. **Accepted by all**

2. LIFE+ - brief background to the project, combined with 4. Terms of Reference/Roles

PD asked whether everyone present had had the opportunity to familiarise themselves with the Project Summary. **ACTION: JS** to ensure that everyone has sight of the project documentation, as submitted finally, and the Common Provisions.

DH said the key to success of the project was good integration with the Water Level management Plan (WLMP) project and a co-operative and collaborative approach. **HRK** believed it was crucial to appoint the right Project Manager otherwise the HHL politics would only be perpetuated and risk the failure of the Project.

MM asked what the links were between the Isle of Axholme LPS project and the LIFE+ project. **TA** reported that the LPS project is dependent on the LIFE+ project for an element of match-funding, but that otherwise the two projects were essentially separate. **HK** asked whether the match funding arrangement could be considered



as double funding. **TA** said that HLF, who funds the LPS project, considers EU LIFE+ funding as suitable match.

HK raised the issue of compliance with HRA and monitoring of impact upon interest features by increased access / tourism (i.e. non essential projects on the Moors) and **TA** explained that the monitoring could be flexible and accommodate tourist impact monitoring.

PD said that the role of the Steering Group was; 1) to provide support and direction to the LIFE+ Project Manager, and 2) to approve project implementation plans and requests for changes to the project to the EU

HK raised the issue of levels of authority and powers. This was deemed to be a matter for ToR / Standing Orders.

DH outlined concerns of the Humberhead Deer Management Group that scrub clearance would lead to the dispersal of Throne Moor's red deer population, with the possible further implication that a genetic disorder within the population could also be spread. **PD** said that Natural England was working with national specialists on this issue, and would report back to the Humberhead Deer Management Group on this. **Action: PD/JS** to contact, in due course, the HLDMG concerning the potential effects of scrub clearance on red deer populations and any other deer management actions that are necessary due to the LIFE+ Project works, and ultimately report to the Steering Group

JB proposed that the circulated Terms of Reference for the Steering Group be accepted. **HK** raised the issue of detail and this was deemed to be required in the Standing Orders. **Accepted by all**

KK proposed that the organisations represented be able to send a substitute representatives if necessary. **Accepted by all**

KK proposed that the meetings be quorate if a third of the group plus one individual was present, i.e. 4 people. **Accepted by all**

JB proposed that the group meet monthly until the project staff are in post, and the frequency of meetings to be reviewed thereafter.

JB proposed that the decision on the quorate level and proposals to formalise voting procedures be incorporated into a Standing Orders document, separate to the Terms of Reference. **Accepted by all. ACTION: Sue Plaxton** to draft Standing Orders document, and circulate it for comments ahead of the next meeting.



3. Minutes of the pre-steering group meeting (16th July 2014)

JB proposed that the minutes for the meeting of 16th July be accepted as a true and accurate record of that meeting. **KK** confirmed that he was the point of contact for DEIDB. **Accepted by all who were present on 16th July.**

The **Steering Group** gave a vote of thanks to **Sue Plaxton** for all her work so far in setting-up the Project.

5. Recruitment of the LIFE+ Team

JS outlined the origins of the staffing model, and the interplay between the posts and the level of 'external assistance' within the Project. Discussion identified the possibility of the need to review the temporary estate posts and it was proposed by **JB** and agreed that the PM would undertake a review and report back to the Steering Group.

PD gave an update of the current situation regarding recruitment. An application had been received through the Civil Service Redeployment Pool for the Administrator post. The Foremen and Estate Worker jobs are on the point of being advertised simultaneously externally and internally within Natural England and the Civil Service. The Project Manager and Monitoring posts, respectively, were currently being advertised internally.

The **Steering Group** discussed the fact that internal advertising could lead to both weaker candidates being appointed to posts, and despite the Associated Beneficiary being involved with sifting and interviewing, could be seen to be less transparent than advertising externally at the same time. The **Steering Group** unanimously expressed its **strong regret** that the recruitment was being handled in this way. **ACTION: PD** will contact Natural England's HR team to discuss this issue and whether changes could be made to the recruitment process.

HK asked whether the biological monitoring provisions within the Project were sufficient and whether sufficient baseline information exists to judge the success of the project. **JS** said that there exists baseline data on water levels, vegetation, breeding birds and an increasing amount on water voles, but that the biggest shortfall was up to date data on the distribution and status of some key invertebrates and invertebrate assemblages. However the Project, would bring substantially more resources to bear on invertebrate monitoring than have been available for a considerable time. The invertebrate monitoring programme was the major objective of the Monitoring Officer post. **JS** explained, following questions by **HK** that NE would undertake Habitat Regulations Assessment (HRA) for non nature conservation / management tasks to demonstrate transparent compliance.



JB said that due to the recruitment delays, the Steering Group should be able to approve an interim implementation plan covering the period up to the LIFE+ project team being settled in. **ACTION: JS** to circulate an interim implementation plan prior to the next meeting.

6. PR Launch

HK/KK and **Sue Plaxton** have been working together on the outline of the PR launch, which is earmarked for **17th October**. **KK** recommended Hatfields, in Hatfield, as a suitable venue.

- Minibuses arranged by the NNR team would transport people after the buffet to Jones' Cable, Thorne Moor, and back again after a site visit. Staff from the WLMP and/or NNR / Forum would be available on the minibuses and on site as informed guides
- It was agreed that there would be a rolling Powerpoint display of images in the background at the venue, to be arranged by NE
- NE will arrange for the design and printing of a project folder with inserts to be used on the day, others to contribute information and items.
- **ACTION: All** any suggestions of alterations to the provisional guest list to be sent to Sue Plaxton (back from annual leave Wednesday)
- NE will make arrangements for the press to be informed of the event, including those on draft invite programme.
- In the event of bad weather, the site visit would switch to Hatfield Moor, as less walking would be needed from the minibuses

PD to confirm the proportions to be funded by Natural England and/or the LIFE+ project.

7. Memorandum of Agreement

JS to liaise with **KK** about the Partnership Agreement required for the Project between the Co-ordinating and Associated Beneficiaries, and they would work on this together. **KK** also confirmed that he was the point of contact for DEIDB.

8. Time/Date of the next meeting

The next meeting will be on 6th October 2014, 2pm at the Humberhead Peatlands NNR office.

9. AOB



JS explained that there had been an intention that there would be collaboration between this Steering Group and that of the Cumbrian Peatlands LIFE+ Project. The Group decided that this would be considered further once the LIFE+ team was in place and the Project was well underway.

The meeting closed at approximately 12.40pm the Chair thanking all present for their attendance and input.

ACTION SUMMARY

1. **JS** to ensure that everyone has sight of the full Project submission and the Common Provisions.
2. **Sue Plaxton** to draft Standing Orders document for consideration and circulation ahead of the next meeting to facilitate discussion at the next meeting.
3. **PD/JS** to contact, in due course, the HLDMG concerning the potential effects of scrub clearance on red deer populations and any other deer management actions that become necessary due to LIFE+ Project works, reporting back in due course to the Steering Group
4. **PD** will contact Natural England's HR team to discuss this issue and whether changes could be made to the recruitment process. **PD** will also ensure that they are made aware of the serious concerns that the Steering Group have about this procedure.
5. **JS** to circulate an interim implementation plan prior to the next meeting.
6. **Actions – PR launch**
 - **KK** to liaise with Hatfields, **JS** to make any necessary deposit payments to the venue
 - **JS** to arrange for minibuses and drivers
 - **All** – to inform Sue Plaxton of suggested alterations to the invitation list
 - **KK** to liaise with political invitees, **NE** to invite other attendees
 - **JS** to arrange for production of printed material
 - **NE** to arrange rolling Powerpoint display of iconic images and other display furniture
 - **NE** to make arrangements for the press to be informed of the event
 - **PD** to confirm the proportions to be funded by Natural England and/or the LIFE+ project.