



**20<sup>th</sup> February 2015, 10.30-11.45am, Hatfield Moors NNR Office, Unit 1a, Green Tree Warehousing, Tudworth Road, Hatfield, DN7 6HD**

Attendees: Jeff Bloor (JB), Paul Duncan (PD), Sue Plaxton (SP), Helen Kirk (HK), Melissa Massarella (MM), David Hinchliffe (DNH), Matt Blissett (MB), James Freeborough (JF), Tim Allen (TA)

Apologies: Caroline Steel (CS)

Support staff: Amanda Lane (AJL)

### 1. Minutes of Last Meeting and Matters Arising

The minutes of the last meeting held on 12<sup>th</sup> January 2015, were agreed as a true narrative.

HK suggested that the information under item 6 referring to notes from SP's notebook, (which were not relayed at the meeting), would be better if appended to the minutes.

#### **Actions from the last meeting - SP**

<b>No.</b>	<b>Action description</b>	<b>Status</b>	<b>Covered under Agenda Item no.</b>
1	Terms of Reference	Ongoing	3
2	Thorne Moors WLMP audit	Completed	2
3	Draft Partnership Agreement	Ongoing	5b
4	Inception Report template	Ongoing	5b
5	Update the LIFE+ monitor about the website and send a link to steering group members when the Gov.uk web page is	Completed	N/A
6	Create a website for the Humberhead Levels Partnership (HLP) and dedicated web page for LIFE+ and obtain a quote	Ongoing	5b
7	Engaging our audiences/social media	Ongoing	5b

### 2. Thorne Water Level Management Plan (TMWLMP) update including representation on the LIFE+ group – JB

JB provided members with an update on the Thorne Moors Water Level Management Plan (TMWLMP). Following a recent internal audit of the TMWLMP, an Action Plan has been drawn up to strengthen governance. The Action Plan commissioned by and presented to the Doncaster East Internal Drainage Board (DE IDB) has been supported and accepted. JB informed members that the Action Plan



allowed the TMWLMP project to move forward and brought with it a different set of controls. The controls include, interim audits conducted at the mid-point, along with an annual audit carried out by the Board. Members asked who would carry out future interim audits. JB informed the group that a tender would be issued to invite external organisations to bid for the auditing work.

Steering Group members went on to ask how the Action Plan would be monitored. JB informed the Group that it would be monitored by DE IDB Finance Committee with oversight provided by the Environment Agency. The Group was keen to know what lessons could be learnt from the TMWLMP audit and applied to the LIFE+ project. JB advised to welcome audits as they safe guard projects. DNH asked what funding was available in the LIFE+ Project to fund audits. **Action 1:** PD agreed to contact the NE finance team to check if the 3.5% contingency could cover auditing of the LIFE+ project and to advise the Group. SP confirmed that an audit at the end of the project is included and funded, and that additional mechanisms are in place throughout the duration of the project to monitor its governance, provided through the EU Monitor. However, there may be scope in the bid to do more audits. TA reminded the Group that if the HLFLPS was successful to stage 2 then it will be audited in 2017, 2019 and beyond, and that any audit would encompass the LIFE+ project. He suggested that potentially the LIFE+ project would be audited by a number of partners whose projects have links to this one.

JB thanked partners for their support with the Action Plan, including Doncaster Metropolitan District Council (DMBC) and the Environment Agency (EA). PD thanked JB for pulling together the TMWLMP Action Plan and his work in presenting it to the DE IDB.

JB informed the group that he would be standing down as Chair of the DE IDB at the end of March. He had also informed the Board he would also be retiring from the Board before the June meeting. However he was now reconsidering this decision.

SP informed members that there was a requirement for two representatives from the DE IDB on the LIFE+ Project Steering Group and Roger Mitchell, from DE IDB, had agreed to join Jeff Bloor on the Group.

### 3. Terms of Reference – SP

SP referred members to version 8 of the draft ToRs. She thanked HK for her feedback on the ToRs which had since been reworked into the document, specifically item 9. *Responsibilities of the Partners*, which refers to the Steering Group. SP reported that she had found a paragraph in the bid about the role of the steering group and added this in as well as information about the TMWLMP. HK asked that the wording be amended and it was agreed to remove “*which involves leading a consortium of drainage boards to implement the Plan for Thorne, Crowle and Goole Moors*”. JB and DNH asked if the ToRs could now be accepted and adopted by the Steering Group. MM advised that she required authority from DMBC before agreeing the sign-off. Members agreed to adopt the ToRs in their current form, subject to sign off by DMBC, and that they will work towards these now. It was anticipated by the



Group that the final version of the ToRs would be signed off before the next meeting in March.

#### 4. Membership of DE IDB on the LIFE+ group – SP

This was covered under item 2.

#### 5. Progress Update – SP and PD

##### a. Recruitment

PD informed members that the Project Manager for the LIFE+ project, David Hargreaves (DPH), would be starting on Wednesday 25th February 2015. SP and Julian Small (JS) would be taking David through the intricacies of the LIFE+ project, along with other members of the project team. PD assured everyone that he would receive a thorough induction. Members asked about David's background, he comes to the project having worked as a Conservation Manager with Yorkshire Wildlife Trust and more recently as the Project Manager on the 'Moors for the Future'. Members welcomed his appointment and news of his start date.

##### b. Key Milestones/Operational Activities

SP referred members to the *Humberhead Peatlands LIFE+ actions and Deliverable Products of the Project* and the operational activities update from JS. SP went through the deliverables that had to be achieved by 31<sup>st</sup> March 2015 and reported to the EU via the Inception Report.

Members asked for progress on the felling license. PD informed the Group that it was being held up by the Forestry Commission who were defining, within the context of the Humberhead Peatlands, what constitutes a tree. MB advised that it had taken two years to gain the felling license for forestry work on Crowle. DNH expressed urgency in obtaining the license as it could bring the project into disrepute as work continues on the Moors. **Action 2:** PD agreed to pursue this with JS as a matter of urgency and advise the Group.

Going through the project deliverables/milestones SP advised the Group that the 1<sup>st</sup> project newsletter (action E4) scheduled for completion by 31<sup>st</sup> Dec 2014 would be issued in the next couple of weeks. It was being written by Janet Canning (JC), Humberhead Peatlands, National Nature Reserve (NNR) Manager and would be a combination of activities from the NNR and LIFE+ project. The 2<sup>nd</sup> newsletter would solely focus on the LIFE+ project from thereon. SP advised members that the LIFE+ project newsletters could potentially be accessible from the Humberhead Levels website, once created. JB suggested utilising Hatfield Town Council's newsletter, the Hatfield Herald to promote the LIFE+ project.

SP went onto express general concerns about promoting and communicating the LIFE+ project to stakeholders and the wider community. She informed the Group that a budget was available but a decision was needed on who would carry out



these activities. SP suggested that the budget could be used to employ a PR and Communications consultant, or create a PR and Communications role, but this would need to be authorised by the EU. SP also suggested that she could approach the Cumbrian LIFE+ project as they employ a full time PR and Communications officer. The intention being to share their expertise across both projects. TA stressed the importance of a co-ordinated message about the projects that come under the umbrella of the Humberhead Levels. He pointed out that if the HFLPS and LIFE+ projects communicate their own individual messages it could confuse and dilute what is happening across the whole of the Levels. It was suggested that a joint newsletter covering the work taking place across the Humberhead Levels by all projects would provide a coherent message and provide economies of scale. MB recognised that each partner could provide the information but there was a requirement to co-ordinate the message. TA suggested that a group is brought together to discuss this further. HK suggested that SG members should be communicating the Humberhead Levels projects internally to their own staff. Members then went onto suggest places where the project could be promoted, for example, Potteric Carr Nature Reserve. The Group suggested that it was the responsibility of the project manager to come back with further plans on marketing and communications. **Action 3:** DPH to devise a Communication Strategy for discussion at next SGM.

The Group was concerned that there were a number of actions that had not been achieved and potentially would roll-over into the coming months impacting on future milestones. In addition, members were concerned about the slow pace in which the scrub was being cleared. SP said that the reasons for the delay in delivering some of the project milestones would be detailed and explained in the Inception Report, including how these would be mitigated to ensure the project was back on track. An extension of time could also be requested from the EU if it was deemed necessary. **Action 4:** DPH to provide revised milestone dates.

JB felt that the report provided, outlining operational activity updates was sparse and needed to clearly relate to the project milestones. **Action 5:** PD advised members that he would ask JS to produce a report relating operational activities to project milestones and budget/spend.

SP provided the Group with an update on the Partnership Agreement. It is currently with NE's legal team. The legal team is aware of the deadline for its completion and also conscious that as one of the organisation's first LIFE+ projects, with the potential for others in the future, the document requires detailed scrutiny.

SP reported that Alison Briggs (AB), Shire Group (SG) Administrative Officer/JBA, on behalf of DE IDB had been providing feedback on the Partnership Agreement and it would include details about financial mechanisms. JB advised that JBA are contacted regarding the requirement for timesheets and that the process is clearly documented. He informed the Group that JBA had been asked to submit a report to DE IDB on their charges as part of the TMWLMP. **Action 6:**



DPH to make contact with Craig Benson, JBA, to discuss with him the requirement for timesheet documentation. JB suggested to SP that as the Partnership Agreement would require Chris McGuinness signature, as Chair of DE IBD, that arrangements would need to be in place to do this. **Action 7:** DPH to liaise with AB on arrangements for signing the Partnership Agreement.

SP gave an update on the two project websites. A Humberhead Levels LIFE+ Project web page is now on the GOV.UK website and SP is progressing the creation of a Humberhead Levels Partnership website which could house webpages for each of the umbrella projects, including the LIFE+ project and links to the LPS project website. TA confirmed that the Humberhead Levels Landscape Partnership website had been designed so that it could accommodate linkages to partners' websites.

## 6. AOB: SP

6.1 SP informed members that she will be attending the end of year conference of the RSPB LIFE+ project Futurescapes and Landscape-scale Conservation. The conference will include a visit to the Somerset Levels which SP felt had similarities to the Humberhead Levels landscape. SP will report back to the Group on the conference and lessons learnt.

6.2 Members asked about the specifics of the Cumbria LIFE+ project. PD and SP advised that:

- The project is for a duration of 5 years.
- They are experiencing similar staffing issues to the Humberhead Peatlands project.
- They had commissioned external contractors to deliver the majority of the project deliverables.
- The steering group meet annually, with a task and finish group meeting quarterly to direct the project deliverables.

SP said that the Cumbria project team had been in touch reference sharing best practice. **Action 8:** SP agreed to provide the Group with an overview of the Cumbria project and possible linkages between the projects.

**7 Date of Next Meeting:** 18<sup>th</sup> March 2015 – 14.00-16.00 at Hatfield Moors NNR Office – now moved to 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2015 from 10.30-12.30, followed by a site visit in the afternoon to Thorne Moors.

Members asked how long the Steering Group would continue to meet on a monthly basis before moving to quarterly meetings. PD suggested that monthly meetings would take place at least for the next couple of months until DPH is fully installed in the project.