

**Longbeech Mire, Longbeech Inclosure,
Ma5 (Corbets Hat Mire, Woodcrates Mire, White Moor)
SSSI Habitat Restoration Consultation Meeting
13th October 2014**

Present:

Sarah Oakley	HLS Ecologist	Forestry Commission
Nick Wardlaw	HLS Hydromorphologist	Forestry Commission
Alex Howells	HLS Works Supervisor	Forestry Commission
Sonia Lorenzo Martin	HLS Contracts Manager	Forestry Commission
Tim Creed	Beat Keeper (Longbeech sites)	Forestry Commission
Andy Shore	Beat Keeper (Ma5 sites)	Forestry Commission
Peter Greenslade	Land Mgt & Conservation Advisor	Natural England
Ian Barker	Ecologist	New Forest National Park Authority
Jack Powell	Work Placement Student	New Forest National Park Authority
Lawrence Shaw	Heritage Mapping & Data Officer	New Forest National Park Authority
Brian Ingram	Committee member	Commoners Defence Association
Richard Stride	Committee member	Commoners Defence Association
Billy Howells	Committee member	Commoners Defence Association
Leanne Sargeant	Verderers Grazing Scheme Administrator	
Diana Westerhoff	Verderer	
Dave Readhead	Verderer	
Richard Deakin	Verderer	
Jenni Tubbs	New Forest Association	
Lynden Bowen	New Forest Access Forum	

Apologies:

Lisa Macher	Beat Forester	Forestry Commission
Frank Green	Archaeologist	New Forest National Park Authority
Graham Ferris	Chair	Commoners Defence Association
Barry Dowsett	Verderer	

BACKGROUND

This consultation site visit covered three SSSI units, Longbeech Mire (unit 73), Longbeech Inclosure (unit 112) and Ma5 (unit 341). Ma5 is the group name for eleven small mire areas located between the A31 and A35, from Burley to Emery Down. The sites are discussed below in the order in which they were visited.

The following condition assessments are taken from the SSSI unit information pages on Natural England's website, www.sssi.naturalengland.org.uk.

Longbeech Mire (unit 73):

Management to improve the condition of the habitat is underway and should ensure that targets for the key attributes in the conservation objectives are met.

This assessment, recorded in 2008, reflects the in principle agreement between NE and FC (and the ongoing commitment of the FC) to undertake SSSI restoration work in the New Forest. It does not cover any site specific issues, or imply that no further intervention is required to achieve favourable condition.

Longbeech Inclosure (unit 112):

This is a long-established inclosure woodland and part of a much larger complex of inclosures. It consists largely of oak and beech plantation with areas of conifer plantation. Parts were re-planted with conifer in the 1960s. There are small areas of original pasture woodland and some quite extensive areas of open heath and grassland habitat.

The inclosure is identified in the Forest Design Plan as having a long-term objective of promoting the further development of a more natural pasture woodland structure and

composition, and further expansion of the open habitats. This is to be achieved through gradual thinning and removal of conifers, promotion of broadleaf regeneration, restoration of open heath and wetland habitat, and creation of more open space. This process is proceeding well but is not yet complete. The area is unfenced and is grazed by animals with the adjacent open Forest. The areas of mixed deciduous woodland have a predominantly oak and beech canopy. There is a scattered shrub layer mostly made up by holly. The ground flora is generally sparse due to the dense canopy cover but is characteristic of the woodland type with sparse bracken and bilberry. The recently established open areas have areas of species-rich acid grassland which add to overall habitat and structural diversity. The small mire in the unit is also species-rich and has good representation of characteristic plants including white beak-sedge. It has high cover of Sphagnum and other bryophytes indicating good habitat conditions. There are good prospects for further habitat recovery with further opening up of the canopy and removal of conifers.

Conifers were cleared from a central area of the Inclosure approximately ten years ago, and two wooden dam structures were placed in the stream channel. These structures are now on the verge of collapse.

Ma5 (unit 341):

This unit is in 11 parts spread over a wide area, all include a variety of habitats including woodland, heath, mire and small scattered patches of seasonally inundated Molinia dominated grassland. All of the areas were visited and plant diversity is high, there is good representation of characteristic plants in the heath and mire habitats. A small population of common butterwort was found at Acres Down. Cover of Sphagnum exceeds 40% in most of the mires and is frequent in much of the wet heath. Several areas of woodland occur along the axis of some of the unit valleys generally dominated by alder with some notably ancient coppice stools and a good age range, also willow, ash, holly, birch and appropriate ground flora. Cover of scrub, bracken and gorse in the open habitats is within target although pine and birch seedlings in places represent a potential threat if not managed. It is notable that there is good structural and habitat diversity of value for invertebrates, reptiles and amphibians throughout the unit. Lapwing were seen in several places. There are no indications of negative impacts arising from nutrient input, excessive disturbance or trampling and current grazing levels appear appropriate to maintain the habitats in good condition. There are occasional areas where recreational and grazing pressure are causing erosion but these are minimal and not increasing in scale. Drainage is an issue in several places but in particular at White Moor where several straightened drainage channels cross the wet heath. Some of these are naturally infilling and may be of value as habitat for a variety of Odonata as at Acres Down a known site used by Southern Damselfly. Adjacent to these is a consistently wide strip of species rich molinia meadow which may be artificially created. Some restoration of these drains is needed and hence the unit remains unfavourable recovering.

Of these eleven areas, only three were assessed as having potential for wetland restoration. These are Corbets Hat Mire, Woodcrates Mire and White Moor.

CONSULTATION DISCUSSION POINTS:

LONGBEECH MIRE

- 1. Eastern mire: Four eroding stretches along the mire system, going from south to north. These are being used as crossings by stock, riders and walkers.**

Review these erosion points and decide which to formalise as crossings. All should be repaired with staked heather bales to remove unstable 'nick points' and protect the mire.

A: HIGHEST NICK POINT AND INFORMAL STOCK CROSSING. INFILL EROSION NICK POINTS AND BED LEVEL RAISE UPSTREAM, RAMPING DOWN TO AN OAK BOARDED GRAVEL CROSSING TO SUPPORT THE MIRE.

B: COMPLETELY INFILL ERODED STRETCH AND REINSTATE MIRE VEGETATION ON TOP.

C: COMPLETELY INFILL ERODED STRETCH AND REINSTATE MIRE VEGETATION ON TOP.

D: ERODED STOCK CROSSING; TC CONFIRMED THIS WAS THE ONE MOST USED BY RIDERS AND WALKERS. INFILL EROSION NICK POINTS AND BED LEVEL RAISE UPSTREAM, RAMPING DOWN TO AN OAK BOARDED GRAVEL CROSSING TO SUPPORT THE MIRE.

AGREED BY ALL PARTIES.

- 2. Western mire: Pinch point where the mire meets the inclosure boundary bank, and continues in a dug channel with spoil banks up to the inclosure treeline.**

Level the inclosure bank in the vicinity of the mire, to create a wider gap to prevent an eroding 'pinch point'. Use the existing spoil to level the drain line and allow a more natural spread of mire habitat up to the treeline.

REQUEST BY RS TO TAKE NEARBY TREES OFF INCLOSURE BANK; TREES TO BE RETAINED TO BE AGREED WITH THE BEAT KEEPER. RESTORATION PROPOSAL AND TREE FELLING AGREED BY ALL PARTIES.

- 3. Western mire: Erosion nick point at the informal crossing further south of the Inclosure, and localised minor erosion just upstream.**

Repair the eroded mire area with staked heather bales to support the mire upstream, and install a gravel ford crossing with boarded edges.

AGREED BY ALL PARTIES. SMALL PINES BESIDE THE CROSSING TO BE FELLED.

- 4. Tree-lined, deep eroding drain with spoil banks along its length, within dense bracken.**

Fell trees, level spoil banks, infill drain.

RESTORATION PROPOSAL AGREED BY ALL PARTIES. PROPOSAL BY VERDERERS AND CDA TO CLEAR BRACKEN, REMOVE PLOUGHLINES AND STUMPS AND RESTORE OPEN HABITAT IN THE VICINITY OF THIS DRAIN, AND UP TO THE GREEN RIDE (2 HECTARES). FC TO INVESTIGATE POSSIBILITY, COST AND IMPACT OF MULCHING STUMPS AND LEVELLING SITE, AND REPORT BACK TO CONSULTEES.

LONGBEECH INCLOSURE

- 5. Watercourse flowing through open lawn area within plantation woodland, with two failing wooden dam structures from previous restoration work.**

Remove wooden structures and marry in bed levels either side.

RESTORATION PROPOSAL AGREED BY ALL PARTIES.

ADDITIONAL TREE FELLING WAS DISCUSSED. THE REMAINING CONIFERS EITHER SIDE OF THE CLEARING ARE DUE TO BE HARVESTED THIS WINTER, WHICH WILL REQUIRE CROSSING THE WATERCOURSE. ONCE HARVESTING OPERATIONS ARE COMPLETE, THE REMAINING BROADLEAVES WILL BE REVIEWED AND ADDITIONAL FELLING REQUIREMENTS DISCUSSED WITH THE BEAT KEEPER AND THE CDA. RESTORATION WORK TO BE DONE ONCE TREE FELLING HAS BEEN COMPLETED, SO THE SITE CAN BE REINSTATED AND ALLOWED TO RECOVER.

NORTH SLUFTERS INCLOSURE

- 1. Review 'crossing point 1' on the Open Forest on the northern edge of the Inclosure. The concrete culvert has been removed and temporarily replaced with a gravel ford. Following discussions with the Forestry Commission Civil Engineers this summer, the original agreed proposal to install a vented causeway is not considered feasible. Permanently replace with a gravel ford crossing with boarded edges. AGREED BY ALL PARTIES.**
- 2. Review 'crossing point 13a' on the Open Forest on the eastern edge of the Inclosure. Following discussions with the Forestry Commission Civil Engineers this summer, the original agreed proposal to install a vented causeway is not considered feasible. Replace with a gravel ford crossing with boarded edges. As previously agreed, undertake bed level raising either side of the ford crossing (for 10m upstream and 5m downstream) to grade into the existing restored channel bed levels. AGREED BY ALL PARTIES.**

AMBERSLADE & BROOMY INCLOSURE

- 3. Wooden vehicle bridge over a deep eroding channel that requires bed level raising. A previous site visit proposed replacing this bridge with a vented causeway as part of the restoration plan for this site. From what has been learnt this year from Forestry Commission Civil Engineers, the original agreed proposal to install a vented causeway is no longer considered feasible to deliver the objectives of the restoration, or to work within the topography of the surrounding landscape. Replace the wooden vehicle bridge with a gravel ford crossing. AGREED BY ALL PARTIES. (NB THIS SITE WAS NOT VISITED ON THIS CONSULTATION.)**

MA5: CORBETS HAT MIRE, WOODCRATES MIRE, WHITE MOOR

CORBETS HAT MIRE

- 1. Eroded passageway and adjacent eroding nick point in the mire. Narrow incised channel running alongside track downstream.**

Repair passageway by defining the line and raising the bed level to that of the adjoining mire. Infill the eroding nick point in the mire with heather bales, and install a gravel ford where the water from the mire flows across the track. Raise the bed level of the track downstream of the ford to its original level, and focus the mire flow in a wider, shallower channel to link in to the wooded channel downstream. Fell pine in the vicinity of the passageway.

RESTORATION PROPOSAL AGREED BY ALL PARTIES.

RS REQUESTED THAT THE BIRCH, PINE AND HOLLY COLONISING THE MIRE WAS FELLED. AGREED BY ALL PARTIES.

AS AND RS NOTED THAT SOME OF THE WATER CROSSING THE PASSAGEWAY IS FROM AN ISSUE HIGHER UP THE TRACK THAT NEEDS TO BE RESOLVED. SO AGREED TO RETURN TO REVIEW THIS WITH THEM.

Track linking Corbets Hat Mire to the gravel track.

AS raised a maintenance request to keep this route usable during the wetter weather. AS TO PURSUE WITH THE OPEN FOREST MANAGEMENT TEAM.

WOODCRATES MIRE

- 2. Minor erosion nick point at southern edge of mire.**

Ramp down using heather bales from two minor nick points to their confluence (approximately 10m).

AGREED BY ALL PARTIES.

WHITE MOOR

- 3. Network of artificial drainage channels across White Moor.**

These were reviewed. There are two opposing opinions on how to manage these drainage channels – fill them in, or clear them out?

IT WAS AGREED THAT FOR THE MAJORITY OF THE SITE, THE EXISTING VEGETATED DRAINS ARE AN ACCEPTABLE COMPROMISE. A SHORT STRETCH OF MORE INCISED DRAIN WHERE IT RUNS BESIDE SCRUB AND WILLOW WILL HAVE THE TREES CLEARED BACK AND HAVE ITS BED LEVEL RAISED (55 METRES).