



BOARD MEETING

10.30 am – Friday 6 September 2019

The Morritt Arms, Greta Bridge, County Durham

Board Members Present: David Hill (Chairman); David Alborough (Northumbrian Water); Amanda Anderson (Moorland Association); Richard Betton (Northern Hill Farming Panel); Jim Cokill (Durham Wildlife Trust); David Gray (Open Seat); Elliott Lorimer (Forest of Bowland AONB Partnership); Amanda Miller (RSPB); Laurie Norris (NFU); Gary Smith (Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority); Crispin Thorn (Forestry Commission); Chris Woodley-Stewart (North Pennines AONB Partnership).

Others present: Anne Gray (Heather Trust); Allie Hesketh (NFU); Ian Proudler (LNP Curlew Project Funding Officer); Clare Steward (Environment Agency); Gill Thompson (Northumberland National Park Authority); Jim Wardill (RSPB).

1. Apologies

Paul Burgess (Nidderdale AONB Partnership); Neil Kilgour (Open Seat); Ben Lamb (Tees Rivers Trust); Fiona Morris (Environment Agency); Laurie Norris (NFU); Christine Venus (Natural England); Pauline Wall (Northumberland National Park Authority)

2. Draft position statement on vertebrate control

Amanda Miller gave a brief introduction to the paper, the content of which had been previously circulated to the Board for comment. It was stressed that it was intended to be a short position statement (not a detailed policy) and to apply only to wader-related conservation projects carried out by the LNP itself (i.e. not to work done by partners as part of their own projects). Amanda Anderson had suggested a number of changes (circulated to the Board). The Board agreed that significant amendment was not necessary so long as the limited application of the statement (the LNP's own wader projects) was made clear in the final version.

3. Annual Forum

The Board was asked to consider whether to re-schedule the Annual Forum originally planned for September. It was agreed to hold the Forum in March 2020, and that future Forums would also be held in March each year. There was considerable discussion about the content of the Forum. It was agreed to retain the broad theme of 'Nature Recovery' but to restructure the format, and include discussions on how more woodland planting and regeneration could be delivered. It was also noted that there would need to be some opportunity for members of the wider Forum to identify any new areas of work that they think the LNP should be focusing on.

4. Update on other LNP projects

HNV farming – Richard Betton gave an update on the work of the HNV farming group and the Northern Hill Farming Panel. The key thing to note was that the ADAS report would now be launched at the Nidderdale

Show on 23 September. The group thought there would be merit in a piece of work to look at ‘what are the hills worth?’. A report on this proposal would come to the Board meeting in December.

Hill Farm Training – Gill Thompson confirmed that the pilot project was now proceeding without any formal link to the FCL Hill Farming Training project. The first training event would be held on 14 November at Town Shields Farm.

Curlew ‘Focus Area’ Project – Ian Proudler update the Board on progress to date. There had been a very positive response from stakeholders but there is still a lot of work to do to draw a coherent and viable project together. The Board also noted the need to ensure that the focus on a narrow range of species did not, inadvertently, lead to adverse effects on other species/habitats. It was agreed that Ian – with the support of the Curlew group – would develop an outline project proposal that the Board could sign off in December. The final details could then be left to Ian/Curlew group. The Board confirmed that up to £5,000 was available – if needed – to source data to support the final funding bid.

Amanda Miller reported that, following the last Board, a significant number of further comments had been received on the curlew advice note. This meant it had taken longer than planned to finalise the text but this had now been signed off by the curlew project group, and sent to Gary Smith on 2 September.

5. Financial update

The Board noted the financial position. Gary Smith would check whether invoices had been sent to the AONB Partnerships and NP authorities for their funding contributions for 2019/20.

6. Information sharing

Across the 21st & 22nd September there will be a national awareness raising weekend for raptor persecution led by police wildlife crime officers and supported by a variety of partners as part of [Operation Owl](#).

Richard Betton had met Elizabeth Buchanan (Non-exec Director at Defra). She had expressed interest in the LNP’s work on High Nature Value Farming and the Curlew project.

EA is developing a large capital ‘**Water Investment Fund**’, which will be designed to deliver natural capital as a whole (rather than focusing just on WFD).

Red Squirrels Northern England (RSNE) – Crispin Thorn highlighted that the RSNE had just completed their 8th consecutive annual monitoring exercise. The data provides a long-term assessment of red and grey squirrel trends across the North of England and represents an excellent evidence base to help demonstrate the impact of the collective red squirrel conservation activity. Analysis is still ongoing but initial results look promising. The number of sites in which greys were detected decreased in comparison to 2018, halting a concerning pattern of increase that was observed in the previous two years. The role of volunteers is critical in both supporting the data gathering and also delivering effective red squirrel conservation. CT would circulate the full report when it is published.

English Tree Strategy – CT noted that a new English Tree Strategy is expected later this year. This provides an opportunity for the LNP to consider the role of trees and woodlands across the area and potentially review the work already undertaken through the prospectus. It was clear that there remains strong interest in supporting both woodland creation alongside ensuring the principle of planting the right tree in the right place is delivered effectively.

The Defra **Wildfire Review** should be published soon.

It is expected that the **England Peatland Strategy** will also be published soon.

Defra recently completed a targeted consultation on [burning on deep peat](#).

7. Minutes of the last meeting and matters arising

The minutes were otherwise agreed to be a true record. All the actions had been completed, other than nos 4. and 10. These would be carried forward.

8. Any other business

The Board noted the following as potential items for the next meeting in December:

Raptor persecution – to reconsider the LNP’s draft action plan in light of the expected publication of the RPPDG’s national action plan.

‘What are the hills worth?’ – potential study into the value of the uplands in the Northern Upland Chain.

Impacts of Heather Beetle – in light of widespread impacts in 2019.

9. Date of next meeting

6 December 2019.

The Board agreed that for 2020 onwards, meetings would take place on the first Thursday of the month (rather than the first Friday). A calendar of dates for 2020 would be circulated following the meeting.

AGREED ACTIONS

| | NAME | ACTION |
|-----|---------------------------------------|--|
| 1. | Gary Smith | To amend the Vertebrate Control Position Statement in line with the Board’s request. |
| 2. | Gary Smith | To identify a date for the Forum in March 2020 (presumed to be the first Thursday of the month). |
| 3. | Gary Smith | To circulate a revised agenda for the Forum |
| 4. | Board Members | To secure appropriate speakers for the Forum |
| 5. | Richard Betton, Adrian Shepherd & NFU | To launch the ADAS report at the Nidderdale Show |
| 6. | Richard Betton, Adrian Shepherd | To bring a proposal for a study into ‘what are the hills worth?’ to the Board meeting in December. |
| 7. | Gary Smith | To format the Curlew advice notes (adding LNP logo etc) and arrange for publication (on the website). |
| 8. | Gill Thompson | To liaise between NNPA’s Comms Team and the Curlew project group to produce a communications plan. |
| 9. | Ian Proudler | To produce an outline for the ‘Curlew Focus Area’ project for the Board to sign off at the December meeting. |
| 10. | Gary Smith | To invoice the AONB Partnerships and NP Authorities for 2019/20 funding contributions |