

Hello Dale

Thank you for arranging today's meeting and to Liz and Nigel for their time. The meeting went well and was very useful for all parties. Unfortunately, Kim Pearce (Natural England – NE) was unable to attend but Emma Quick attended on behalf of NE

Please see a summary of our discussion below :

- It was confirmed the fire was caused by arson and that someone has been arrested
- It was agreed that the extreme weather coupled with the deliberate arson attack was the cause and that the present management of the common was not a factor
- The fire service completed a report, and the PC reps will ask for a copy of it and share with SWT and NE
- Discussion was had about whether to cut and remove the burnt gorse stems or leave in situ. From an ecological viewpoint it does no harm to leave it, but the PC should also seek a view from the fire service on this.
- If the burnt gorse is to be cut back, SWT advised seeking the support of a contractor to cut and chip due to the amount of work required to clear it.
- It was good to see that a lot of gorse is already regenerating from the base and many seedlings have germinated, greening up burnt areas rapidly.
- It was agreed that due to the fire burning back much of the gorse, this winter would be a good opportunity to dedicate time to other forms of positive management for wildlife such as creating scalloped edges along rides where the gorse has been burnt and to open up some small corners at the junction of paths and rides.
- Fire breaks are still present and will be maintained. If desired these could also be extended as part of the habitat management work this winter
- The current management plan remains valid despite the fire, but this will need to be reviewed and extended 2023 – ideally to correspond with a 5 year extension of the HLS agreement. It was felt that little would need to be changed and that the need to manage the gorse has been reduced for the next few years due to the fire.
- The PC reps informed Natural England that they would like to be considered for an extension to the current HLS agreement for 5 years with the option to move into a new ELMs scheme (without penalty). The PC should receive an extension offer to the HLS before Christmas

We also clarified the roles of the interested parties. The PC should report to NE/ RPA (Rural Payments Agency) for all matters relating to the HLS agreement and any future agri-environment scheme. The PC can apply directly for future schemes and do not have to go through SWT. However, we can offer free advisory support for applications. As the Common is a County Wildlife Site, SWT will continue to offer free advice on habitat management and are happy to review the and any future agri-environment applications and Management Plans for the PC.

Kim Pearce NE, is more than happy to talk through the HLS extension and future agri-environment possibilities with you so I have copied Kim into this email

Thanks again to Liz and Nigel for coming along today. We look forward to returning and seeing how well the common responds to the fire

Kind regards
Graham Hart
Conservation Adviser