

VIP PROJECT – WALK the ROUTE with the RESOTRATION CONTRACTOR – ALASKA

Monday 25th February 2019

Taking part in walk:

NG	Stuart Fox (SF) Ben Smith (BenS)
Alaska	Will Bond (WB)
HPC	JH, IG, JM, WT, RA-S and GL
PHPM	Peter Gear

At the very start WB explained what Alaska had done so far.

Extensive soil/topography surveys and had been closely working with the Nat Eng soil and ecology specialist.

Started walk by entrance to Pound Bottom – followed route as marked on latest NG plan.

At regular intervals the Alaska representative, Will Bond, took soil samples to show basic soil make up and depth of top-soil. The top soil across this area is mostly around a depth of 100-120 mm and variably includes soil, rotted down vegetation, sand, clay and a variety of plant roots.

Gorse – the route tries to avoid the most dense areas of gorse for 2 reasons:

- a. wildlife need the gorse
- b. areas of gorse make turf preservation difficult because the removal movement causes the dropped seeds to come-to-life and start to grow.

So where an area of gorse cannot be avoided Alaska will pull up and either transplant elsewhere (if appropriate) or dispose of.

Plan is that the widest part of 'swathe' would be 100 m wide – the trench digging area = 60 m and then the removed top-soil turves would be stored 20 m to either side. In some areas where there is not the width the turves might need to be moved to the wider sections or to sections where the turves were not being preserved – such as the section where the NT have cut down multiple trees leaving a 'wasteland' – this area would be re-seeded as the turves would not be of the quality to re-start proper growth.

The will use spiked digger tool to dig down to hard base and then gently lift turf off in one piece – this is more effective and better for preservation than using a bucket on the digger. Digger operators are skilled and practised in this task.

The best practice is to remove turf during the winter and then replace during the same winter – though actuality has shown that turves can be preserved for at least 6 months and up to a year.

Where possible the turves will be replaced as the work goes along but there will be some areas where this won't be possible – ie under the haul road.

Process will be:

1. Mow area to be worked on and the storage area – this makes the area flatter and easier to manage but also by reducing the size of the 'canopy' of a plant gives the root system a greater chance of survival.
2. Within about 3 weeks any plant life on the turves will begin to yellow and within about 8 weeks will turn brown and become dormant.
3. Will not water whatever the weather as that would provoke growth – if left alone the plants will remain dormant.

Protected animal species will be hunted and removed to other areas but will not actively remove invertebrate species that will re-colonise by themselves once habitat is restored.

The tree felled area at the back of Mays Firs will be significantly improved from its current state once the work is completed and restoration done. Area will have tree stumps removed and the top soil will be re-seeded with 'bristle bent grass' and some heather. As these 2 plant are mutually dependant they will be planted together.

WB estimates that each restored area will be fenced for a MAX of 2-3 months for restoration to establish while other areas will restore better if wildlife (including ponies) are able to roam across freely. If I understood correctly it is only the seeded areas and not the translocated turf areas that would be fenced.

There are 2 areas where some additional tree felling will be required – at the back of A Passmore's land and along to the area closest to Tethering Drove. The felling will be kept to the minimum possible.

At the back to Mays Firs the 100 m swathe will start 12 m out from the line of telegraph poles – so – telegraph poles > 12 m > piles of turves (22m from poles) > trench digging work 32-92 m from poles) > turves (92-112 m from poles).

Haul road will remain in use for the duration of the work and the entrance by Pound Bottom will be the only access to the whole route.

Some trees will have to be felled along the Purlieu Road but, where possible, a screen will be maintained. The amount that can be maintained will reduce the closer one gets to the sealing compound as they will not descend the slope down to the mire. There is one place where works may have to be narrower than 60 metres and ducted trenches are being considered. Initially the sealing end compound will be visible from the road until the hedge screen regrows. The entrance to the sealing end compound will be offset to minimise visual impact.

The trees along the East side of the road would be retained where possible but the works would get closer to the road as they approach Folly Hill and Archer's Folly to keep away from the downhill slope and there would be very few trees left here. Contractors may use ducting at this narrow point as it allows cables to be laid closer to one another.

The pylon near Archer's Folly would be removed but there would be an end station which would be visible from Hale Purlieu although the main part of this would be further down the hill and would not be visible. Vehicular access to the end station will be required and will probably be through the existing gates. A section of Rhododendron would be cleared to gain access for the works but would be replaced by subsequent planting.

All reinstatement along Lady's Mile will be by reseedling.

Detailed proposals from contractors bidding for the work are due in this week. They are all required to use Alaska. Detailed methodology will not be known until a preferred contractor is selected.

WB stated the he feels there is a fine balance between restoration and overdoing it.