

SUBJECT TO APPROVAL

DARTMOOR COMMONERS' COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of the Dartmoor Commoners' Council held at Two Bridges Hotel, Princetown on Wednesday 17 October 2012.

Present:

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| Professor I Mercer - Chairman | Mr J Cooper | Mr D Powell |
| Mrs M Alford - Vice Chair | Mr P French | Mr M Reddaway |
| Mr L Branfield - Deputy Chair | Mr G Hill | Mr R Savery |
| Mr J Aylett | Mr L Jones | Mr R Steemson |
| Mr A Coaker | Mr J Jordan | Mr T Stratton |
| Mr A Cole | Mr B Lavis | Mr D W Webber |

In attendance

| | |
|----------------|-------------------------|
| Mrs L J Heriot | Ms Karla McKechnie DLPO |
| Mrs K F Davis | Miss Lucy Thomas NFU |

1 Chairman's Remarks

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting and introduced Kate Davis as Assistant Secretary to the Dartmoor Commoners' Council.

2 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence Messrs C Alford, P Abel, R Ashford, I Mortimore, M Retallick and R Pigott.

3 Confirmation of the Minutes

Mr Philip Abel's name had been omitted from the list of attendees for the Annual meeting. His name was added to the list. There being no other amendments the minutes of the meeting on 15 August were confirmed and signed.

4 Matters Arising

4.1 Dartmoor National Park Management Plan

A meeting had been arranged for Monday 5 November at 9.30 a.m. at Parke to discuss the National Park Management Plan with Quartermen and National Park officers. The Chairman asked for volunteers from each quarter it was established that the quartermen attending would be Mr John Cooper (North), Mr Philip French (South) with Mr Anton Coaker as substitute, Mr John Jordan (East), Mrs Mary Alford, (West) and Mr Layland Branfield, Deputy Chairman.

4.2 Sheep Clearance - Trowlesworthy

Mrs Alford informed Council that a meeting had taken place on 26 September with the National Trust to discuss the subject, and she said that Trust had been very helpful. As the matter was still in progress she felt it was too early for a report but would do so at the next Council meeting.

5. Matters Brought Forward

5.1 Defra –Tag Numbers

Mr Powell informed Members of the difficulty he had experienced, yet again, in trying to obtain information from Defra regarding ownership of some

ponies that had come in from the Forest after the Holne drift. He had spent a considerable amount of time and effort trying to locate the owners and felt that the Dartmoor Commoners' Council should have the authority to obtain information from Defra regarding ear tags.

The matter was discussed at length. Mr Coaker proposed that a formal letter be written to Defra explaining the Council's responsibilities and the reasons why the information is needed and the Chairman seconded it.

5.2 TB Concern

The Chairman referred to a letter Mr Savery had received from the Animal Health and Veterinary Laboratories Agency (AHVLA) regarding TB concerns raised by South Brent Commoners' Association (the letter was tabled). Mr Savery considered that the critical part of the letter was about TB restricted herds being allowed to graze or not on the common. He went on to say that at the moment any herd that has been affected with TB or under restriction has been allowed to graze on the common. Mr Alan Shuttleworth from the Head Office Policy Team of AHVLA is seeking advice on a national approach to this matter. Mr Savery considered that Council needed to make representation so that the Head Office Policy Team know what the implications would be if all herds that are subject to TB restrictions were prevented from grazing on the common. The AHVLA letter also mentions TB infected livestock not being moved along roads and this would make cattle farming impossible if farmers are not allowed to use the roads, and implied that AHVLA did not understand the geography of roads on commons.

It was agreed that a formal letter be written to AHVLA stating Council's concerns and asking them to respond. A discussion followed. Mr Coaker proposed that the Deputy and Vice Chairman assist in the drafting of the letter.

5.3 Sheep Rustling

Mrs Alford said that 87 sheep had been taken from her newtake and that she had reported the incident to the police who appeared not to be interested other than to give her a log number. Mrs Alford had spoken to Ms Maria Endean, of Devon County Council's Trading Standards about the issue. Ms Endean had suggested that she would be prepared to work alongside the Council with regard to this business. The Chairman asked Members if the Council should formally approach Trading Standards to ask for their help and sought Mrs Alford's help in drafting the letter. A discussion took place and it was felt that the police were also disinterested in some of the recent road traffic accidents involving livestock. The Chairman considered that it might be time to write yet again to the police over these concerns.

5.4 Ponies

The Chairman informed Members that Mrs Faulkner had attended an International Wild Equid Conference in Vienna. She had learnt a great deal from the talks and discussions and that some ideas may well be appropriate for the Dartmoor pony i.e. grazing models, dealing with diseases on common land. He said Council had received a request to make a retrospective contribution to assist with the funding of the trip and that the National Park were prepared to match the Council's contribution. The cost of the trip was approximately £1,000. Mrs Alford proposed that Council make a contribution

of £250.00 towards the costs of the expenses involved in the visit and Mr Jones seconded the proposal. A vote was taken and the result was 3 for and 15 against, therefore the proposal was defeated.

A lengthy discussion followed about the management of ponies on Dartmoor and Mr Coaker proposed that the subject of ponies should be on the next agenda and if necessary a separate pony meeting should be arranged. It was agreed that the Council should have a clear policy and use its rules and regulations.

5.5 SWUF Conference, Exeter

The Chairman reminded Members of the SWUF Conference at Exeter Racecourse on Friday 19 October about the Future of the Common Land sponsored by the Dartmoor Preservation Association.

5.6 Dartmoor National Park Forum

The Chairman said that National Park Authority had modified the constitution of its Forum and that Council was invited to make a nomination and a substitute to attend the meetings. The Forum reviews National Park policies, advises on changes and meetings take place twice a year. The Chairman felt that the Commoners' Council should be represented. Mr Layland Branfield agreed to represent the Council and Mr Philip French agreed to be the substitute.

5.7 Little Yennadon

Mr Jones reported that on two occasions seven ponies had got onto the Princetown road through the fence at Little Yennadon; these ponies are normally leared on Yennadon Common. Mr Coaker asked for an update on the cattle grid situation. The Chairman said that the owner of the common had accepted the Devon County Council's position that the fence was not their problem and had asked Yennadon Commoners to repair it, which they are disinclined to do from their own resources, consequently there is a stalemate. This new reported incidence is more evidence of the problem and a further letter will be written again not only to the Devon County Council but also to the Chief Constable. Mr Jones requested that the Association have a copy of the letter.

5.8 'Moor than Meets the Eye'

The Chairman explained that 'Moor than Meets the Eye' is a Heritage Lottery Fund proposal that the National Park is pursuing and it had invited the Council to be represented in the project. Mr Maurice Retallick was volunteered in his absence. Mr Branfield commented that it would have been helpful if Council had been involved earlier in the process.

Mr Steemson said the project had five aims; to conserve the unique historic landscape and its natural habitats which tell the story of human influence over thousands of years, to enhance the intellectual access to the heritage landscape; to sustain a living, working environment and encourage business opportunities that capture the value of the landscape, and to develop and provide a well trained volunteer workforce to help conserve the area's heritage. The landscape programme requires any successful project to achieve outcomes under four headings; conserving for historical and natural features;

conserving landscape character; increasing community opportunities for participation in local heritage; increasing access to and learning about the landscape area and its heritage and increasing training opportunities. He went on to say that the proposal has, so far, been awarded £100,000.00 with a potential of another £1.9m if the next phase is successful. (Further information can be found on the Dartmoor National Park website.) A project officer has been appointed and will take up the post on 1 December.

Mr Steemson was asked about the decision regarding the chosen area and who was responsible for the bid and the future plans. He said that the designated area had to be approximately 200 square kilometres and had been decided by the various partnerships at the time of the proposal. The organisations involved in the bid were Dartmoor Partnership, Dartmoor Farmers Association, Dartmoor Preservation Society, Duchy of Cornwall, English Heritage, Forestry Commission, Natural England, South West Nature Trust and the Woodland Trust. Mr Steemson said that Mrs Ally Kohler would be happy to attend the next Council meeting to update Members and answer further questions.

Mr Steemson said the next phase would be working the project bid up for the area that had been agreed. Mr Coaker proposed that both Mr Branfield and Mr Retallick should be the Council's representatives; all Members agreed this.

5.9 NFU – Uplands Meeting

The NFU are hosting three uplands meetings on Exmoor, Dartmoor and Bodmin to give an update on CAP negotiations and the current NFU position. The Dartmoor meeting will be at the Two Bridges Hotel, Princetown on 15 November at 7.30pm.

6. Update from National Park

6.1 Commoners' Council & National Park Authority Recreation Liaison Group

The notes on the meeting of 5 September had been tabled.

6.2 Dartmoor Police Beats 2012

Mr Steemson had copies of an updated list of local police officers' contact details, which were distributed to Members.

6.3 Farming Futures

There had been a recent meeting on the Forest, where official visitors including Defra and Guy Thompson (a Natural England Director) had learnt about Farming Futures, the Hill Farm Project, the work of the commoners and the Park Authority.

6.4 Tour of Britain Cycling Event

Mr Steemson said a large number of people had attended the event and that it would probably take place again next year. Mr Branfield commented that there was considerable congestion that day due to two other events taking place, a walking group and a vintage car event. Mr Steemson said that the Park Authority were unaware of the other two events. There was a discussion about the various events. Mr Steemson said the Park are not always notified of events but believed the public are more aware of the need to notify the

National Park. Details of events are distributed via the Dartmoor Commoners' Council office to all the relevant Local Commoners Association secretaries.

6.5 Ten Tors Team Managers' Meeting

Mrs Alford, Mr Cole, Mr Cooper and Mrs Dodd had spoken to various team managers at the meeting on 13 October. The National Park Authority had received excellent feedback from the managers and also wished to thank Mrs Alford on her positive comments with regards to the National Park's presentation on the day. A thank you letter from Brigadier Hankinson to the Dartmoor Commoners' Council was tabled.

6.6 South West Upland Federation Fire Event

Mr Steemson mentioned that the National Park is committed to assist with any rearranged training days.

6.7 Potential Events

A list of potential events taking place across the Moor in the next couple of months has been cleared, as there had been no objections to them.

Mrs Alford asked if Mr Steemson knew when the next Farmers Forum would be held. He understood it had been delayed because of the Management Plan but that the next Farmers Forum will be done in partnership with the NFU in the New Year.

7. Report from Livestock Protection Officer

The report from the Livestock Protection Officer had been sent out with the agenda. Mrs McKechnie was in attendance to answer any questions, the Chairman thanked her for the report and all the work she does. Mrs McKechnie said there had been 57 dog attacks on sheep and 33 had been logged with the police. Logged incidents have an identification number and the police are able to visit the owner and give them advice. She said she had built up a good working relationship with the police and she has their direct telephone numbers. Mrs McKechnie considered the police have been proactive and always advised her of the outcome of their visits to the dog owners.

8. Christmas Lunch

The date for the Christmas lunch was 12 December 2012 and would be held at the Two Bridges Hotel: more information would be sent out in due course.

9. Proposed Dates for Next Year's Meetings

It was proposed and agreed to change the meeting date scheduled for Wednesday 2 October to Wednesday 16 October 2013. An amended schedule will be sent out with the next agenda.

10. Mr Cole thanked Mrs Heriot for all her hard work in moving the office this year and taking on the secretarial duties from Mrs Seage. The Chairman said that he had written a formal letter of thanks to Mrs Heriot.

11. Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Council will be on Wednesday 5 December 2012 at 7.30 p.m. at Two Bridges Hotel, Princetown. (The Chairman reminded members

that he had apologised for his absence from that meeting, as he was attending a meeting in Windsor about hill farming on Council's behalf.)

Signed:.....

Date:.....