

DARTMOOR COMMONERS' COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of the Dartmoor Commoners' Council held at Two Bridges Hotel, Princetown on Wednesday 30 January 2013.

Present:

Mr L Branfield - Chairman	Mr G Hill	Mr D Powell
Mrs M Alford - Vice Chair	Mr L Jones	Mr M Reddaway
Mr P Abel	Mr J Jordan	Mr M Retallick
Mr J Aylett	Mr B Lavis	Mr R Steemson
Mr J Cooper	Mr I Mortimore	Mr T Stratton
Mr P French	Mr M Mudge	

In attendance

Mrs L J Heriot	Ms K McKechnie DLPO	Mr S Scoffin - DNPA
Mrs K F Davis	Ms A Kohler – DNPA	

1. Chairman's Remarks

Mr Branfield, Deputy Chairman, welcomed everyone to the meeting. He said that Professor Mercer had still not fully recovered from his recent illness.

2. Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Professor I Mercer, Messrs R Savery, R Ashford, D Webber, C Alford, A Coaker, and P Cottingham.

3. Confirmation of the Minutes

There being no amendments the minutes of the meeting on 5 December were confirmed and signed.

4. Matters Arising

4.1 Sheep Rustling

A letter was sent out to all active graziers and Local Commoners Associations but as yet there had been no responses.

4.2 Ponies

The Chairman advised Members that further to the meeting of 9 January, letters had been sent out to all Local Commoners' Associations and pony keepers as an information gathering exercise and is work in progress.

4.2.1 Mrs Alford asked if there had been any reply from Defra on ear tagging the Secretary replied that there had not.

4.2.2 Mr Jones asked if there had been comments from Members on the draft letter and, if so, had they been incorporated in the pony letter. The Secretary confirmed that there had been several helpful comments from Members and these had been considered before the letter was sent out.

4.2.3 Mrs Alford asked if there had been a reply from SWLakes Trust about Burrator Woods, the Secretary replied that there had been no reply yet.

5. Matters Brought Forward

5.1 Dartmoor Livestock Protection Officer

A letter had been received that evening from Mr Graham Palmer thanking Mrs McKechnie for her assistance in two recent cases of sheep worrying. The Chairman thanked Mrs McKechnie and commended her on her valuable work.

6. Estimate for 2013-2014

The estimates for the financial year 2013/14, together with explanatory notes had been sent out with the agenda. As there were no queries the Chairman asked Council if they were content to receive and adopt the estimates. Mr Aylett proposed that Council adopt the 2013/14 estimates and Mr Lavis seconded the proposal.

6.1 Moorskills

An update on Moorskills was tabled and Mrs Alford asked what was happening about Moor Skills and their expenditure. The Chairman said that the organisation had changed and was delivering training in a different way. Mr Retallick said the main change was that the apprentices' scheme, which had been delivered since the project was set up, had been replaced by training for those involved in agriculture up to the age of 25. There were not sufficient training providers available to take on new apprentices but if, training providers and apprentices came forward, then the training would revert back to its original concept. The whole scheme had been so successful that apprentices had been trained to the standards of the individual farmers and were then employed by them. Mrs Alford asked if Council was committed to paying Moor Skills £1,500 per year. The Secretary said that at the Council meeting of May 2012 Members had agreed to allocate £1,500 per year to Moorskills. Mrs Alford raised her concerns that the money would not be used for young people as it was first intended. Mr Retallick confirmed that training was still aimed at the younger generation and those working on farms or engaged in agriculture within the Dartmoor National Park. Mrs Alford expressed her disappointment that trailer tests cannot take place now. Mr Retallick said that there was a scheme available through Bicton College which Mrs Dodd was aware of and looking into. Mrs Alford said that this matter has been raised over the last two years but as yet nothing had come forward. Mr Stratton said that a circular was sent out to the farming community last year asking for comments and any training they would like to see, so a package of courses could be made available. Mrs Alford agreed that this had been done but nothing had come of it. Mr Retallick said that funding for these projects had various stipulations and needed to be continually updated. He informed Members that there was a Hill Farm Project Steering Group meeting on 8 March and he welcomed any ideas to promote training which he would be happy to take forward to the meeting. Mrs Alford suggested that trailer-training courses would be useful; the Chairman said that that the course was funded from a different source. He concluded that the courses are available and that it was a matter of deciding which courses give value for money.

7. Moor than Meets the Eye

Ms Ali Kohler, Director of Conservation and Communities for the Dartmoor National Park Authority outlined the Moor than Meets the Eye project from its initial concept to the present time. During 2011 Ms Kohler worked with a

number of partners (Natural England, Duchy of Cornwall, Dartmoor Farmers' Association, Dartmoor Partnership, Woodland Trust, Forest Commission and the SW Lakes Trust) to pull together a funding bid to the Heritage Fund through the Landscape Partnership Scheme. The Landscape Partnership Scheme has four outcomes, viz conservation, landscape, raising awareness of the community understanding of the heritage of the area and increasing skills and training to conserve the heritage of a particular area. The Moor than Meets the Eye project covers an area of 280 kilometres in the east of the National Park. A bid for £4m was submitted in February 2011, which was successful (£2m of which will be match-funded), and an initial payment of £100,000 was paid in July to start the procedure of partnership working and to appoint a project manager to help develop the bid. Mrs Kohler introduced Steve Scoffin who is the Project Manager for the Moor than Meets the Eye project. Mr Scoffin will be working over the next 12 months to pull together a detailed Landscape Conservation Action plan which will be submitted to the Heritage Lottery Fund.

Mr Scoffin gave a presentation on Moor than Meets the Eye project and informed Members that the initial stage was required to be completed by 16 January 2014 with a decision by 3 June 2014. (Leaflets explaining the project will be sent out to Members with the minutes.)

Mr Jones asked if the Council would be represented on the project. Mr Scoffin said that Professor Mercer was a member of the board. He also confirmed that information on the project could be found on the National Park's website.

8. Update from the National Park

Mr Steemson reported on the following issues:

8.1 Dog Control Order Pre-Consultation

There had been no further information on the Dog Control Order from the South Hams District Council. Mr Steemson expected that there would be more actions and scheduled meetings in March on the subject.

8.2 Litter Campaign

This year's Litter Campaign leaflets and lambing notices have been printed and will be distributed in early March.

8.3 Recent Snowfall

The significant snowfall of the previous week had caused disruption across the moor. The general public had been irresponsible but the National Park had done as much as they could under the circumstances. Other key agencies namely the Police and the Highways Department had been lacking in their assistance and consequently letters of complaint have been sent to them from the National Park. Mr Steemson reiterated that the National Park do not have the jurisdiction to enforce parking fines or road closures. A discussion took place and it was recommended that a meeting of the various agencies be called to discuss the situation. It was further agreed that a letter be written to the Chief Constable and the Highways Authority stressing the health and safety issues, not only for humans, but also for the livestock that live on the moor.

8.4 Travellers at Cadover Bridge

A group of travellers had recently camped near Cadover Bridge but the National Trust's bailiffs moved quickly and the site was cleared within five days.

8.5 Organised Events

An events list (compiled by the Dartmoor Commoners' Council office) was tabled. Mr Steemson said that if anyone had any queries concerning the events to direct them to him or Sue Bishop.

8.6 Work on Sheepstor

A contractor has been appointed and work is expected to start on the Eylesbarrow track in early February.

8.7 Edward Morshead Award – 2013

Nominations for the Edward Morshead Award 2013 should be forwarded to the Dartmoor National Park Authority by 30 April 2013. (Leaflets were distributed to Members.)

9. Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Council will be on Wednesday 27 March 2013 at the earlier time of 7.00 p.m. at the Two Bridges Hotel, Princetown.

Signed:.....

Date:.....