

DARTMOOR COMMONERS' COUNCIL

Minutes of the Meeting of the Dartmoor Commoners' Council held at Two Bridges Hotel, Princetown on Wednesday 27 September 2017.

Present:

Mr J Waldon - Chairman	Mr P Cottington	Mr G Mortimore
Mrs M Alford – Vice Chairman	Mr P French	Mr M Mudge
Mr P Abel	Mr G Hill	Mr M Reddaway
Mr J Aylett	Mr J Jordan	Mr M Retallick
Mr P Cleave	Mr B Lavis	Mr R Steemson
Mr J Cooper	Mrs K Little	

In attendance:

Mrs K McKechnie (DLPO) Mrs L Johnson (Condy Mathias)

1. Chairman's Introduction

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting, including Mrs Lesley Johnson, representing Condy Mathias accountants, who will present the accounts & auditor's report. He advised that Mrs Sara Sloman was unable to attend tonight's meeting as she was in hospital & Council Members sent their best wishes for a speedy recovery.

2. Apologies for Absence

These were received from Mr C Alford, Mr R Ashford, Mr N Cole, Mr S Lake, Mr T Stratton, Mr D Webber & Mrs A Willcocks.

3. Confirmation of Minutes

The minutes of the Meeting held on 2 August 2017 were confirmed & signed.

4. Accounts & Auditor's Report

A copy of the financial statements had been sent to all Council Members prior to the meeting. Mrs Lesley Johnson presented the accounts & auditor's report for the financial year ending 30 June 2017. Any questions raised by Council members were answered. Mr George Hill proposed that Council adopt the accounts, this was seconded by Mr Jonathan Aylett & all Council members agreed. The Chairman thanked Mrs Johnson for her work in preparing the accounts on Council's behalf.

5. Matters Arising

5.1 Stallion Scheme Autumn 2017

Please note a revised date of Wednesday 1 November 2017. Venue & all other details remain unchanged.

5.2 Local Commoners' Association Meeting

This will take place on Wednesday 11 October 2017 at the Two Bridges Hotel, Princetown starting at 7:30pm. It is hoped that members of Council will attend.

6. Matters Brought Forward

The Chairman advised that he had sent a letter of support, on behalf of Council, to a group of Spanish farmers who are seeking to create a governance mechanism for their area. They have bid for funds to visit the UK, specifically Dartmoor & to meet with Council.

The Prince's Farm Resilience Programme is being rolled out on Dartmoor for 2017. This exciting opportunity engages 15 - 20 farms for a year enabling them, through a series of

essential & practical workshops, to receive professional advice & support to improve the prospects of viability for their farm business. Anyone interested in finding out more should contact the Dartmoor Hill Farm Project, who are coordinating the programme.

Mr Maurice Retallick reported on the recent incident of cattle grid gates & fencing being damaged in the Manaton area. The matter has been reported to the Devon County Council, who are responsible for repairing the damage. Council agreed to write to the Highways Department to try & expedite the repairs.

The Chairman thanked Mr Philip French for the constructive way in which he progressed & resolved an issue in the South Quarter regarding poor fencing with a potential hazard to livestock.

Spitchwick Commoners were invited to meet with Mrs Sara Sloman, Office Administrator, recently to check the accuracy of their registrations on Council's 'live' register. The day was well attended & no major problems were identified.

The Chairman briefly reported on the second meeting of the DNPA's Future of Farming Task & Finish Group. The Chairman sits on the group as Council's representative & as such anyone with any comments or suggestions is encouraged to raise these with the Chairman in order that they can be fed into future discussions. Key points from the meeting:-

- to explore opportunities to influence Defra over the next 12 months. Mr Michael Gove is proving to be a very hands on Secretary of State & has already visited Dartmoor. He has revived both the Environment Plan & the Agricultural Bill & has set a new timetable for input.
- to put together key points & guiding principles that Defra should address, learning from the work of the Farming Futures Project.

A note of the meeting will be circulated to Council Members & the Chairman will do a report at the Local Commoners' Association Meeting to ensure that this information is expanded to a wider audience.

7. Joint Meeting held with Dartmoor National Park Authority.

The Chairman gave a report on this meeting which was well attended by Council Members. A note of the meeting is attached (Appendix A).

The DNPA are hoping to arrange another Event Manager's Training Day in January & Council will be requesting representatives to attend once the date has been confirmed.

Following a discussion on the Dartmoor National Park Authority Byelaws, it was agreed that the Chairman & Vice-Chairman draft a proposal, for Council's consideration, on whether legal advice should be sought regarding the Byelaws relevant to commercial activities on the Commons. The proposal should include the questions that need to be asked & the potential costs involved. Council Members have been asked to contact the Chairman or Vice-Chairman with their views.

8. TB Consultation & Update

The Chairman thanked Council's TB Working Party for responding on behalf of Council to the TB consultation on proposals to simplify surveillance testing in the High Risk Area of England & other disease control measures.

Following Council's recent meeting with APHA & Defra TB Programme, APHA have agreed to release a TB18 for each common that has submitted a TB Control Plan or confirmed there are no changes to their existing plan. Specific issues will be addressed direct with the farmer.

Also, if cattle are missing from TB test, passports are to be returned to BCMS for test to be considered as complete. Passports must be requested back if/when missing cattle are recovered & tested.

9. Update from Dartmoor National Park Authority

Nothing to report.

10. Loss of Livestock

A discussion took place on the regular occurrences of loss of stock & the possibility of rustling. It was suggested that a log of unexplained losses be kept by Local Commoners' Associations or Council. This will be raised at the forthcoming Local Commoners' Association meeting.

11. Ponies

11.1 Pony Working Group Meeting Report

Mr John Jordan gave a brief report to Council:-

- Following the request to Council for help in gathering a large number of unmarked ponies from Haytor Down, it was suggested that the Association set a date to gather them & inform the office & a request for some help will be circulated.
- A stallion that was causing problems on Roborough Down has now been removed. Concerns had been raised that the issue had gone on for too long & The Pony Working Group will draft a protocol for dealing with dangerous ponies for Council's approval.
- As there has been no response from Defra to Council's letter sent at beginning of September requesting an update on legislation for equine identification, it was agreed that a further letter be sent.
- All pony keepers have been reminded that they have an obligation to ensure the information held on Council's pony database is correct to ensure Council keeps the derogation under the new legislation introduced for equine ID.

11.2 Drifts Update

Local Commoners' Associations have been asked to inform the office of the dates of forthcoming drifts & to provide feedback afterwards.

12. Update from Dartmoor Livestock Protection Officer

Mrs Karla McKechnie read out her report & a copy is attached (Appendix B).

13. Meeting Dates for 2018

The proposed dates for meetings & elections in 2018 were agreed & a copy of this is attached (Appendix C).

14. Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Council will be held on Wednesday 6 December 2017 at 7:30pm at Two Bridges Hotel, Princetown.

Signed:.....

Date:.....

Impact of Recreation on Farming
Joint Meeting with Dartmoor National Park Authority
25 September 2017

Meeting chaired by Mr James McInnes, DNPA Member.

Individual farmers raised their concerns. These included the impact on farmers from:

- Wild camping (on enclosed land & overnight parking of mobile homes in car parks)
- Dogs (commercial dog walking, general fouling & attacks on livestock)
- Commercial events (not controlled, potential impact on the environment, erosion & infrastructure (flags, tape & signs) left behind or erected days before event)
- Night time events (apparent increase in activity with unknown consequences)

General concerns, some shared by rangers & NP staff:

- Farmers increasingly having to police regulations & becoming the “moaning face of Dartmoor”. A role they do not wish to have to undertake.
- Increasing lack of respect from public, including locals.
- Public claim to “know their rights” but frequently incorrect. Higher percentage of trouble makers.
- NP web site fails to convey the correct messages &/or is not easy to navigate.
- Rangers not available at critical times (evenings).
- Increase in numbers of visitors & events could lead to the “killing of the golden goose”; damaging what people come to Dartmoor for.
- Lack of enforcement by NP & Police.
- Most visitors well behaved, a small minority cause trouble. They are the focus for action. Some (most?) of the difficult people are from local communities.

General information:

- NP Rangers working with Police Special Constables to enforce bye laws & public order, likely targets include fires, camping, motor bikes off –road & dogs. Early days but signs encouraging.
- Events Heat /Sensitivity maps: NP undertaking mapping exercise to show areas of greatest activity in order to inform decision-making & management.
- The process the NP has to use to encourage event organisers to adhere to a code of good practice is largely dependent on voluntary participation.
- The number of rangers employed by the DNPA has not dropped over the last 10 years although out of hours coverage has changed.

Suggested actions:

- NP to consider prosecutions for those issues they are confident that the existing bye-laws provide the necessary powers.
- Police & rangers to “ticket” illegal overnight campers & provide information on local camp sites. This would act as a deterrent elsewhere.

- Review & improve NP web site especially access to important information. Ensure opening text does not encourage bad practice.
- Provide signs that clarify where it is legal to camp (in car parks & on entrances to enclosed land (new takes and fields)).
- NP review the web sites of recreational groups, including mobile homes, to ensure the advice on these web sites is correct.
- Provide maps to show where camping is permitted.
- Clarify law on drink driving related to drivers of mobile homes parked in car parks.
- Provide information on laws relating to dogs, including maps showing where public access includes dogs, to hotels & local press.
- Consider introducing cap on number of events & participants. Precautionary principle relevant considering status of environment.
- Consider introducing dusk to dawn curfew.
- Not all visitors, especially locals, use NP web site so develop appropriate means of conveying information (local press, local radio, signs & leaflets).

Agreed actions:

1. Land owners, Dartmoor Commoners' Council & DNPA form alliance to produce an agreed policy statement on large-scale recreation events that is then adopted by each body. **Action:** Each group to identify 2 or 3 members to meet to draft policy statement.
2. NP to review web site information & messages. **Action:** DNPA
3. NP to review signs & signage. **Action:** DNPA
4. NP to look at enforcement issues in conjunction with the Police. **Action:** DNPA

Note provided by John Waldon

Dartmoor Livestock Protection Officer's Report - September 2017

Road Traffic Accidents

To date there have been 123 incidents reported - 18 dead ponies, 4 injured; 1 dead cow, 1 injured & 80 dead sheep/lambs, 10 injured. Sadly, we thought the numbers were going to be less this year, but with winter fast approaching & the daylight hours decreasing, I fear the total number will rise more.

Over the weekend, it has been reported that the speed visor at Peak Hill has been vandalised, possibly beyond repair & also I have received a report that the speed visor at the Warren House Inn is in pieces. So not only do we have speeding & reckless motorists on Dartmoor, we now have vandals & thugs! It is a shame not to have the speed monitors operating because the information & data downloaded from them is proving to be of considerable use. A lot of time & effort, not to mention money, was put into erecting these machines.

Dog Attacks

There have been 49 dog related incidents reported to me so far this year. Many of them have been reported & 'crimed' with the Police & the Police have paid many visits to dog owners' addresses. A recent attack at Burrator Reservoir, where a lady recorded the dog chasing the sheep into the Reservoir, is under investigation & a decision will be made whether to take further action. Several compensations have also been paid. This is a decision made between the farmer & the dog owner.

General

I mentioned in my last report that I was having trouble from a stallion on the west side of the Moor. The stallion was unbranded & had not been approved by Commoners' Council. It was proving to be a nuisance to walkers, riders & cyclists by chasing & attacking them. This stallion has at last been removed.

Autumn calving in the Moor has given rise to a few problems. Also, it was brought to my attention that there were a couple of incidents involving cows with young calves & dog walkers. It should be common knowledge that cows with calves must be given a wide berth as they can be very protective.

It has been a particularly bad autumn for lame sheep & I have had a considerable number of calls about sheep on the west side of Dartmoor.

Note provided by Karla McKechnie (DLPO)



**MEETINGS OF THE DARTMOOR COMMONERS' COUNCIL
FOR 2018**

The Dartmoor Commons Act 1985 states that four meetings are required in a year including the Annual Meeting & consideration of estimates. The following dates are proposed for 2018.

Dates for Meetings

Wednesday	24 January 2018	Annual Dinner 31 January 2018
Wednesday	21 March 2018	
Wednesday	30 May 2018	Devon County Show 17,18,19 May 2018
Wednesday	8 August 2018 (Annual Meeting)	
Wednesday	3 October 2018 (Accounts & Auditor's Report)	
Wednesday	5 December 2018	

Dates for Elections

Wednesday	13 June 2018	North Quarter	Royal Cornwall Show
Thursday	14 June 2018	South Quarter	7, 8, 9 June 2018
Wednesday	20 June 2018	East Quarter	
Thursday	21 June 2018	West Quarter	