



#### **4. Chairman's Report**

A copy of the Chairman's Report was sent to all Council Members with the Agenda & a further copy is attached (Appendix A).

#### **5. Elections**

##### **5.1 Election of Chairman**

The Vice-Chairman, Mary Alford, took the chair & asked for nominations for the post of Chairman. Russell Ashford proposed that John Waldon continue for a further year. John Jordan seconded the proposal. As there were no other nominations, John Waldon was duly elected as Chairman for the year 2018-2019. The Chairman thanked Council Members. He said that as we enter interesting yet difficult times, there are plenty of issues that Council has to be engaged in & that he would be very happy & proud to represent the Council during the next 12 months.

##### **5.2 Election of Vice-Chairman**

The Chairman asked for nominations for the post of Vice-Chairman. Ann Willcocks proposed that Mary Alford continue for a further year. Brian Lavis seconded the proposal. As there were no other nominations, Mary Alford was duly elected as Vice-Chairman for the year 2018-2019. The Vice-Chairman thanked Council Members & said that she would be very proud to carry on the Council colours.

##### **5.3 Confirmation of Honorarium**

The Chairman reminded Council Members that at the Annual Meeting last year, it was proposed that the amount paid be reviewed this year. Following a discussion, both the Chairman & Vice-Chairman felt that the current honorarium amount was still at a suitable level. Therefore, it was proposed by Brian Lavis & seconded by Russell Ashford that the payment for 2018-2019 will continue as £5000 for the Chairman & £500 for the Vice-Chairman. Again, it is to be noted that at the Annual Meeting in 2013, it was agreed that the payment for Vice-Chairman be £1000. However, Mary Alford has held the position since then & is happy to receive a reduced payment of £500.

##### **5.4 Re-Appointment of Owners of Common Land Representatives to Council**

Under Section 3 (2) (d) of the Dartmoor Commons Act 1985, Russell Ashford & Jonathan Aylett have been re-appointed by the Dartmoor National Park Authority (DNPA) to represent the interests of owners of common land on the Council. This is for a period of four years commencing 1 July 2018.

##### **5.5 Re-Appointment of Veterinary Surgeon to Council**

Under Section 3 (2) (e) of the Dartmoor Commons Act 1985, Stuart Lake was re-appointed by Council members for a period of four years commencing 1 July 2018.

#### **6. Matters Arising:**

##### **6.1 BPS Update & RPA CSG Meeting Report**

The Vice-Chairman represented Council at the RPA CSG tele-conference held on 4 July 2018. She reported that Stakeholders were very concerned at the continued delay in processing the BPS element of Minchinhampton retrospective payments. They have asked that the RPA produce a clear plan with an agreed timescale to issue entitlements & make payments. She also reported that the RPA advised that all 2017 agri-environment payments should be made by 15 October this year & then the processing of the 2018 claims will commence. A further meeting has been scheduled for 27 September 2018 & the Vice-Chairman has asked Council Members that if they are aware of any 2017 agri-environment payments outstanding by then, to please let her know in order that she can raise this.

The note of the RPA CSG Meeting held on 4 July 2018 will be circulated to Council members once it has been received.

## **6.2 Agri-Environment Agreements**

Council Members had a discussion regarding the late payment for some 2017 agri-environment agreements. It is thought that payments should have been paid by June of this year, however, many agreements do not actually stipulate a payment-by date. It was agreed that Council send a letter to the Minister (& copy in Natural England board members), setting out its concerns about payments not being made on time & highlighting the problems this has caused, including the additional costs some commoners have incurred as a direct result of the late payment.

The Chairman reported that he had been contacted by some Council Members & commoners with cattle grazing the commons, concerned about the implications of the long period of hot & dry weather, such as the potential for a vast increase in feed & bedding costs this coming winter & the fact that the commons are currently carrying a lot of vegetation. He advised that Council had sent a letter to Natural England (NE) to request that they consider offering a derogation, to those commons in an HLS agreement, who wish to extend the cattle grazing period into the winter. Council has since received a reply confirming that NE will be happy to consider requests for a derogation from individual agreement holders (including commons). NE have provided Council with a simple procedure for doing this, which has been circulated to all Local Commoners' Association Secretaries.

Ann Willcocks raised the matter of NE creating work plans. The Chairman informed Council Members that he had contacted Nik Ward, Team Leader (Dartmoor) at NE, for clarification on this. Nik advised that the work plans form part of an internal process, that NE have devised, in an attempt to help them with their limited resources. The idea being that an Association would have an approved schedule of works for a 3 or 5 year period, rather than annually. Mary Alford commented that once a plan had been approved between NE & an Association, NE must guarantee not to amend it due to a change in staff. It was agreed that Ann Willcocks will monitor the situation & report back to Council if necessary.

As discussed at the last Council Meeting, many of Dartmoor's HLS agri-environment agreements are coming to an end in 2019 & 2020. Council wrote to Defra requesting that consideration be given to offering an extension to these agreements. The Chairman reported that Defra has replied to our letter. The Minister agrees with this course of action; to roll over agreements with no change, with payment levels & obligations assumed under the agreement to remain the same. The proposal will need to be signed off by the EU, as the agreements will be paid from EU money. The Chairman was unsure how this will impinge on those commons agreements that have ended in 2018 & haven't entered into a Countryside Stewardship agreement.

Council engaged in a discussion on Natural Capital. Mary Alford requested that Council officially collates information & figures on how much it costs farmers to actually operate & deliver the stewardship schemes. Ann Willcocks supported this idea as there is no benchmark to indicate what elements of a scheme have been successful, the costs incurred or what the environmental gain has been following 20 years of stewardship. The Chairman acknowledged that there was a lot of support amongst Council Members to commission this piece of work & offered to look into the idea further. He suggested that Council may then form a working group to write a very clear remit of what is to be addressed

Ann Willcocks suggested that Council might consider a review of its draft Internal Deed. The Chairman agreed that this would be a valuable exercise & asked that Ann take the lead on this & organises a small working group to look into this further & report back to Council.

George Hill requested it be minuted that he had said that Council had the responsibility for the grazing on Dartmoor but Defra had to take over because of Council's apparent failure to accept this responsibility.

### **6.3 TB Regulations Meeting with APHA & Defra**

The Chairman reported that following concerns previously raised by Anton Coaker, it is hoped that a meeting will be arranged shortly with APHA to discuss the impact of some TB Regulations including the '10 mile rule'. It is intended to propose a risk-based assessment process, available to **all** cattle graziers. It was agreed that all members of Council's TB Working Party will be kept informed & invited to attend the meeting.

## **7. Matters brought forward**

### **7.1 Dartmoor Commoners' Council's Standing Orders Update**

The Solicitors at Devon County Council have very recently advised us of their suggested amendments, following their review of Council's Standing Orders. Kate Little will be asked to arrange a further meeting with the other working group members to consider the comments made before presenting the draft to Council for formal ratification.

### **7.2 Road Traffic Accidents involving Livestock**

Defra have yet to produce a formal note of the meeting held in the New Forest. However, our Chairman has progressed the idea of holding an annual Dartmoor summit meeting between relevant organisations including Devon Highways & the Police. DNPA has agreed to co-ordinate & host this.

### **7.3 Wild Fires**

DNPA will be arranging an annual fire summit meeting, in November, between relevant organisations including the Devon Fire Service to ensure all parties are prepared in the event of a wild fire & discuss incidents over the past 12 months

### **7.4 Dartmoor Livestock Protection Officer – Council's Contribution**

Council Members agreed to increase Council's annual contribution to this role by £2,000 with effect from July 2018. This is in line with the increase to the amount that the Dartmoor Livestock Protection Society contribute. Council Members acknowledged Karla's dedication to her work & the invaluable job that she does. Rob Steemson, on behalf of DNPA, fully supported this & thanked Karla for her ongoing help.

## **8. Update from Dartmoor Livestock Protection Officer**

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

Ann Willcocks questioned what factors may bring more livestock to graze close to the roads on Dartmoor, such as there being less flies, more people walking the high Moor, sweeter vegetation on the roadside.

Neil Cole mentioned it would be interesting to know how many of the dog attacks are by rescue dogs (dogs being brought over from abroad & re-homed in this country). John Cooper reported that a dog training organisation visits his farm to help train dogs not to chase sheep. Russell Ashford & Ann Willcocks commented that this was a useful service that more farmers could offer & Council thanked John for providing this facility.

Mary Alford added it would also be interesting to see how many of the dogs are actually microchipped, as this has been compulsory since April 2016. Layland Branfield felt that more should be done to keep the dog microchip database updated when dog attacking livestock incidents are reported.

Karla asked that all dog related incidents & road traffic accidents involving livestock continue to be reported to her. The Chairman reiterated this & how important it is to gather evidence. He suggested that some of the ideas discussed should be pursued.

#### **9. Loss of Livestock Update**

Last year, it was agreed that Council would monitor reports of missing livestock to gain a better understanding of the scale of the issue, be able to identify if there were any specific hot spots & have evidence to raise the matter with the Police. All LCAs were informed of this & when our invoices were sent to all registered commoners in January, they were accompanied by a note asking that any missing livestock incidents be reported to LCA Secretaries. Earlier this month, the information was collated & only one incident had been reported, suggesting that there is not a problem on Dartmoor! Following a discussion, it was evident that there clearly is an issue with stock going missing & it was decided to carry out the exercise again with a slightly different approach. A form will be sent to all registered commoners, with our invoices in January, for commoners to use to report any incidents of missing livestock directly to the Commoners' Council office. In the meantime, with the help of Karla & the Quartermen, commoners will be made aware that Council is keeping a log of any incidents but it's up to those affected to report it. The matter will also be raised at the forthcoming Local Commoners' Association Meeting.

#### **10. Update from Dartmoor National Park Authority**

On behalf of DNPA, Rob Steemson congratulated the Chairman on his re-appointment & reported on the following:-

The DNPA recreational staff would like to thank those presently involved with the current event notification system, as it appears to be working very well. The recently monitored 'Something Wild' event had caused a few issues, which are now being addressed by the organisers.

In regard to the Recreational Events Policy, Ally Kohler, who attended the last meeting, has amended the draft copy to reflect all of Council's comments. A copy has since been sent to all Council Members for consideration as Council has been asked to adopt & support the policy. Any comments are to be forwarded to Ally by the end of August. Council Members agreed to endorse the policy if nothing substantive arose. It is hoped that DNPA will approve the policy at its meeting on 5 October. DNPA are keen to obtain Council's written support before then as they are aware that one recreational event organiser will formally object to the policy not supporting events during the moorland lambing & bird breeding season (1 Mar-31 Jul). This particular organisation doesn't want to hold its event in August as people tend to go away on holiday then! Layland Branfield commented that it was important that these dates were adhered to & Council Members supported this.

Rob thanked those Council Members who attended & gave input at the recreations organisers meeting in June. Some minor changes were talked through & in October, DNPA would like to reconvene the sub group meeting to draw up a principle charter so that event organisers know what to expect from the DNPA, Dartmoor Commoners'

Council & the Dartmoor Common Land Owners Association in the revised event notification system so everything is clear.

The contractor for the 'Year of Life on a Dartmoor Farm' film has just been selected, so filming should start soon & this should be a good educational tool.

DNPA will be organising a fire summit meeting in November, as already mentioned. In preparation for this, Rob is working with a recently appointed dedicated fire officer, to get practical things like commoners' training, the partnership fire plan & joint equipment sharing addressed before the 2019 season.

DNPA has recently been asked to specifically look at signage relating to feeding of ponies & will be looking to Council to assist with a partnership approach in regard to design & funding. Following a discussion, the Chairman suggested that this is progressed at the summit meeting on road traffic accidents involving animals & Council Members agreed to the principle of contributing towards the costs of this signage.

Rob advised that the DNPA has sent a letter of support to Natural England regarding Council's request to extend the cattle grazing period.

Finally, the DNPA have a meeting next week with the Police regarding the Rural Crime Initiative & in June, DNPA successfully prosecuted a 4x4 driver for damaging land around Nun's Cross Farm.

#### **11. Farm Share Agreements & Grazing Agreements**

Council has formed a small working group to look into this further. The Chairman has drafted some guidelines for the group to consider & it is hoped that this be brought to Council at the next meeting for ratification.

#### **12. Stallion Scheme Autumn 2018**

Council agreed to hold its annual Stallion Inspection on Wednesday 24 October. Mary Alford has kindly agreed to hold it at Moortown Farm, Tavistock. Further details will be sent to pony keepers & Local Commoners Associations at the beginning of September, along with a reminder that it is the responsibility of the pony keepers to advise Council of any changes to their herd numbers in order that Council's pony database is updated accordingly.

#### **13. Sheep Clearance Autumn 2018 – Proposed Dates**

Council agreed the dates for the mandatory sheep clearance. The South moor clear period will be from 10-24 November & the North moor clear period will be from 17 November – 1 December. It is noted that some sheep graziers in the north of the Moor are not content with the dates & wish a later date for removal.

#### **14. Local Commoners' Association Meeting**

This will be held on Wednesday 17 October 2018 at Two Bridges Hotel, Princetown at 7:30pm. All the Local Commoners' Associations (LCAs) will be invited & the Chairman asked that all Council Members attend & try to persuade the LCAs in their quarter to attend.

#### **15. Ten Tors Team Managers Training Day**

This will be held on Saturday 13 October 2018. Council has been asked to send 4 of its members, representing farming. The Chairman reiterated that this day is an opportunity to inform the Ten Tors Team Managers of the impact that these type of events have on

farming on Dartmoor. John Cooper, Karla McKechnie, Gordon Mortimore & Ann Willcocks have offered to attend. Further details will be circulated to these people nearer the time.

**16. Swaling/Insurance**

As previously reported, Council is unable to have a generic public liability policy that covers the local associations when swaling, as Council does not have a direct responsibility or a direct input in this activity. All LCAs have been advised to take out their own insurance policy. Council is still in discussions with a number of firms who are considering if they can provide this type of cover to LCAs & Tom Stratton has offered to raise this subject at a meeting he has arranged with the Duchy's insurers at the beginning of September. The Chairman asked that the Quarterman remind the LCAs in their quarter that it is their responsibility to ensure that they are appropriately covered for all activities, carried out on their common that they are legally liable for.

**17. Date of Next Meeting**

The next meeting of the Council will be held on Wednesday 3 October 2018 at 7:30pm at Two Bridges Hotel, Princetown.

**Signed:**.....

**Date:**.....

## **Chairman's Report to Council - August 2018**

During the past twelve months, six Council Meetings were held and well attended. Council will continue to hold its regular meetings at the Two Bridges Hotel following a renegotiation of the beneficial terms they offer to Council.

In May, the Council's bi-annual elections were held. Mr Michael Mudge decided to step down as a small grazier representative and that position on Council remains vacant. All other members of Council, whose term of office ends at this Annual Meeting, were willing to re-stand and as there were no other nominees, all were re-elected to Council. Whilst it is useful to have continuity on Council, it is a concern that no other commoners are inclined to stand for election.

The Government's proposals post Brexit are beginning to form. The loss of the Basic Payment Scheme and other aspects of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) will, in some cases, be offset by a land management scheme (NELMS). What this scheme will look like and who will benefit are still unclear but Council, together with the Foundation for Common Land and others, have been lobbying to ensure the proposals are suitable for common land. I continue to be a member of the Dartmoor National Park Authority's group to consider future land management options for Dartmoor, including preparing a submission to Defra to trial a new land management scheme on common land. There have been many occasions to press for common land not to be overlooked, including Defra's Secretary of State visit (August) and during Defra's Head of Agri-environment visit in September. Council has also been lobbying for existing agri-environment agreements (all Higher Level Stewardship agreements), that come to an end over the next three years, are allowed to be rolled over to avoid the complex and costly move to a Higher Level Countryside Stewardship agreement.

Council continues to be represented on the Devon TB Eradication Group, Defra's National Common Land Stakeholders Group (NCLSG), Rural Payment Agency's Commons Stakeholders Group and both the MOD's Working and Steering Groups on Dartmoor. The NCLSG eventually arranged for a meeting to discuss road traffic accidents involving livestock in May. Held in the New Forest, the meeting attracted good representation from all the relevant agencies and promoted the sharing of good practice, including a proposal to hold an annual summit on Dartmoor to discuss this issue.

The annual meeting with the Local Commoners' Associations was held in October. Again, it was well attended by representatives from the local associations. The issue of insurance to cover the activity of swaling remains unresolved despite the efforts of the office administrator, Sara Sloman. Sara continues to ensure Council's live register of rights is up to date and a copy was submitted to the RPA on time to help them carry out their duties. Sara is to be congratulated on her efficient management of the register and the complex issues that arise.

Ex-Council Member Roger Michelmore died on 1 November. His contribution towards the management of commons on Dartmoor was significant.

In July, Council hosted a visit from twenty two farmers and others connected to commons in South Wales. The visit proved very successful due, in no small part, to the contributions from members of Council.

Note provided by John Waldon, 26 July 2018



## **Dartmoor Livestock Protection Officer's Report - August 2018**

Dog Attacks - 63 since the beginning of the year.

The Sheep Watch UK Conference in Petersfield, I thought was a bit of a non-starter, with little progress since the last meeting we attended in Loughborough in 2015. Dog owners are receiving community resolution & a dog control order placed on a dog for the first offence. We do not generally get second offences occurring, but if a dog under a control order re-offends, a destruction order can be placed on that dog. The Police are going to have a wildlife officer for Devon & one for Cornwall to deal with incidents such as these, which will be useful for me as a point of contact.

A few dog attacked incidents to mention:

- On Yennadon, 2 red setters were chasing & worrying livestock & the dog owner was very abusive & aggressive to the other walkers/witnesses. He thought that there should not be any livestock on the Moors & that they interfered with his dog walking! He has been visited by the Police after I reported the incident & handed over all the witness details.
- A nasty dog attack on a lamb at Mary Tavy left the lamb so badly savaged around the front leg that it had to be put down. I put a message on Facebook, which gathered much response & awareness.
- A sheep with a massive wound on its back at Okehampton Camp had been attacked by a dog. The wound had been infested with maggots & the farmer took it off & treated it.
- A poor ewe at Clearbrook suffered such horrendous injuries around her throat that the farmer had to put her down. Thankfully, a kind couple saw the ewe struggling & picked her up. They called me & I managed to get the farmer there to pick her up. The dog owner was not seen or found.
- A holiday-maker's dog chased a lamb into Burrator Reservoir resulting in the lamb drowning. Compensation has been paid & a dog control has been placed on the dog.
- A nasty dog attack recently where the dog owners are local people resulted in the sheep being put down & again, compensation is being paid & hopefully a dog control order placed on the dogs which should prevent the owner from ever letting them off the lead again.

With the massive load of people visiting Dartmoor each year, it is not surprising that the number of dog incidents & road traffic accidents are increasing. The hot weather recently has brought huge amounts of people to Dartmoor. So not only are there more incidents happening, but my phone is continuously ringing.

Please report all dog related incidents to me, even if you do not have full details as I need numbers & to be able to 'crime' them with the police where possible.

Road Traffic Accidents – 114 so far this year.

This year looks likely to top all previous years although we are constantly working on raising awareness. The weather has been hot & visibility has been good, so why are the numbers going up? Speed Watch volunteers are out & about with speed guns & finding the number of speeding motorists is high.

At last our speed visors are back out, but we are requesting new sites where we have noticed 'hot spots' where animals are getting hit. Dartmeet Hill & along Olisbrim Straight is one area & Dunnabridge Common is another.

I had a terrible road traffic accident where a motorist had witnessed a car hit a pony at Pork Hill. The witness called me & said he thought the pony looked lame on a back leg. I had received no other calls about this pony but decided to go out & to my horror, the poor mare's back leg was almost in 2 pieces – swinging from below the hock & the bone snapped in half. There was no option but to have the pony put down.

Many sheep have been killed & I have managed to collect compensation for several of them. When, on occasions, the motorist who has hit the animal calls me, I always ask whether they would be prepared to pay for the loss of the animal & towards disposal. Generally they agree to this & cash & a receipt is exchanged.

I had a very stressful situation recently where a foal was hit by a car & had suffered a broken leg. I was asked by the farmer & Tavistock Police to attend & put the foal down. On my way, I was called by the farmer's wife, who was with the foal, saying that armed police had arrived to shoot the foal but were not sure where to shoot it, so were wanting to call a vet! The local Inspector called me & I said I would be there in 10 minutes – when I arrived the 2 armed police officers had stood down but were there waiting for me with half of the population of Yelverton looking on! The poor foal has a badly broken front leg & I was able to put her down ending her suffering. I found this situation in front of a full audience rather stressful!

On another note, I recently has a call about a poorly pony beyond Sandy Hole Pass, west of the East Dart & it took me a long time to get there & locate her. The pony was in an absolute mess, she was unmarked & had obviously gone to this remote place to die. She was still pretty wild & wary, but after a while, I was able to put her down.

The hot weather has brought its fair share of problems – lack of water at usual watering sites & the constant irritation of flies. Some of the ponies at Yelverton & Roborough Down are suffering terribly with flies & many sheep are getting fly strike. I have endless calls about foals down & dying when in fact they have only been asleep in the sun. I have been called to sleeping foals by a veterinary nurse, a farmer & a lady working at a dog rescue kennel, who all claimed that the foals they had found were unconscious & taking their last breath – an utter waste of time!

On a serious note, the Police have contacted me about livestock theft & for farmers to be vigilant. A large livestock theft in Exeter recently involved over 200 ewes & rams & the chains & padlocks on the gates had been cut open. Please report either to me or the police if you have any worries over livestock thefts.

Note provided by Karla McKechnie, Dartmoor Livestock Protection Officer.

8 August 2018