

## DARTMOOR COMMONERS' COUNCIL

### Minutes of the Meeting of the Dartmoor Commoners' Council held at Two Bridges Hotel, Princetown on Wednesday 3 October 2018.

#### Present:

Mr J Waldon - Chairman	Mr A Coaker	Mrs K Little
Mrs M Alford – Vice Chairman	Mr P Cleave	Mr G Mortimore
Mr P Abel	Mr A Cooper	Mr M Reddaway
Mr C Alford	Mr J Cooper	Mr M Retallick
Mr R Ashford	Mr P French	Mr R Steemson
Mr J Aylett	Mr G Hill	Mr T Stratton
Mr L Branfield	Mr J Jordan	Mrs A Willcocks

#### In attendance:

Mrs S Sloman	Mrs K McKechnie (DLPO)	Mr E Humber (NFU)
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#### 1. Chairman's Introduction

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting & advised that after the items on the agenda had been dealt with, Council will discuss two additional matters in a closed session.

- He introduced Andrew Cooper, the National Park Authority's Member representative (appointed by the Secretary of State) who will be deputising for Derek Webber. Derek is quite poorly at the moment & Council Members sent their best wishes for a speedy recovery.
- The Chairman reported that following the new Equine ID regulations which came into force on 1 October, there are concerns over how equine passports will be issued at the forthcoming annual pony sale. Defra acknowledged this is an issue. They approached Council to consider options & asked if Council would be prepared to become a Passport Issuing Organisation (PIO) for a short, fixed period of time. This option is now unlikely as it is hoped that Pet ID will continue to provide this service on Dartmoor. Following further discussions held between the Chairman, Charlotte Faulkner, Peter Farnsworth (Rendells Auctioneers) & Defra, a potential solution (for this year) has been agreed, subject to the vet & PIO being assured that the proposal is achievable & would not leave them vulnerable to prosecution under the new regulations. The Chairman advised that many people had put in a considerable amount of time & effort to ensure that the pony sale could go ahead on 11 October.

Mary Alford requested that talks to find a better solution continue & that those with the expert knowledge, but not Council Members, are asked to be on the discussion group.

It has since been confirmed that this year's pony sale will go ahead.

- The Chairman thanked Crispin Alford for helping & sorting out a long standing sheep issue in the North Quarter.

#### 2. Apologies for Absence

These were received from Mr N Cole, Mr P Cottington (Mr Ed Humber from NFU attended instead), Mr S Lake & Mr B Lavis.

#### 3. Confirmation of Minutes

The minutes of the Annual Meeting held on 8 August 2018 were confirmed & signed.

#### **4. Accounts & Auditor's Report**

A copy of the draft financial statements had been sent to all Council Members prior to the meeting. Any questions raised by Council Members were answered. A discussion took place on whether the amount of monies held in reserve is necessary & if a better return can be sought. It was agreed that a small working group is formed to consider this further. Council Members agreed to adopt the accounts for the year ending 30 June 2018.

#### **5. Matters Arising:**

##### **5.1 Pony Darting Licence**

Tom Stratton confirmed that the pony darting licence applicable to the Duchy owned area of the Forest of Dartmoor had been finalised & sent to Charlotte Faulkner, Dartmoor Hill Pony Association (licensee) for signature. The Licence shall run for one year, until 31 August 2019 when it will be reviewed. If any Council Members would like a copy, please contact Tom.

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

The Chairman & Vice-Chairman represented Council at the RPA CSG meeting held in London on 27 September 2018. The Chairman reported that the Minchinhampton retrospective payments were discussed again & that the RPA had advised that they now intend to pay in one tranche. This payment will be made before the RPA start to process the BPS 2018 claims in December this year.

The note of the RPA CSG Meeting will be circulated to Council Members once it has been received.

##### **5.3 Agri-Environment Agreements**

Council wrote to the Minister regarding the late payment of some 2017 agri-environment agreements. The reply advised that the matter would be discussed at the RPA CSG meeting, which it was. As from 1 October 2018, the RPA are administering all agri-environment claims & have taken on more staff to help them achieve this. The RPA have assured that all 2017 claimants would receive at least a part payment by 30 September 2018. Council Members discussed the effects of the payment calendar dates, outlined at the start of agri-environment agreements, not being adhered to. Late payment will act as a deterrent to some commons considering entering into an agreement.

The chairman advised that it is still yet to be confirmed whether the EU has agreed that HLS agri-environment agreements ending in 2019 & 2020 be offered the option to carry on until 2022. It is not certain if all schemes will automatically roll over, or if it will be discretionary. Countryside Stewardship will continue. It has been confirmed that HLS replication (Defra's term for an extension) will not be available to those agreements that have already ended or are due to end in 2018.

The Agricultural Bill proposes a New Environmental Land Management Scheme (NELMS), which will be trialled & is proposed to start in 2022. It is intended that BPS funding will be maintained at its current level until 2021 & then the level of payment will decline until 2027, when it will stop. There may well be a gap between the full BPS payment & NELMS payments.

##### **5.4 Cost of Delivering Agri-Environment Agreements**

Following a discussion held at the last meeting about collating data on how much it costs to operate & deliver agri-environment schemes, Mary Alford informed Council Members

that Janet Dwyer (Gloucester University) had carried out this type of work on Exmoor. There is a possibility she could do a similar exercise on Dartmoor at little or no cost. Mary Alford & Ann Willcocks agreed to produce a clear statement of what would be required & to bring it to Council for further consideration.

## **5.5 Farm Share Agreements & Grazing Agreements**

The Chairman explained that the working group has not yet had an opportunity to meet & produce a final draft of guidelines. It is hoped that this will be progressed in the coming weeks & brought to Council at the next meeting in December.

## **6. Matters Brought Forward at the Direction of the Chairman**

None.

## **7. Dartmoor Commoners' Council's Standing Orders**

A copy of the draft final version had been sent to all Council Members prior to the meeting. Kate Little briefly highlighted the main changes that had been made to the Council's Standing Orders & a discussion was had on these changes & the on the recording of meetings. Kate Little proposed that the amendments be approved by Council & Ann Willcocks seconded the proposal. Council Members agreed to adopt the updated version of the Standing Orders with immediate effect.

The Chairman thanked Kate Little & the members of the working group, being Mary Alford, Jonathan Aylett, John Cooper, Paul Cottington, Philip French & Ann Willcocks, for the work they had done over the previous twelve months to bring the Standing Orders up to date.

## **8. MOD Dartmoor Working Party Meeting Report**

The Chairman thanked John Cooper for representing Council at the meeting held on 6 September 2018. John gave a brief report which included:-

- Due to spending cuts, MOD need to reduce their manpower by 10%
- MOD & DSFRS are reviewing how they deal with fires
- The explosive team plan to carry out exercise to clear area of ground
- MOD will not be renewing their dry firing licence on Sheepstor
- Commoner's Briefing will be held on Thursday 29 November 2018

John expressed his disappointment at the Working Party meeting that the MOD are allowing Ten Tor's team leaders to bring dogs to the training days.

The Chairman reminded everyone that the Ten Tors Team Managers' Training Day is on Saturday 13 October 2018. Ann Willcocks apologised that she was no longer able to attend & therefore, another representative is desperately needed. Unfortunately, no other Council Member came forward & the Chairman stated that it does not reflect well that Council is unable to provide the minimum number of representatives required. He asked everyone to consider whether they or a family member could attend or if they know anyone else who would be prepared to go & represent the farming community. Since the meeting, Tracy May has kindly volunteered to attend.

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

Rob Steemson reported on the following:

The Recreational Events Policy, which is supported by both Dartmoor Commoners' Council & Dartmoor Common Land Owner's Association, will go to the DNPA Members for approval on Friday 5 October 2018.

Rob has had more meetings with the dedicated fire officer who is responsible for arranging a more coordinated fire service approach to wild fires. The officer will be speaking at the Local Commoners' Association's meeting on 17 October 2018. The dates for commoner's annual training with the Fire Service have been organised for Monday 12<sup>th</sup> & Monday 26<sup>th</sup> November & the Fire Summit meeting date will be confirmed soon, for the end of November.

Following a request from Dartmoor Hill Pony Association, DNPA are looking at providing a darting licence on the three areas of common land that they own (similar to the licence recently agreed by the Duchy).

DNPA is reviewing its Management Plan & part of this process will be to hold some Dartmoor Debates. The Farming & Forestry Debate will be held on 7 November 2018 & invites will be sent out soon.

**10. Swaling/Insurance Update**

All associations have been advised to take out their own insurance policy. However, it is proving increasingly difficult to obtain this type of cover for controlled burning. At our last meeting, Tom Stratton offered to raise the issue at a forthcoming meeting with the NFU & with the insurance brokers, Lycetts. The meeting with the NFU was cancelled, but Tom has followed up the matter & is awaiting a response from the NFU. Lycetts are potentially able to provide third party liability cover for swaling, at a reasonable cost, subject to some conditions that require further consideration & this is being progressed.

The Chairman thanked Tom Stratton for his help in trying to conclude this problem.

**11. Meeting Dates for 2019**

A discussion was had on the proposed meeting dates for 2019. Following some amendments, the revised dates were agreed & a copy is attached (Appendix A).

**12. Date of Next Meeting**

The next meeting of the Council will be held on Wednesday 5 December 2018 at 7:30pm at Two Bridges Hotel, Princetown.

The Chairman reminded Council Members that the Local Commoners' Association meeting will take place on Wednesday 17 October 2018 at the Two Bridges Hotel, Princetown starting at 7:30pm.

A motion to go into a closed session was proposed by the Chairman.

**Signed:**.....

**Date:**.....



## MEETINGS OF THE DARTMOOR COMMONERS' COUNCIL FOR 2019

### 1. Proposal

The Dartmoor Commons Act 1985 states that four meetings are required in a year including the Annual Meeting & consideration of estimates. The following dates have been agreed for 2019.

#### 1 Dates for Meetings

Wednesday	30 January 2019	
Wednesday	13 March 2019	Devon County Show 16,17,18 May 2019
Wednesday	22 May 2019	Royal Cornwall Show 6,7,8 June 2019
Wednesday	31 July 2019 (Annual Meeting)	
Wednesday	2 October 2019 (Accounts & Auditor's Report)	
Wednesday	4 December 2019	

### 2. Considerations

- 2.1** Estimates should be considered four months before the end of the financial year (30 June) as stipulated in the 1985 Act.
- 2.2** The first meeting held after 1 July in any year shall be the Annual Meeting as stipulated in the 1985 Act.
- 2.3** The Annual Accounts & Auditor's Report will be presented at the October meeting to allow sufficient time for the auditing of the accounts to be completed.
- 2.4** Working party meetings will be convened as required between the above dates to deal with specific issues.