

Mary Alford questioned if Council is the lead organisation for Action 6 of the Your Dartmoor Action Plan: seek to ensure that the importance of ponies for conservation grazing is recognised in future management & funding. The 2014 Action Plan confirms that Dartmoor Commoners' Council is the lead organisation.

The minutes of the Meeting held on 5 December 2018 were then confirmed & signed.

4. Matters Arising:

4.1 BPS Update & RPA CSG Meeting Report

The RPA advised that they had completed making the Minchinhampton retrospective payments. However, Council is aware of some commoners on Dartmoor who have not received their BPS retrospective payments for 2015 to 2017 & these cases have been referred to the RPA for further investigation. The latest remapping exercise showing the areas used to calculate BPS 2018 payments has raised many queries in regards to the reduction in the eligible areas. The RPA's commons mapping team offered to come to Dartmoor to meet those Local Associations & Council will pursue this.

4.2 T B Regulations Meeting with APHA

Members from Council's T B Working Group met with APHA recently. Issues & suggestions following on from the last grazing season were discussed & Dartmoor's TB Control Plan was reviewed. APHA wish to update the Plan & Grazier's Pack for 2019 & will produce a draft for the Working Group to consider. The outstanding issue of the impact of the 10 mile rule is still being progressed with APHA's support for a meeting with the Defra TB Policy team.

4.3 Electronic Identification (EID) of Cattle & Sheep

Representatives from Defra's Cattle Identification & Livestock Movement Team visited Dartmoor on 11th December. They visited a local farm, attended a small meeting with Council Members & took part in an open discussion evening. The role out of new EID regulations will have significant implications for those farmers that graze livestock on common land. Council has offered to help in any way it can to ensure that the new requirements are suitable for common grazing.

5. Pony Working Group Report

Postponed until the next Council Meeting

6. Reports from Members representing Council at meetings:

6.1 Dartmoor Moorland Bird Project – Tom Stratton

Tom Stratton gave a report from the meeting he attended on behalf of Council in December. A copy of the report is attached (Appendix A).

6.2 Dartmoor Rural Crime Partnership – John Waldon

The Chairman represented Council at the inaugural meeting held on 17 December 2018. His report is attached (Appendix B).

7. Matters Brought Forward at the Direction of the Chairman

None.

8. Update from Dartmoor National Park Authority

Rob Steemson reported on the following:

Following the Dartmoor Debates that were held in 2018, the next stage is a wider Steering Group meeting to consider the draft vision for the DNPA Management Plan

which will inform future actions. The Steering Group meeting will be held on 14 February 2019 & the Park is keen to get representation from the farming community & Council.

Just before Christmas, DNPA were informed that they had been successful with a bid to Defra to be one of the 'test & trial' areas for the new Environmental Land Management System. The proposal builds on Dartmoor Farming Futures & has a clear focus on commons. It includes the following elements:

- Looking at how to develop a plan led system
- Farmer engagement in design, delivery & monitoring
- Payment methods for public benefits

DNPA are still awaiting detailed feedback from Defra & do not know whether they will support all of the elements of just some.

The Fire Service have organised two extra evenings (with a fresh approach) for Commoners of other interested persons to be trained up to enable them to be accepted & involved with a wild fire call out. They will be hosted by Fire Officer, Ian Donovan on February 13th 7pm at Tavistock Fire Station, Abbey Rise, Tavistock, PL19 9BB
February 19th 7pm at Okehampton Fire Station, North Road, Okehampton, EX20 1BE
Spaces on both nights are limited to 25 so you need to book by contacting Rob Steemson, DNPA Community & Landscape Management Ranger via either rsteemson@dartmoor.gov.uk or 07711 856206.

Finally, the Highways Agency have responded to the Met Office yellow warning for snow over the coming days – driving conditions will be challenging on high ground. Please keep an ear to local radio & weather bulletins.

9. Financial Estimate for 2019/2020

Copies of the estimate were sent to all Council Members with the agenda. Being self-explanatory with no major queries or comments, Council agreed to the estimates provided.

10. Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Council will be held on Wednesday 13 March 2019 at 7:30pm at Two Bridges Hotel, Princetown

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

Signed:.....

Date:.....



Dartmoor Moorland Bird Project

Steering Group Meeting Report – 5 December 2018

Background

The Dartmoor Moorland Bird Project was established in response to the launch of the Devon Bird Atlas. HRH The Prince of Wales provided the foreword for this book which was compiled by the Devon Birds group and it notes the distribution of bird species across Devon, also providing a benchmark against the last Atlas which was published in 1988. Dartmoor is highlighted in the current Atlas as a place of increasing importance for many bird species in decline elsewhere whilst others, such as the Curlew are in critically low numbers.

The Duchy of Cornwall highlighted in 2016 the fact that significant investment has been made over the years in various bird surveys but seldom to these result in practical habitat or other improvements on the ground and land are managers often not aware of what actions are needed where. Likewise, there is a huge amount of knowledge and often interest amongst land managers which is not fully utilised so a discussion was initiated to discuss this which resulted in a partnership being created to pool all existing bird data for Dartmoor, creating a spatial understanding of where issues exist that need to be considered, with Project Officer resource to work with land managers and conservation advisers to deliver practical management on the ground to safeguard key species and try and improve the fortunes of those in decline.

The project is now in its second year and Fiona Freshney is the Project Officer.

A Steering Group exists to coordinate the project supported by a larger, Advisory Group, both of which have farmer representation. The Steering Group members are:

Tom Stratton (Chair)
 Helen Booker (RSPB)
 Kevin Cox (Devon Birds)
 Ann Willcocks (Farmer)
 Fiona Freshney (Dartmoor Moorland Bird Advisor)
 Layland Branfield (Farmer)
 Nik Ward (Natural England)
 Chris Giles (DNPA)
 Phil Hutt (Dartmoor Preservation Association)
 Jonathan Aylett (Dartmoor Commoners Council)
 Mark Allott (*MTMTE* Project Manager)

Meeting on 5th December 2018 – Key Points

Fiona Freshney produced a list of target sites across Dartmoor for the production of bird information sheets; these being produced as a double sided A3 sheet to make land managers aware of the key species their site / holding has and the habitats these favour. Nine such sheets have been produced to date and these have been developed with the land manager.

On commons, the importance of gaining input from the Associations in the development of the sheets was stressed to ensure as much engagement as possible. On completion, sheets are to be sent to the Association secretary for circulation to commoners. It was agreed that the development of these sheets should be prioritised for those commons taking part in the 'Our Common Cause' project where visions are being developed between commoners, owners and the relevant Statutory agencies relating to what people would like to see the subject commons look like over an agreed time period.

The British Trust for Ornithology is supplying breeding bird data to help fill gaps in the data that is available to the project already for Dartmoor.

Significant progress has been made in identifying and implementing habitat improvement work in the Central newtakes between Two Bridges and Postbridge. The work is focussed at improvements for waders and particularly Curlew and Snipe. Spaders has been a particular focus with cattle numbers increased to help reduce Molinia, vegetation cutting to encourage stock distribution, creation of scrapes, introduction of ponies and swaling planned subject to weather.

Concern was expressed relating to the depletion in NE resources for Dartmoor and Tom Stratton agreed to speak to new area team manager Eamon Crowe to try and ensure that the good work done in promoting the Moorland Bird Project and in securing derogations for certain habitat works on land within HLS was not lost and that a communication line could be established now that HLS administration has passed to the RPA.

NE propose to undertake a swaling consultation and it was agreed that the Project should engage with this process.

In autumn 2018 an information evening was held at the Forest Inn to provide an opportunity for the farming community to find out more about the project and to ask questions. A number of farmers expressed an interest in finding out more about moorland birds at a farm specific level and Fiona will be setting up a series of walks in 2019.

Note provided by Tom Stratton

Dartmoor Rural Crime Initiative Meeting Report

The inaugural meeting of Dartmoor Rural Crime Partnership was held on 17th December 2018.

Attendees:

Dartmoor National Park Authority, Office of Police and Crime Commissioner, Devon and Cornwall Police, South Hams District Council, Teignbridge District Council, West Devon Borough Council, Dartmoor Commoners' Council, Forestry Commission, South Lakes Trust, Devon County Council Highways, Dartmoor Livestock Protection Society, DNPA Parish Members, Environment Agency, Trading Standards and Devon Fire Rescue Service.

Purpose:

The aim of this meeting and the proposed Partnership is to bring together the statutory authorities and other representative groups/stakeholders who have the tools and resources to ensure that Dartmoor National Park is a safe environment for local communities, businesses and visitors alike. The Partnership will look to deliver a commitment which will synergise the resources, legal powers and intelligence of each partner to address common priorities in terms of rural crime and safety.

To create a forum for key stakeholders on Dartmoor to:

1. Identify rural crime and safety issues affecting the statutory authorities and those communities living, working and visiting the National Park.
2. Agree priorities and partnership action to address these issues.

Actions:

- It was agreed to set up a communication structure where Information and Intelligence will be shared, Priorities set and Activity to address these agreed.
- There are still resource problems. No change to police resources but a dedicated Rural Affairs Officer for Devon – PC Martin Beck will provide a point of contact for reporting crime on Dartmoor. (PC 4970 Martin Beck 07710075689).
- A meeting to discuss raves will be held on 6 February 2019.
- A meeting to discuss reducing animal deaths from road traffic accidents will be held (March 2019 DNPA taking the lead).
- Creation of a communication plan to ensure correct messages to the public.

Note provided by J Waldon, January 2019