

DARTMOOR COMMONERS' COUNCIL

Minutes of the Meeting of the Dartmoor Commoners' Council held at Two Bridges Hotel, Princetown on Wednesday 22 May 2019.

Present:

Mr J Waldon - Chairman	Mr P Cleave	Mrs K Little
Mr P French – Vice Chairman	Mr A Coaker	Mr M Reddaway
Mr C Alford	Mr P Cottington	Mr M Retallick
Mrs M Alford	Mr G Hill	Mr R Steemson
Mr R Ashford	Mr J Jordan	Mr D Webber
Mr J Aylett	Mr S Lake	
Mr L Branfield		

In attendance:

Mrs S Sloman	Mrs K McKechnie (DLPO)	Mr E Crowe (NE)
--------------	------------------------	-----------------

1. Chairman's Introduction

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting. He also welcomed Eamon Crowe, Natural England Team Leader for South Devon & Dartmoor, who gave a presentation to Council after the meeting.

2. Apologies for Absence

These were received from Mr P Abel, Mr J Cooper, Mr G Mortimore, Mr T Stratton & Mrs A Willcocks.

3. Confirmation of Minutes

The minutes of the Meeting held on 13 March 2019 were confirmed & signed.

4. Matters Arising:

4.1 Dartmoor National Park Authority Representatives on Council

It was formally clarified that Derek Webber has resumed his role as one of the Authority's nominated representatives & will hold a voting right along with Rob Steemson, who remains the Authority's other representative. Andrew Cooper is appointed as a deputy for Derek but does not hold a voting right.

4.2 RPA – Update on BPS, Mapping & Retrospective Payment

The Chairman reported that Council had written to the RPA to express its disappointment over the delays in arranging a meeting with the Local Commoners' Associations (LCAs) to discuss the changes made to many of the commons' eligible areas.

John Waldon, Philip French, Ann Willcocks & Sara Sloman have since met with the RPA Commons Mapping Team & offered to help the RPA interpret more accurately the imagery they are using to calculate eligible areas. The Chairman thanked Ann Willcocks & Sandra Dodd for providing the RPA with photographic examples of vegetation that should be accepted as eligible as it is grazed. The RPA are looking at these examples & will make a uniform decision for the whole

of Dartmoor regarding the eligibility. This may then mean that some commons will no longer have a problem & the number of commons contesting the situation might fall. However, the offer to meet with the LCAs that have a significant issue with regards to ineligible areas still stands. Russell Ashford encouraged each LCA to take photographs of their common to demonstrate where livestock grazing takes place. The Chairman reiterated that LCAs will be in a much better position when they meet with the RPA if they can produce a sample of photographic evidence of the contentious areas.

Philip French gave a brief update on the CSG dial in meeting that he was party to & reported that Dartmoor is a lot further ahead with regards to the mapping than other areas. He conveyed that the RPA hope to have the mapping sorted prior to the 2019 payment window & that there are approximately 300 Minchinhampton Retrospective Payments outstanding from the BPS years 2016 – 2018. The RPA hope to pay these the end of July this year. It is hoped that the RPA will produce a note following the CSG Meeting held on 16 May which will be circulated to Council Members if/when received.

4.3 Electronic Identification (EID) of Cattle & Sheep

Council has yet to receive a reply to its letter to Defra. Laura Monkman (Livestock Identification & Traceability Team) has since advised that Defra are currently working up their plans for common land & testing them internally before proceeding any further. They would like to run the proposals for common land by Council before they go out for public consultation later this year.

Additionally, no reply has been received to Council's letter to Laura Monkman (cc Tristan Crago & the Minister) regarding equine ID Regulations. Since the meeting, a further letter has been sent to Lord Gardiner.

4.4 TB

APHA & Defra's TB Policy Team have made a proposal to address the impact of movement regulations for those commoners who have to move cattle further than 10 miles. APHA have agreed to write a risk assessment & propose incorporating it within Dartmoor's TB Control Plan. APHA have requested a meeting with a couple of farmers who are directly affected. Council has agreed to progress this.

4.5 Defra's Environmental Land Management system (ELMs)

The Chairman had previously reported that the Dartmoor Test & Trials had been accepted by Defra. This resulted in Defra asking Dartmoor to address 6 questions, 3 of which related directly to common land. The timetable was very tight & the questions were required to be turned into objectives & costed. This work was submitted to Defra. However, the initiative is currently on hold due to Defra having insufficient budget.

The Chairman confirmed that a steering group will be established on Dartmoor to progress the initiative, once it gets going again & that Council will have a seat on this group. Council Members will have an opportunity in due course to decide who will represent them on the steering group.

4.6 Dog Worming Research

At the last Council Meeting, Ann Willcocks offered to do some research on the regular dog worming to prevent health risks. Her note was circulated to Council members. The Chairman thanked Ann for carrying out this useful piece of work.

Council Members discussed the best way to use the information gathered by Ann & progress the issue. Following a suggestion made by Mary Alford, Karla McKechnie & Layland Branfield offered to obtain some medical information on how humans are affected. Rob Steemson suggested that a small working group is then formed to consider strategies to address the issue including what other organisations can help in getting the message across.

5. Matters Brought Forward at the Direction of the Chairman

5.1 Review of Council's Working Practices

The Chairman advised that he proposes holding 'review' meetings in each quarter this autumn. The informal meetings will involve discussions with the relevant Quartermen, the Chairman, Vice-Chairman & Office Administrator on ideas & areas of work that Council should consider addressing in the coming years. The resulting proposals will be brought to Council for ratification.

5.2 Council's Annual Meeting

In previous years, Council's Annual Meeting has been held on the same night as a regular meeting, which has meant very lengthy meetings. The Chairman proposed that the only business addressed at the Annual Meeting, which is being held on Wednesday 31 July 2019, is the elections & other legally binding processes that have to be dealt with annually at this meeting. He proposed that other Council business is dealt with at an additional meeting on Wednesday 4 September 2019. Council Members agreed.

6. Update from Dartmoor National Park Authority

Nothing to report.

7. Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Council is the Annual Meeting which will be held on Wednesday 31 July 2019 at 7:30pm at Two Bridges Hotel, Princetown.

Signed: *John Waldon (Chairman)*

Date: *31st July 2019*