

Ann Willcocks asked Council to support her suggestion to the RPA that HL10 Restoration of Moorland be included in the list of agri-environment options for non-agricultural land regarding BPS claims in relation to agri-environment scheme agreements. The Chairman agreed to raise this at the forthcoming NCLSG meeting.

The RPA had previously advised that any outstanding Minchinhampton Retrospective Payments would be made by the end of July 2019. Council has been alerted of several cases where the payment has yet to be received. This will be raised at the RPA CSG meeting.

4.2 Defra's Environmental Land Management Scheme (ELMs)

The Chairman reported that this initiative has not progressed since the last Council Meeting due to its links to the Environment Bill & the Agriculture Bill, both of which are not being progressed at the moment owing to the situation at Parliament. The Chairman reiterated the intention to set up a steering group on Dartmoor to progress ELMs & advised that Council will be invited to join this group.

4.3 Dog Worming Research

At the last Council Meeting, Karla McKechnie offered to obtain some information on the risks to humans, in particular children, from dogs not being wormed. Her findings were circulated to Council Members. The Chairman thanked Karla for obtaining this useful information. Following a discussion, it was decided to take Stuart Lake up on his offer to carry out some further investigation on the matter, to include specific remedies for different types of worm & identify other animals that can transmit worms. The information collated will be presented to the Dartmoor National Park Authority (DNPA) & Dartmoor Hill Farm Project for wider circulation to raise awareness of the consequences of not worming dogs properly.

5. Members representing Council at Meetings

5.1 Dartmoor Commons Owners Association

Our Chairman represented Council at this meeting held on 7 August 2019 that included a useful presentation on the Dartmoor National Park Management Plan. He reported that the DNPA had confirmed that they will not approve recreational events without obtaining the landowner's consent.

5.2 Dartmoor Moorland Bird Project

Jonathan Aylett gave a report of the meeting he attended on behalf of Council in August. A copy of the report is attached (Appendix A). Fiona Freshney would appreciate feedback from members of Council about their experiences of how the Project has gone.

5.3 Dartmoor Rural Crime Partnership – Road Focus Group

Our Chairman represented Council at this meeting held on 22 August 2019. He felt that the meeting was useful & constructive. His report is attached (Appendix B). Devon County Council have produced a very good presentation on road traffic statistics for Dartmoor. If anyone wishes to receive a copy, please contact Sara, Office Administrator, Dartmoor Commoners' Council.

5.4 Our Common Cause Project

Mary Alford is Council's representative on the Common Cause Steering Group. She gave a brief update on the project & a more detailed report is attached (Appendix C).

6. Matters brought forward at the direction of the Chairman

6.1 National Food Strategy Consultation

<https://consult.defra.gov.uk/agri-food-chain-directorate/national-food-strategy-call-for-evidence/>

This is a review to address the problems caused by our food system, to ensure the security of our food supply & to maximise the benefits of the coming revolution in agricultural technology. Philip French was asked to co-ordinate a response on behalf of Council. If anyone is interested in contributing, please contact Philip.

7. Update from Dartmoor National Park Authority

7.1 Rob Steemson reported on the following:

Environmental Land Management Scheme (ELMs) – Post Brexit

DNPA applied for an ELMs test & trial to build on Dartmoor Farming Futures & the work of the task & finish group that Maurice Retallick chaired. The original proposal was submitted in 2018, a revised proposal submitted in March 2019 (following a request to complete a Defra template) & a further revised proposal was submitted in August (again to comply with a new template & costing guidance). DNPA is still awaiting a decision. If successful, the proposal will provide some resource to work with the farming community to develop ideas in a number of areas including:

- A payment by results/performance related payments model – building on experience in the Republic of Ireland.
- Looking at how environmental land management can be identified & agree local priorities.
- Advice required & how delivery is monitored.

DNPA have advertised a fixed-term post (at risk) to work with the farming community on this project if Defra funding is secured.

Management Plan Review

This is ongoing & DNPA will be inviting farmer & Commoners' Council representatives to a workshop in the autumn to discuss the farming section & key actions.

Glover Review

The Government appointed Julian Glover (a journalist & former special advisor) to lead an independent review of National Parks & AONBs. He is due to publish his final report shortly. In July, Defra published an exchange of letters between Glover & Michael Gove (then Secretary of State). Glover's letter contained an idea for a National Landscape Service & Gove supported this further but neither letter contained any detail about this service. On 28 August 2019, the BBC Radio 4 Today Programme interviewed Glover & he seemed to indicate that he was in favour of a National Ranger Service & an increase in ranger numbers.

Visitor Management

DNPA Rangers, Forestry staff & the Police undertook joint patrols over the August bank holiday at Bellever & Fernworthy woods that prevented a rave from taking place.

7.2 Fire Service Cut Backs Consultation

DNPA intend to respond to this consultation. Following a brief discussion, it was agreed that Council should submit a response.

7.3 Ten Tors Team Managers Training Day

This will be held on Saturday 12 October 2019 & will take a different format to previous years. Council has been asked to send one member to give a short farming talk to everybody at the start of the day. The Chairman felt it would be useful for a few members to attend this opportunity to inform the Ten Tors Team Managers of the impact that these type of events have on farming on Dartmoor. John Cooper, Ann

Willcocks & Kate Little offered to attend.

8. Condition of the Commons

This follows on from a suggestion made by Ann Willcocks at the last meeting to review the condition of the commons, following years of stewardship schemes with Natural England. Following a discussion, it was agreed to begin to address this by holding a smaller meeting to highlight the issues that Council Members have with the present condition of the commons. Additionally, what Council would like to achieve going forward & how Council should proceed needs to be discussed. Philip French has offered to Chair the meeting & liaise with Ann to set a date. The findings can then be brought back to full Council for further consideration. This will be at a separate meeting which will precede the next Council Meeting on 2 October 2019.

9. Update from Dartmoor Livestock Protection Officer

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

Council agreed to write to The Maristow Estate Manager asking him to reconsider his decision to not allow two signs to be erected warning drivers to slow down. The letter will be copied to DNPA.

10. Proposed Review of How Council Works

The Chairman advised that informal 'review' meetings will be held in each quarter during the next few months. Discussions will be with the relevant Quartersmen on ideas & areas of work that Council should consider addressing over the next few years. The proposals will be brought to Council for further consideration & progressed through a small working group.

11. Sheep Clearance Autumn 2019

Council agreed the dates for the mandatory sheep clearance. The South moor clear period will be from 9-23 November & the North moor clear period will be from 16-30 November.

12. Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Council will be held on Wednesday 2 October 2019 at 7:30pm at Two Bridges Hotel, Princetown.

Signed: *John Waldon*

Date: *2 October 2019*

Dartmoor Moorland Bird Project**Steering Group Meeting Report – 14 August 2019**

The meeting was chaired by Tom Stratton & attended by Helen Booker, Kevin Cox, Fiona Freshney, Nik Ward & Chris Giles. Fiona had prepared an Advisor Progress Report June 2019 to September 2019 & a paper headed "Delivery Outcomes". The paper concentrates on what has been achieved to date & is divided into four sections:-

1. Habitat Restoration & Enhancement - Central Newtakes, Duchy Tenancies, Commons & The Forest, Other Newtakes & Privately Owned Land.
2. Wider Collaborations & Partnerships.
3. Volunteers.
4. Community Engagement.

The provision of Bird Information sheets has been a major task for Fiona which she is struggling to finish - some 30 plus individual sheets will ultimately be available for distribution to interested Landowners/Farmers & for use in connection with agri-environment applications, management plans etc. The Project has engaged with tenants in about 15 Duchy newtakes & a major driver of engagement in the central newtakes has been the enhancement of habitats for waders, viz Curlew & Snipe, but also for other species associated with the ranker habitat in these extensive mires. Management discussions have focused on grazing levels, scrub management, provision of scrapes, Molinia control by grazing & cutting & future maintenance of areas under management.

On the Commons the consultations have focused on swaling & bracken management plans, with archaeology being an important driver of bracken management on some commons. Fiona has highlighted the intrinsic conflict between the management required for most moorland birds & that for archaeology. On the Forest the dominance of Molinia has emerged as a key issue & Tom felt that the support of the Trustees in discussions with Natural England & the Powers that Be over the making of strategic decisions in connection with how this aspect of management of Dartmoor is handled in future will be important.

The Project has collaborated with Our Common Cause Project in producing bird visions for each Commons pilot area & with the administrators of the Dartmoor Farming Futures Project. Also with Natural England, Butterfly Conservation, the RSPB, the Operation Wader Project & The Wetlands & Wildfowl Trust. Volunteers from various organisations have helped with field work, mainly surveys relating to Snipe & Ring Ouzel. Community Engagement has involved the giving of talks on the Project to groups/organisations, stalls at events, walks for farmers & other interested parties. Fiona is looking for guidance over where her work should be focused during the last six months or so of the Project. Members agreed that it was important to highlight in a concise document the actions required by land managers as identified by the Project Advisor. Tom feels this is important to ensure delivery under any future agri-environment schemes & particularly in relation to the Duchy holdings/newtakes.

There was discussion about the lack of any firm knowledge about the shape of future agri-environmental schemes in the wake of Brexit but a feeling that a "whole landscape approach" was more likely to appeal to the designers of whatever schemes are put in place. Caution was expressed about the Project being seen as "Curlew dominated" & about the very real difficulties of actions designed to reintroduce this species on Dartmoor before sufficient evidence has been collated about its specific needs & the nature of the invertebrates in Dartmoor soils. The hope is that there may be some funding for further research on this subject. Finally there was an interesting discussion on the existence of certain enclosures in Tavy Cleave & at West Mill Tor & the benefits of leaving these in situ so as to enable comparisons to be made into the future between the herbage growth inside & outside the areas in question & the study of invertebrates, heather beetle & other animals. It is hoped to have one or two further meetings of the Steering Group before March. The Advisory Group meets on the 26 of September when I believe we may be looking at the West Mill Tor enclosure.

Note provided by Jonathan Aylett, August 2019

Dartmoor Rural Crime Initiative – Road Focus Group Meeting Report

Jon Farr from Devon County Council presented an analysis of data from all road traffic accidents (RTAs) resulting in human injury & some animals. The data from RTAs (human) mirrored that of those RTAs involving animals in timings & locations. So tackling one will also tackle the other. More resources will be available because of the slightly higher than average number of accidents involving human injury. However, analysis of historical & recent data suggests that reducing speed is not the only answer; driver awareness & driver behaviour appear to be as important.

Most accidents were caused by drivers living within 30 miles of Dartmoor, the 15 to 18 age group statistically causing a higher chance of accidents, with the peak months being April, June, October & January. Actions to focus on these times & audiences.

Results of day of traffic monitoring and use of speed cameras confirmed problem & better identified hot spots.

It was agreed to:

- Produce a plan of action that identifies all the various issues & assign people to address each. Plan to be drafted by DNPA & be provided within 2 months.
- Ensure animal stats are collected in the best way & fed into the analysis. Karla to be included in the sub-group looking at this.
- Next meeting of roads sub group set for Thursday 28th November.

Also DNPA is considering meeting with people in the New Forest to get info & results of their innovations & actions that have reduced the number of accidents.

Note provided by J Waldon, August 2019

Our Common Cause - Update on Development Phase & allocation of funding for the Delivery Phase of the Project

Background

“Our Common Cause: Our Upland Commons” is a National Heritage Lottery Fund Project (NHLF) which has been awarded Development phase funding for a two year period with a proposed three year Delivery (second) phase. The Development phase budget is circa £480,000 & the total five year project has a budget of £3.2 million. The Development phase ends in December 2019 when the second round application will be submitted to HLF, the Delivery phase is programmed over 3 years.

The project builds on the work of ‘Better Outcomes on Upland Commons’ a project inspired by HRH The Prince of Wales & delivered through a partnership led by the Foundation for Common Land. The new NHLF project covers four areas across England: Dartmoor, Shropshire Hills, Yorkshire Dales & the Lake District. It aims to encourage more people to enjoy & understand commons & to help empower local communities to safeguard the heritage of commons. The strength of a project across four areas is the ability to try different approaches & learn from each other. The project aims to deliver its outcomes by:

- ‘Enabling Collaborative Management’
- ‘Reconnecting People with Commons’
- ‘Improving Public Benefits from the Commons’

The project partnership is convened by the Foundation for Common Land with the National Trust acting as the accountable body. The national partners include: Dartmoor, Yorkshire Dales & the Lake District National Parks, Shropshire Hills AONB, Cumbria, Devon, Shropshire & Yorkshire Wildlife Trusts, NFU, Natural England, RSPB, South West Water, Duchy of Cornwall, Moorland Association, National Sheep Association, Open Spaces Society. Most of these national partners are reflected in the Local Area Group for the project which has been supporting the work on Dartmoor. Representatives from the Dartmoor Commoners Council & all of the local commons (both commoners and landowners) are invited to the Local Area Group.

The Development Phase

Over the past 18 months Local Facilitators have been working across the four areas to develop agreed visions for 3 Commons in each area, working to get consensus between landowners, commoners & a range of other stakeholders including RSPB, Wildlife Trusts & others.

On Dartmoor Tracy May was appointed as the Local Facilitator & has been working with three Commons (Holne, Harford/Ugborough & Bridestowe and Sourton/Sourton). On Dartmoor this work has built on the Moorland Vision. The successful Great Gather event on Buckfastleigh Common was part of this project & clearly exemplified how little the general public know about commons & communing, it is hoped that this can be rolled out in the next phase of the project. Some members of the Council will have attended the exhibition in Princetown Visitor Centre this Spring, which highlighted people working on Commons & documented their thoughts about the importance of commons & communing— a number of farmers were involved & will have been interviewed & photographed by Rob & Harriet Frazer as part of this Project. Again this work has been funded through the Common Cause Project.

As well as developing the visions, other work has been commissioned to develop a set of proposals for interpretation & public engagement to be delivered in the next phase of the project. This work aims to improve understanding of common land, why it is so special, what it delivers for society & to highlight the work of commoners to deliver these benefits. There is a specific strand to engage young people through the John Muir Award. Other pieces of work have also been commissioned to support the next application to the NHLF.

The Delivery Phase

The Delivery phase will be 3 years; it will build upon the work being undertaken during the Development Phase & will fund a number of projects to help deliver the agreed visions or help answer some of the questions raised during the process. It will also allow us to roll out the development of Visions to new Commons & will focus on public engagement & understanding. One of the key aims of the project, to encourage a collaborative approach, working together to find solutions in a way which values everyone's opinions equally, will continue & is crucial if the work is to be successful. The bid to the NHLF is being developed at the moment & will be structured around the following themes:

Collaborating - e.g. continuing the Vision process

Resilience – e.g. new technology, trialing new approaches

Commons for All - e.g. interpretation & engagement

Commons for Tomorrow - e.g. archaeology & habitat & species restoration

The second funding bid will be submitted to National Heritage Lottery Fund at the end of November.

Summary

This is a project across 4 areas of the country & aims to try things, share good practice & knowledge. It is about working collaboratively to develop visions for Commons & consider ways to deliver those visions.

It is very timely given the uncertainty of future Agri-Environment schemes because it is a way of highlighting & agreeing the important & special features on a common & opportunities for future enhancement - this could be useful if the government pursue the public goods for public money approach. It is an opportunity to better engage people with commons, not just locally but nationally, & in doing so increase understanding of why they are important & the role of farmers & commoners.

Some funding will be available in the next phase of the project, if we are successful, to help us deliver or trial things we have identified in the visions & to roll out the visioning process. (This funding is for things not covered by current agri-environment schemes). All of the projects are not listed here because there are many & it would be a very long paper. This information could be made available.

Note provided by Ally Kohler, September 2019

Dartmoor Livestock Protection Officer's Report

Road Traffic Accidents – 125 to date (91 animals dead, 34 injured)

These statistics are similar to last year's figures.

We had four ponies hit, two of them killed, on a road at Maristow, Roborough. This caused a lot of local upset and a local resident raised funds and had two signs made and erected warning drivers to slow down. The Maristow Estate Manager, Joe Hess, has said the signs are to be taken down and collected from his office because, in his opinion, signage is not the answer. Interestingly, signs are put out every year by the Estate warning there are pheasants on the road.

Dog Attacks – 74 to date

I have obtained monetary compensation from several dog owners for the loss of sheep and the police have issued Voluntary Control Orders. Please keep me updated of any incidents with relevant details, as I may be able to help.

It's been a busy summer with many callers phoning in about lame sheep all over the moor. Several calls also about maggoty sheep; calls about sheep with orf, with louping ill and members of the public with concerns about sheep that had not been sheared.

There have been a few thin ponies that have either been taken off, or put down on the moor and others monitored to be dealt with at drift time.

There have been two serious situations with cattle when members of the public have been injured. One near Widecombe and one near Whiteworks. I have not been contacted further.

A few unfortunate incidents: One where 11 cows were struck by lightning on Gibbet Hill and all killed. The other, with a better outcome, was a cow stuck in a sink hole at Crane Hill with only its head exposed, which was found by accident by a walker who was lost and wandering around. The cow was successfully dug out and was soon up and grazing again. A third incident was a dead cow with its newly born calf lying beside it right out at Ring Rock, Amicombe, again found by a wandering walker. This calf was picked up by the farmer and taken home.

I get lots of calls about injured or dead animals at the side of the road, including deer, badgers, foxes and, sadly, I was called to attend what the caller thought was a dead sheep but on arrival it turned out to be a sheep dog mown down only 5 ft. from its farm entrance. A call to the farmer I did not enjoy making. It was the farmer's best work dog.

Note provided by Karla McKechnie, 4 September 2019