

DARTMOOR COMMONERS' COUNCIL

Draft Minutes of the Meeting of the Dartmoor Commoners' Council held at Two Bridges Hotel, Princetown on Wednesday 4 March 2020.

Present:

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

In attendance:

Mrs S Sloman	Mrs K McKechnie (DLPO)
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1. Chairman's Introduction

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting. He explained that a number of points recently raised will be addressed under Agenda item 5: Matters brought forward at the direction of the Chairman.

2. Apologies for Absence

Received from Mr J Aylett, Mr S Lake & Mr G Mortimore.

3. Confirmation of Minutes

George Hill felt that the concerns he had raised over the damage, caused by commercial horse-riding, to the Mary Tavy Commons should have been minuted. The Chairman agreed to amend the set of minutes from the last Meeting accordingly.

Mary Alford pointed out that although the Chairman's & Vice-Chairman's job description was circulated with the agenda for the last Meeting & taken as read. It had not been formally adopted by Council & she requested that the minutes be amended to reflect this.

It was agreed that the Chairman withhold from signing the minutes of the last Meeting until these adjustments had been made.

4. Matters Arising:

4.1 Update on RPA Mapping Issues

At the last meeting, the Chairman agreed to look into the concerns raised by Council Members that some Local Commoners' Associations (LCA) still had mapping issues. Following this, all LCA's were asked to let the Office know if this was the case. To date, Council is aware of only one LCA with an issue. The RPA has suggested that this Association write to the RPA to appeal against the fact that the eligible area of the common has been considerably reduced due to the principle of RD01 not being applied. The Chairman asked that the Association keeps Council updated.

4.2 Dog Worming Research: Update

Following the last meeting, Philip French had done some research on what posters & leaflets were available. He advised that there is a mass of information on the internet, much of which is in a downloadable poster format & mirrors what Stuart Lake had reported on at the last Council Meeting. Philip informed Council Members that the NFU, vets & agricultural suppliers also have information readily available. He has spoken to Dartmoor National Park Authority (DNPA) who is in the process of re-branding some of their dog information leaflets & would welcome input from Commoners, prior to the leaflets going to print, to ensure that the correct message on dog worming is being circulated. Karla, our Livestock Protection Officer, has agreed to assist with this.

Discussions followed on whether Council should produce its own literature & whether the focus should be on the hazards that certain types of worms present to humans, or the type of worm that has an indirect impact on graziers of common land by affecting livestock, resulting in abattoirs condemning affected carcasses. It was agreed that once a local leaflet / poster has been produced, it is circulated widely to local veterinary surgeries & LCAs with a covering letter from Council.

The Chairman thanked Philip French, Stuart Lake, Ann Willcocks & Karla McKechnie for the research they have done.

5. Matters Brought Forward at the Direction of the Chairman

5.1 Environmental Land Management: Policy Discussion

Defra has issued a consultation, on Environmental Land Management: Policy. Although many Council Members will be particularly busy in the coming months due to lambing, it was agreed that Council must respond to the consultation, which ends on 5 May 2020. The Chairman offered to circulate a note, containing the questions that Defra want answered, to those Members who had offered to contribute to a response & ask that they comment accordingly. He will then produce a draft note for further discussion that can be developed into a full response.

5.2 Letter to Council Members: Quasi-Rights

The Chairman referred to a recent letter that had been sent by email to all Council Members querying the payment rate on quasi-rights. He advised Council that the suggestion in the letter does not reflect the current situation & he will do a response on that basis.

Following a brief discussion, it was proposed by Ann Willcocks & seconded by Mary Alford that the subjects of quasi-rights & owner's surplus be revisited by Council. The Chairman agreed to give this further consideration.

5.3 Office Database & Laptop

The Chairman advised Council Members that following the receipt of a reasonable quotation to upgrade the Office's Computer Database system, he had authorised that the work go ahead.

5.4 Your Dartmoor: Dartmoor National Park Management Plan

The draft Plan for 2020-2025 is out for consultation. The Chairman reported that the role of the future management plan could be very different to previous Plans. Therefore, getting it right for Dartmoor is very important. The consultation closes on 20 April 2020. Mary Alford, Layland Branfield, Paul Cottingham & Philip French offered to draft a response on behalf of council. It was agreed that the draft response be circulated to Council Members before being submitted.

5.5 Livestock Theft

The Chairman advised Council Members that there has been an increase in reports of sheep theft from common land. He reminded everyone of the protocol in place to report missing livestock: Contact the Police directly by phoning 101 or emailing <https://www.devon-cornwall.police.uk/contact/contact-forms/101-non-emergency/> or contact Council's Office Administrator who will contact the Police. The Chairman asked the Quartermen to raise this with their Associations.

6. Members representing Council at Meetings:

6.1 Trading Standards Farm Partnership

Maurice Retallick represented Council at this meeting held on 20 February 2020. He reported that:-

- Peter Morris gave a presentation on the proposed new animal identification system, which isn't due to be introduced until mid-2021 at the earliest.
- World Horse Welfare gave a presentation on fly grazing & legislation which enables local authorities to deal with the placing of horses on another person's land to use their grazing, without their consent. The Chairman said that Council will look at this legislation to see if it specifically mentions common land & the Dartmoor Commons Act.
- Animal & Plant Health Agency (APHA) gave an update. They advised that, due to resources, they are currently unable to physically test all dairy cattle replacements imported from Europe for TB.

The chairman thanked Maurice for his report & attending the meeting on behalf of Council.

6.2 Foundation for Common Land

Layland Branfield recently attended a meeting of the Foundation for Common Land. He sits on this Group as a trustee in his own right, not as a Council representative. Layland agreed that he will report relevant information back to Council.

7. Update from Dartmoor National Park Authority

Rob Steemson reported on the following:

- Following the concerns raised at the last Council Meeting regarding damage caused by groups of horse-riders to the Commons, Rob has visited the affected areas. He is currently liaising with his colleagues on legislation & plans to visit the relevant establishments across the Moor.
- With the lambing season & ground bird nesting season upon us, information signs & leaflets are being widely circulated.

- At the recent Authority meeting, there was a recommendation put forward to increase the fees of the DNPA car parks by £1.

Concerns were raised regarding the number of *new* recreational events on Dartmoor & that certain commons suffer from the frequent footfall of such events. Rob urged commoners, local associations & landowners to use the consultation process that is in place to comment on such events. Paul Cottington suggested that Council should contact the other National Parks to see how they deal with recreational events in their area. The Chairman agreed.

8. Update from Dartmoor Livestock Protection Officer

Karla McKechnie read out her report, a copy of which is attached (appendix A).

Karla also reported that some local District Councils have Dog Order Regulations which do not permit more than 6 dogs to be walked at any one time by one person. She asked if the DNPA would consider introducing something similar. Rob advised that when the District Councils were revising their Dog Order Regulations several years ago, both DNPA & Dartmoor Commoners' Council requested that each District Council include any common land & access land in their area in their Regulations. However, the District Councils were unable to do this as they do not have the necessary byelaw provisions over the land within the Dartmoor National Park. Following a discussion, it was agreed that Council write to the local District Councils & DNPA to question this disparity that has arisen.

9. TB: Annual Review Meeting with APHA

A note of the meeting had been previously circulated to all Council Members. A copy is attached (appendix B).

The Chairman agreed to clarify the action point regarding LCAs resubmitting maps of cattle lears to APHA.

10. Report on Meetings with Quartermen

The Chairman reported that the purpose of the meetings was to provide an opportunity for the Quartermen to meet & review how Council operates & discuss ideas on how Council might change its working practices to be prepared for what the future may bring. The meetings were intended to look at how Council operates rather than on what it does. He thanked those Quartermen who attended these meetings, which he felt were very constructive & useful. All Council Members have been provided with a note of the meetings. The Chairman advised that following AGM, Council will have to decide how it wishes to take it forward, or not.

11. Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Council will be held on Wednesday 6 May 2020 at 7:30pm at Two Bridges Hotel, Princetown.

Signed:.....

Date:.....

Dartmoor Livestock Protection Officer's Report

Road Traffic Accidents (RTAs)

This year to date, 14 RTAs, involving livestock, have been reported: 10 dead sheep, 2 dead ponies & 2 ponies survived. There have been no reports since 7 February: In the 7 years that I have been doing this job, I have never had a month of no reported RTAs. Maybe, due to all of the rain, livestock are sheltering & have kept away from the roads.

The exceptional amount of rain this last month seems to be taking its toll on the condition of the stock on the moor. Ponies are being fed in some areas & I am monitoring a few, it may be that they will have to come off. Sheep are also being knocked by the weather & it doesn't bode well for lambing which is slowly beginning in some areas.

I've had a little issue where a local resident was feeding the ponies hay, but this has now been addressed.

A dead pony on Heckwood Tor reported on 26 February remains a mystery as I cannot establish ownership. No chip. It had a slit in its off ear. Perhaps a tag had torn out but the mare was approximately 5 years old.

There are some naughty colts on one common, a 2 year old & a yearling that I am trying to get removed.

Dog Attacks

To date this year there have been 11 dog attacks. There was a bad spate in the last few weeks. A rescue dog, that had run away from its new owner & had been missing for a week, was reported to me after it had been found having killed a sheep. Compensation was paid.

Another dog near Haytor that had escaped from its owner & had killed a sheep has had a dog control order placed on it & compensation has been paid.

Again, a dog that killed a sheep at Cadover had a dog control order placed on it & full compensation has been paid.

So out of the 11 reported attacks, 3 have paid out compensation.

A growing concern of mine is the increasing number of rescue dogs that are attacking & the increasing amount of commercial dog walkers on the moor, some exercising more than 6 dogs at a time. Teignbridge District Council has now bought in some new regulations which permit only 4 dogs to be walked at any one time.

Please keep reporting any incidents to me.

TB Annual Update

APHA office, Starcross 23 January 2020

Attendees: APHA – Jenny Heard, Agnieszka Dabrowska, Maria Reyero & Manuel. DaCC – Anton Coaker, Mary Alford, Helen Radmore, Colin Abel & John Waldon

Apologies: Ann Willcocks and Layland Branfield

1. Process of distributing and receiving the annual graziers' packs went smoothly in 2019. All commons returned forms and licences (TB18) issued.
2. Since January 2019, 18 new cases (reactors or confirmed slaughter house cases) included farms with common grazing on Dartmoor. However still not possible to know if the cattle involved were those that went to common. More detail required and farmers still not ensuring cattle grazing on common are identified on the test sheet with an M written after the identification number.
3. APHA data base improving but still unable to provide detail on breakdowns involving common graziers.
4. Contact APHA's dedicated commons' email address working and remains best route for non-urgent communication.
5. Maps original submitted to APHA as part of a common's TB control plan need checking to see if anything has changed. These maps recorded lears and graziers.
6. Move to 6 month testing not to be rolled out till at least 2021 and still not confirmed. Implications for commons grazing will need to be raised at appropriate opportunity.

Actions:

1. DaCC to change date on last year's graziers' pack and send out. Covering note/email to include a reminder to mark ALL test sheets to identify cattle that go to the common (or may go to the common) with an M, the importance of recording the holding areas and of contacting APHA if restrictions are applied and you wish to graze the commons.
2. All associations to review the map they submitted to APHA in 2014 and ensure it is correct. All LCA's to resubmit maps to APHA this year.
3. DaCC to provide APHA with updated list of local commons associations contact details.