

## DARTMOOR COMMONERS' COUNCIL

### Notes of Discussion Meeting of the Dartmoor Commoners' Council held virtually on Thursday 1 October 2020.

#### Participants:

Mr P French – Chairman	Mr J Cooper	Mr G Mortimore
Mr L Branfield – Vice Chair	Mr P Cottington	Mr M Radmore
Mr P Abel	Mr K Edwards	Mr M Reddaway
Mrs M Alford	Mrs C Faulkner	Mr R Steemson
Mr R Ashford	Mr J Jordan	Mr T Stratton
Mr P Cleave	Mr R Leigh	Mrs A Willcocks
Mr A Coaker	Mrs K Little	

Mrs S Sloman

#### Note

The Meeting scheduled for 16 September 2020 was postponed due to the latest Government guidelines regarding the coronavirus pandemic. It was rearranged for 1 October 2020. However, as restrictions were still in place on that date, Council could not hold a face-to-face meeting, so it was decided to trial a virtual meeting.

#### 1. Chairman's Introduction

The Chairman thanked Council Members for their efforts to participate in the virtual meeting & explained that it would take the format of a discussion rather than a formal meeting. He advised that paperwork on various issues to be addressed would be circulated to Council Members for consideration in due course & all comments must be directed through the office.

#### 2. Apologies for Absence

Received from Mr G Hill, Ms T May, Mr J Waldon, Mrs P Warren & Mrs K McKechnie (DLPO)

#### 3. Confirmation of Minutes

The Chairman advised that there were three sets of Minutes waiting to be signed off by Council; 4 March 2020, 12 August 2020 (AGM) & 2 September 2020. These will be recirculated to Council Members for confirmation.

#### 4. Matters outstanding from previous meetings:

##### 4.1 Appointment by DNPA of Representative for Owners of Common Land

The Chairman welcomed Penny Warren who, under Section 3 (2) (d) of the Dartmoor Commons Act 1985, has been appointed to represent the interests of owners of common land on the Council. This is for a period of four years ending 1 July 2024.

##### 4.2 Public Space Protection Order (PSPO) Consultation

The Chairman thanked those Council Members who contributed to Council's response to this West Devon Borough Council consultation relating to dogs in public spaces. The current PSPOs are due to be renewed October 2020.

A copy of Council's response is available from the Office upon request.

## **5. Correspondence received by the Chairman or Office Administrator:**

### **5.1 Duchy of Cornwall: Agistments - South Quarter of Forest of Dartmoor**

Proposed changes to the agistments following retirement of the agister. A copy of the letter together with some additional information will be circulated to all Council Members for comment in due course.

### **5.2 Okehampton Commoner: Reduction of Stocking Levels by NE**

Allegedly, Natural England (NE) has requested that all sheep to be removed from Okehampton Common from September until spring next year. As yet, Council has not received an official request from Okehampton Commoners' Association to become involved. However, the Chairman has written to Eamon Crowe, NE expressing his concerns over the purported stories & press reports. He has requested a meeting with NE to try & establish exactly what NE's future policy is & the implications this may have across Dartmoor. Furthermore, the Chairman has visited Okehampton Common to see for himself the situation 'on the ground'. He thanked Tracy May for showing him around. The Chairman has agreed to keep Council members updated on the matter.

### **5.3 General Letters x 2: Pony Drifts**

The letters raise some general issues & questions. One letter has also appeared in the local paper. The Chairman intends to circulate copies of both letters to all Council Members for comment before sending a response.

## **6. Report & Recommendations from Pony Working Group**

John Jordan gave a brief update on the meeting held 21 September 2020. A note of the meeting is attached (Appendix A). All of the recommendations for action were agreed by Council. This included Council sending a letter to the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons (RCVS) who are undertaking a review of the legislation that only a registered vet may implant a microchip in an equine. The Pony Working Group had asked Charlotte Faulkner & Stuart Lake to provide Council with draft wording for the letter.

## **7. Condition of the Commons:**

### **7.1 Update on Review undertaken by Ann Willcocks**

Ann reported that the draft review document now includes a record of the discussions held with various people prior to lockdown. It states what is considered to be wrong with the current management of the commons & Ann is in the process of finding the relevant evidence to support what is being claimed. In due course, solutions will need to be identified & the document will need to include recommendations for best working practice.

### **7.2 Considering Introduction of Charter for Management Works on Commons**

Ann would like to see the above-mentioned document develop into the production of a charter that sets out what the relevant groups & organisations consider to be important. This could be fed into ELMS & used in discussions on how future agri-environment agreements are reached & who must be consulted.

Council Members agreed that Ann continue with this piece of work. Ann will tidy up the current review document & circulate it to Council Members for comment. The Chairman thanked Ann for all of the work she has done so far.

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

Rob Steemson reported the following:

### **DNPA Management Plan Consultation**

The responses are being analysed & it is hoped that a report will be presented to the Authority in November outlining any proposed changes. DNPA thanked Council for their response.

### **Recreational Events**

DNPA's COVID-19 position statement (see Council Minutes 12 August 2020) remains the same. The consultation process for 2021 events will open in October depending on any new advice from Government.

### **Prohibition on Camping**

The prohibition period on camping at Bellever/Riddon Ridge finished in early September. The supporting Marshalls continued at weekends until the end of that month & the initiative proved very successful. DNPA are looking at various options & potential funding sources to have a similar, wider initiative in place for 2021.

At this point, the Chairman lost internet connection. The Vice-Chairman reported that Council had sent a letter of thanks to Alison Hernandez (Police & Crime Commissioner) for providing DNPA with the funding used to employ the supporting Marshalls.

### **Ten Tors Team Managers Training Day**

This will be held virtually on Saturday 10 October 2020. Rob is undertaking the DNPA presentation. He will pick up & place extra emphasis on the important role of farming on Dartmoor & the key requests that farmers normally underline.

The Chairman re-joined the meeting.

## **9. Presentation- Harriet Bell (Dartmoor Environmental Land Management Officer)**

After introducing herself, Harriet gave a brief outline of Defra's Environmental Land Management Scheme using their generic presentation 'Our Vision for a Future Scheme'. Copies of the presentation slides are available from the Office. Harriet then gave a presentation on Dartmoor ELM Test & Trial & the slides accompanying this are attached (appendix A). The Project is being overseen by a Project Board & an Advisory Team. The Project Board is made up of Dartmoor organisations with representation from National Park Authority, Hill Farm Project, Commons Owners Association, Council & Natural England. It is independently chaired by John Waldon. The output of the Dartmoor Test & Trial is steered by a volunteer Advisory Team, all of whom would welcome input & feedback from Dartmoor farmers.

All information on the Dartmoor ELM Test & Trial can be found on the Dartmoor Hill Farm Project website <https://www.dartmoorhillfarmproject.co.uk/elms>

Philip French thanked Harriet for doing the presentation.

## **10. Date of Next Meeting**

The Chairman said that the meeting scheduled for 21 October 2020 was unlikely to go ahead due to the Government's latest Coronavirus guidelines.

He advised that some matters will be addressed electronically. Council members will receive an email with all the relevant information on a specific topic & be asked to comment accordingly.

The Chairman thanked everyone for participating in the virtual discussion & declared the meeting closed.

**Signed:**.....

**Date:**.....



## DARTMOOR COMMONERS' COUNCIL

### Notes of Pony Working Group Meeting Monday 21 September 2020

#### Overview of Current Issue & Drift Dates

##### North Quarter

Letter from Chairman of Okehampton Commoners' Association asking Council to arrange drifts in certain areas of the North quarter to collect unmarked ponies that they say are coming from the Forest or neighbouring commons. **Action:** Recommend to Council that letter is sent advising that it's the Association's responsibility to gather & deal with unmarked ponies grazing the common & that the drifts must include each quarters area of the Forest.

Chagford drift: Sunday 4 October 2020

##### South Quarter

Concerns were raised regarding the number of unmarked ponies on Dean Moor. **Action:** Recommend to Council that a letter is sent requesting that the Association clear up the unmarked ponies on their common.

Harford & Ugborough drift: end December/beginning of January 2021

##### East Quarter

The Strangles outbreak is still prevalent on Spitchwick Common. Ponies are being monitored regularly & will remain in the common. There will be no drift in this area until the disease has run its course.

Concerns were raised regarding the number & condition of unmarked ponies on Haytor Commons. DLPO has received lots of complaints regarding the welfare of these ponies. As the 'gateway to Dartmoor', this is not giving out a very good message. **Action:** Recommend to Council that letter is sent to the Association requesting that the ponies are gathered & dealt with by 31 October 2020.

Widcombe drift: 29 September 2020

Hameldown drift: 2 October 2020

##### West Quarter

Roborough Down carried out drift on the airfield side on Sunday 20 September 2020. It was reported that a pony keeper (with no common rights) had 30 ponies brought in with the drift. A number of which were turned back out. Furthermore, DLPO has since been called to a welfare issue where a mare, belonging to the same pony keeper, was on the airfield side of Roborough Down screaming to its 6 week old foal that had been dumped on the Clearbrook side, along with 3 other foals. The latter issue has been dealt with, thanks to DLPO & a local Quartermen. However, the illegal ponies that have been turned back out on to the common will need to be addressed. **Action:** Recommend to Council that a letter is sent to pony keeper giving them 7 days to remove all ponies from the common or else Council will take legal proceedings.

Shaugh Prior Commoners are unable to agree on a drift date. It was agreed that a drift needs to take place as soon as possible & not left until next year. **Action:** Recommend to Council that a letter is sent to Shaugh Prior Commoners' Association requesting that a drift takes place before the end of the year which must include the Willings Wall & Hentor Warren area.

Walkhampton drift: 24 or 25 September 2020

Merrivale drift: 28 September 2020

Whitchurch drift: 30 September 2020

### **Changing Legislation & Microchipping**

From 1 October 2020, it will be mandatory in England for all pony keepers to microchip their ponies. However, this does not apply to ponies that are on Council's derogation database. Furthermore, ponies under 12 months old can leave the derogated area & go direct to slaughter on just a rump sticker (providing no medicinal treatment has been received). Ponies 12 months & over can leave the derogated area to go direct to slaughter on a passport & a rump sticker, but do not require a microchip (unless they've received medicinal treatment).

### **Chagford Pony Sale – Thursday 8 October 2020**

### **Stallion Accreditation – Wednesday 21 October 2020**

#### **Semi-Wild Equine Forum**

Defra's Equine ID team held the inaugural meeting in July (virtually) with semi-wild equine stakeholders. John Jordan, Philip French & Charlotte Faulkner represented Council. Defra has produced a note summarising the main points of the meeting & have asked that it is only shared with those immediately relevant to semi-wild equines. Council's representatives felt that the note was extremely useful & will strongly encourage the producing of a note following future meetings.

Current regulations state that only a registered vet may implant a microchip in an equine. Stakeholders agreed that hiring a vet for microchipping semi-wild equines made no economic sense & suggested that group members lobby the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons (RCVS), who are reviewing the legislation. The Pony Working Group asked that Charlotte Faulkner & Stuart Lake draft a letter to be sent to RCVS. **Actions:** Recommend that Council send letter to RCVS once drafted & approved & that Council's representatives on this group will be Philip French, Mary Alford/John Jordan & Charlotte Faulkner.

#### **Pony Action Group (PAG)**

Recommend to Council that Council's representative is Phil Abel.

#### **Pony Working Group Terms of Reference**

These have been reviewed & will continue along the same lines.

#### **Date of Next Meeting**

To be confirmed.

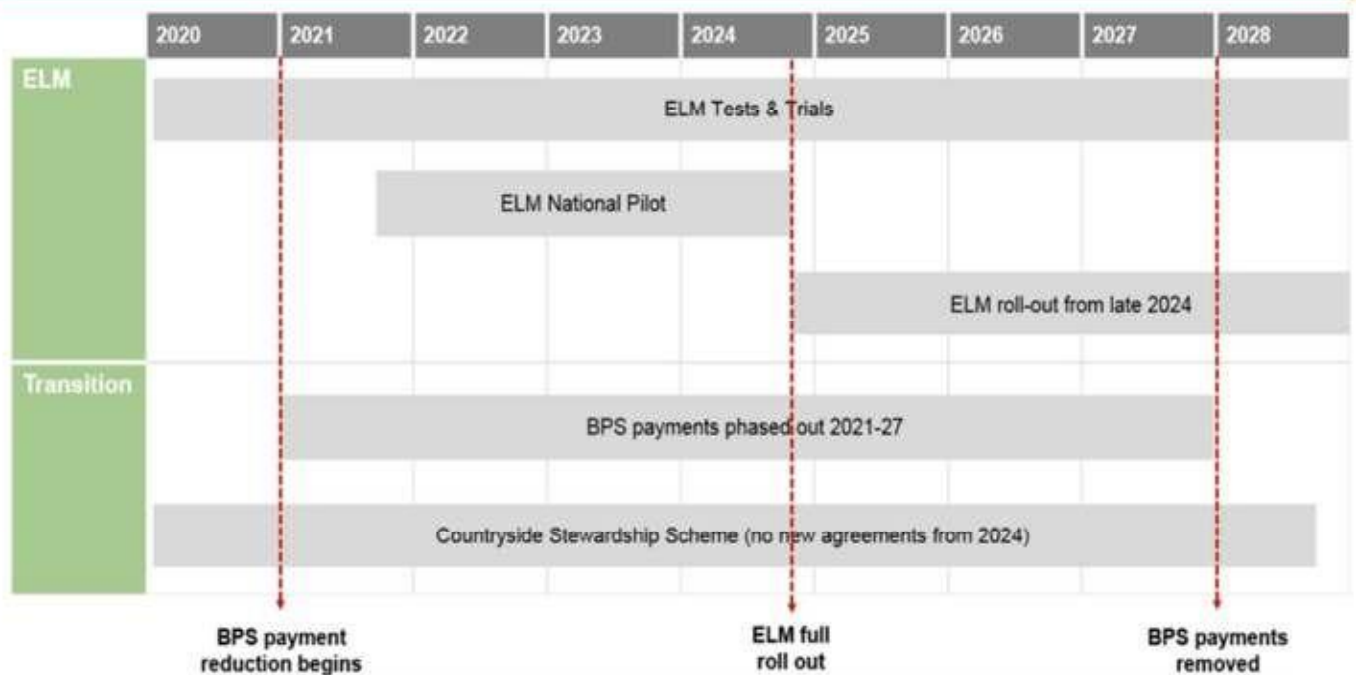
# Dartmoor ELM Test and Trial

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## Proposed timeline

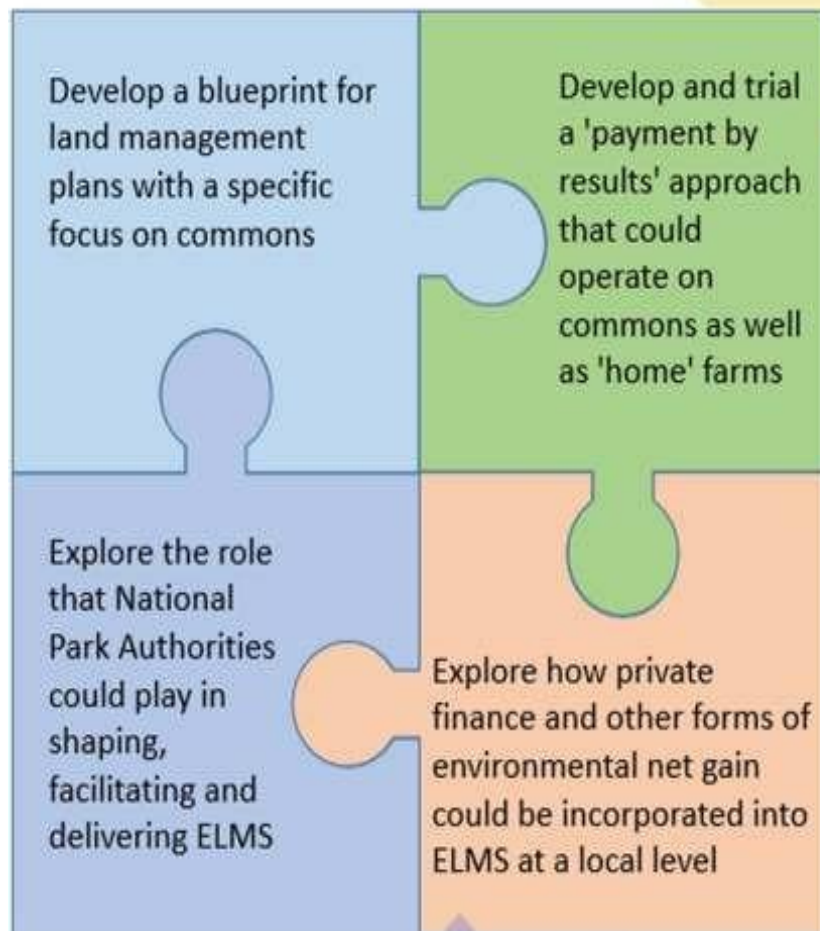


## Dartmoor Test and Trial Objectives

Timescale Jan 2020 – Nov 2021

More information available:

<https://www.dartmoorhillfarmproject.co.uk/elms>



## Dartmoor Test and Trial Governance

### Project Board:

“The Project Board will have oversight of project delivery but also be a point of connection between the Dartmoor ELMS T&T and wider industry and policy developments.”

### Advisory Team:

“The Dartmoor ELMS T&T will be farmer led, coordinated by a volunteer Advisory Group of active farmers which will provide strategic direction for the project. The aspiration is to achieve a recommended approach for the delivery of ELMS on Dartmoor which reflects community consensus.”







**Develop a blueprint for land management plans with a specific focus on the commons**

**What's happened:**

- Extensive discussion by the Advisory Team about what should be included
- The decision that it should be based on a scorecard with farmer led mapping and optional advice
- A model for advice has been agreed and submitted to Defra:  
<https://www.dartmoorhillfarmproject.co.uk/post/proposed-elms-advice-model-from-dartmoor-test-trial>

**What's in progress:**

- James Moran and the Organic Research Centre have been commissioned to develop a scorecard and payments by results model
- Ongoing discussion about how ELM should work for common land

**What will happen:**

- Trial scorecard on home farms and commons
- Agree an appropriate accompanying approach to mapping
- Final report to Defra



**Develop and trial a 'payments by results' approach that could operate on commons as well as 'home' farms**

**What's happened:**

- Initial scoping paper on payments by results written and submitted to Defra, available here: <https://www.dartmoorhillfarmproject.co.uk/post/introducing-payment-by-results>
- Whilst originally considered a separate element to the Land Management Plan the Advisory Team determined that we should explore delivering all of ELM on a payment by results basis

**What's in progress:**

- James Moran and the Organic Research Centre have been commissioned to develop a scorecard and payments by results model

**What will happen:**

- Trial payment by results on home farms and commons, with the potential to be done as a practical exercise involving payments
- Final report to Defra



**Explore how private finance and other forms of net gain could be incorporated into ELMs at a local level**

**What's happened:**


- Discussion with Advisory Team on blended finance including different income sources and potential models for receipt of investment

**What's in progress:**

- Workshop with Michelmore's clients around investment

**What will happen:**

- Agree/develop the best model to attract and receive investment in Dartmoor
- Agree/develop a model for collaborative between farmers/land managers action at a landscape scale to deliver on funding
- Practical test on two case study farms
- Final report



**Explore the role that National Park Authorities could play in shaping, facilitating and delivering ELMs**

**What's happened:**

- Working paper on the use of the Natural Capital framework for local priority setting, available here: <https://www.dartmoorhillfarmproject.co.uk/post/how-feasible-is-the-use-of-naturalcapital-for-local-priority-setting-within-dartmoor-national-park>
- Discussion with Advisory Team on setting spatial priorities including the use of the Dartmoor National Park Management Plan, notes available here: <https://www.dartmoorhillfarmproject.co.uk/post/who-or-how-do-we-set-spatial-priorities>

**What's in progress:**

- Paper outlining framework for local priority setting

**What will happen:**

- Report on process for local priority setting and landscape-scale planning
- Report on advice required/role of facilitation