

## DARTMOOR COMMONERS' COUNCIL

### Minutes of the Meeting of the Dartmoor Commoners' Council held at Two Bridges Hotel, Princetown on Wednesday 2 September 2020.

#### Present:

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

#### In attendance:

Mrs S Sloman                      Mrs K McKechnie (DLPO)

#### 1. Chairman's Introduction

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the Meeting. He reminded Council Members that, due to COVID-19, masks should be worn & social distancing measures must be followed while using the hotel facilities. Furthermore, no public gallery is permitted at this time.

#### 2. Apologies for Absence

Received from Mr P Abel & Mr S Lake.

#### 3. Confirmation of Minutes

##### 3.1 22 January 2020

The Minutes of this Meeting were confirmed & signed following the amendments requested at the Meeting held on 4 March 2020.

##### 3.2 4 March 2020

A Member raised concerns that some points within the TB Annual Update Note (Appendix B) were misleading & not factually correct. The Chairman agreed to withhold from signing the minutes until the points had been made clear.

*Subsequently, following clarification to Council Members, the Chairman (Philip French) proposed that Council's TB Working Group revise the wording used in next year's Cattle Grazier Pack regarding the need for Commoners to write 'M' on the TB test sheets in addition to the requirement to maintain a list of moorland cattle (subject to APHA approval). Council Members were given the opportunity to vote on this proposal which has since been passed (Approve: 16; Reject: 0; Abstain: 1).*

##### 3.3 12 August 2020 (AGM)

Ann Willcocks asked that under item 3 'Discussion - Visitors to Dartmoor', it be minuted that wildlife & livestock on Dartmoor thrived due to being undisturbed at the start of COVID-19 lockdown.

Mary Alford wished it to be noted under item 5 'Council's Elections & Small Grazier Issue' that her opposition to Kate Little standing for Council is not a personal attack & that her objection still stands.

The Chairman agreed to withhold from signing the minutes of this meeting until the amendments are made & approved by Council.

*Subsequently, these sections of the Minutes were rewritten to incorporate the above requests. However, Mary Alford was not happy with the revised wording. The Chairman believed the revised Minutes to be a correct & true account of what happened &, in order to conclude the matter & move on, he proposed that Council agree to the signing of the Minutes. Council Members were given the opportunity to vote on this proposal which has now been passed (Approve: 15; Reject: 2; Abstain: 0).*

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

##### **4.1 To adopt the Chairman & Vice-Chairman Job Description**

The job description had been sent to all Council Members for consideration in January but had not been formally adopted by Council. There was an objection to the Chairman using delegated powers to address issues arising between Council Meetings & it was suggested that the wording from Council's Standing Order 7 (4) be used instead. This allows the Chairman, Vice-Chairman & Secretary to use delegated powers jointly to deal with a specified emergency. During a discussion, it was pointed out that the Standing Orders are the rules under which the Council operates, which permit the delegation of powers to the Chairman. The job description explains what the role of Chairman may entail & this includes being able to make decisions between meetings as long as issues of relevance are reported back to Council at the first opportunity. Anton Coaker proposed that the job description be adopted without amendment & Russell Ashford seconded the proposal. The Chairman called for a vote by a show of hands with 15 Members for the proposal & 5 Members against it. The proposal to adopt the job description without any amendment was carried. A copy is available on Council's website.

##### **4.2 Environmental Land Management: Policy Discussion Consultation**

The Chairman thanked those Council Members who contributed to Council's response & he thanked John Waldon who coordinated & submitted this on Council's behalf. Defra has advised that all responses will be reviewed, analysed & used to help further develop the policy for ELMs. A summary of responses received along with Defra's follow up actions will be published by the autumn.

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

##### **4.3 Your Dartmoor: DNPA Management Plan Consultation**

The Chairman thanked the group of Council who got together 'virtually' & submitted a response on behalf of Council. A copy of Council's response was circulated to all Council Members. Further copies are available from the Office upon request.

DNPA are currently working through the responses they received (approx.400) & will provide an update & report in due course.

#### **4.4 Financial Assistance Statutory Instrument Consultation**

The Chairman thanked those Council Members who contributed to drafting Council's response & he thanked Ann Willcocks for coordinating & submitting the response on behalf of Council. Defra has advised that the views gathered will contribute towards the development of a new statutory instrument which will provide the legal basis for publication of beneficiary data, & enforcement & monitoring requirements for these schemes.

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

#### **4.5 Our Common Cause: Our Upland Commons Bid**

In March, Our Common Cause: Our Upland Commons was awarded funding by the National Lottery Heritage Fund for its Delivery Phase. Council had already agreed to pledge a total of £2000 over the 3 year Delivery Phase period if the bid was successful. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic & current restrictions, the Project Board & the Heritage Fund are being flexible about the start date of the Delivery Phase.

Ann Willcocks asked if a final update/sign-off could be given to those commons that were involved in the Development Phase. The Vice-Chairman offered to pass this request on.

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

#### **5.1 Harriet Bell: Dartmoor Environmental Land Management Officer**

Council has been asked to help circulate information to Commoners regarding the Dartmoor Environmental Land Management Test & Trials. Due to Data Protection Regulations, email addresses will not be shared, however Council has agreed to forward on relevant information received from the ELMs Officer using its Commoners email group.

Council Members may recall that previously an exercise was undertaken, when the annual invoices were sent out, to collate Commoners email addresses & begin creating a Commoners email group which could be used as an efficient & effective means of keeping registered commoners informed. It was agreed that it would be useful to start actively using this method of communication & the above exercise will be repeated in January when the invoices are sent out.

#### **Dartmoor Environmental Land Management Test & Trials**

The Chairman reminded Council Members that all the information is readily available from the Dartmoor Hill Farm Project website, including Terms of Reference & notes of previous meetings & discussions.

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

#### **5.2 DNPA: Use of Dartmoor Commons Act 1985 (Part III S.10) to Regulate Camping**

The Chairman proposed a motion that the next item of correspondence be discussed in committee. This was agreed.

### **6. Update from Dartmoor Livestock Protection Office**

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

A discussion followed on how useful it would be to have a national database to record dog worrying incidents using microchip numbers so that persistent offenders can be identified etc.

Council Members thanked Karla for her ongoing commitment & commended her on the way she deals with the members of the public on dog worrying & livestock issues.

### **Livestock Theft**

The Chairman reminded Council Members to encourage Commoners to report missing livestock by contacting 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.

### **7. Date of Next Meeting**

The next meeting of the Council will be held on Wednesday 16 September 2020 at 7:30pm at Two Bridges Hotel, Princetown. *(This meeting was subsequently postponed due to COVID-19 & an informal discussion was held virtually on 1 October 2020).*

The Chairman thanked everyone for attending & declared the meeting closed.

**Signed: *Philip French***

**Date: 30 June 2021**

## Dartmoor Livestock Protection Officer's Report

I am not going to say too much about lock-down. I think we have all had to struggle and endure the onslaught of visitors.

### Road Traffic Accidents (RTAs)

RTAs are to date: **96**. 125 last year to the same date. Could the reason for the apparent drop in RTAs be because less commuting traffic crossed the moor during lock-down, even though at present visitor numbers are much higher.

### Dog Attacks

This year to date: **65**. Which amounts to almost 6 attacks a month.

I have dealt with some pretty belligerent people over the last few months, people who don't understand Dartmoor nor the animals that live here and don't care too hoots either. All I hear people say is that we need to educate visitors, but I'm sorry, you can't educate closed-minded ignorance.

I have crimed nearly all dog attacks this year, the police have been helping and have issued many control orders and I have collected lots of compensation for the farmers. This I know isn't the complete answer but it's the best I can do to help for the loss and it must hit home with the dog owners who have to pay up. I would like to see a readily available fine for dog worrying, separate from compensation for loss of sheep. I am going to stress that with the police and relevant bodies.

Please keep your reports coming in, even if you have little information on the dog.

### A Virtual Police Meeting

On 8<sup>th</sup> July police and representatives from local bodies discussed situations arising from lock-down. I stressed the amount of footfall, dog attacks and RTAs and the police are setting up a sub-group to talk about enforcement. Also the idea has been put forward for certain people who frequent the moors to carry dash-cams to record incidents.

The Police, National Park, Sara and myself took part in two educational days on the moor, one on the north quarter which was a wash-out because it rained heavily, and the other on the west quarter where we spoke and gave out information to moor users about the conflict between the public and animals on the moor.

### Strangles

As you can imagine, because of the outbreak of strangles on the east quarter of the moor, I have been contacted by a lot of organisations & people, mostly those without any knowledge of the moors or the ponies. I just keep on telling everyone that the ponies are being monitored daily, that they must be left quietly and without stress, that the strangles infection will run its course and that the people who need to know do know. I am keeping a close eye on these ponies. They are all at different stages of the infection, but there are none at the moment that appear to be in a particularly debilitated condition. Oddly enough, no members of the public seem to be getting excited over Orf (in sheep), which has been really bad this year & can actually be caught by humans (it seems as though certain people are just using the strangles outbreak to jump on the bandwagon to get themselves heard).

## Orf

Orf is bad this year and I have had several farmers take in sheep because of it.

## Maggots

Maggots in sheep have been bad as well and sheep have been taken off for extra treatment even though they have already been treated.

## General Incidents- to name a few

- lame foal removed from Widecombe.
- 2yr old unmarked lame colt on three legs at Haytor that I'm monitoring.
- upside-down yearling bullock lifted out of a fence at Gutter Tor.
- cow lifted to safety from a deep peat trench near Dittsworthy Warren.
- I also arranged the Fire Brigade to rescue a sheep on a 40ft ledge at Double Waters

## Drifts

It is essential this year that the drifting of the ponies in the Haytor area of the east quarter is efficient and thorough. I have had many problems with unmarked ponies there and they must be permanently removed.

Likewise the unmarked ponies in the Okehampton area of the north quarter must be removed as well as getting a clearance of unmarked ponies off the Forest.

This is a problem that is getting seriously worse and must be dealt with.