

## DARTMOOR COMMONERS' COUNCIL

### Minutes of the Meeting of the Dartmoor Commoners' Council held at Two Bridges Hotel, Princetown on Wednesday 1 December 2021.

#### Participants:

Mr P French – Chairman	Mr J Cooper	Mrs K Little
Mr L Branfield – Vice Chair	Mr P Cottingham	Ms T May
Mr P Abel	Mr W Dracup	Mr G Mortimore
Mr C Alford	Mr K Edwards	Mr M Radmore
Mrs M Alford	Mrs C Faulkner	Mr M Reddaway
Mr R Ashford	Mr J Jordan	Mr R Steemson
Mr P Cleave	Mr S Lake	Mrs P Warren
Mr A Coaker	Mr R Leigh	Mrs A Willcocks
Mrs S Sloman	Mrs K McKechnie (DLPO)	

#### 1. Chairman's Introduction

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the Meeting.

#### 2. Apologies for Absence

Received from Mr T Stratton.

#### 3. Confirmation of Minutes

The minutes of the last Council Meeting had been previously circulated to all Council Members requesting that any comments be made ahead of tonight's meeting. No comments were received & the minutes of the Meeting held 27 October 2021 were confirmed & signed.

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

##### 4.1 Dartmoor National Park Authority Byelaw Review

There were 3500 responses to the public consultation into proposals to update & amend Dartmoor's byelaws. After DNPA officials have considered & analysed the responses, a report will be taken to a public meeting of the National Park Authority in 2022. This will take into account the consultation responses & other relevant assessments to inform the decision-making process & next steps. A copy of Council's response to the consultation is available on our website.

##### 4.2 Natural England – Common with SSSI not in agri-environment agreement

Council has received a formal reply from NE to its questions posed regarding consent for grazing on SSSI, which was circulated to Council Members along with an article on the matter written by Julia Aglionby of Foundation for Common Land (copies available from the office upon request).

A discussion followed during which Mary Alford asked whether the Dartmoor Commons Act 1985 holds any bearing. The Chairman agreed that Council look into this further to see what information can be obtained.

## **5. Matters brought forward at the direction of the Chairman**

### **5.1 Dog Worrying Livestock Prosecution – Karla McKechnie**

Karla reported that, following an investigation by the police, a local man was charged & appeared at Plymouth Magistrates Court on 2 November 2021. The defendant pleaded guilty to owning a dog that worried livestock. He was given a Conditional Discharge for 6 months & ordered to pay costs of £85 to the Crown Prosecution Service, £22 towards funding victim services, £100 compensation for the loss of the lamb & £15 for its disposal. The dog now has to wear a muzzle & be kept on a lead.

Karla was thanked for all her hard work & efforts in assisting the police with this case which enabled them to bring the matter before the court. Karla reported that the police are taking livestock worrying seriously & feels sure that there will be further prosecutions if dogs are seen chasing & attacking livestock

### **6. Meeting Dates for 2022**

The revised meeting dates are attached (Appendix A). Please note that due to venue availability, the first two meetings of the year are on a Tuesday.

### **7. Sheep Clearance – Reports from Quartermen**

The Quartermen reported that the clearance was generally good in all quarters. Very heavy fog did cause problems in some areas of the north quarter which meant that not all sheep were cleared in time for the start of the clear period. John Cooper advised local dog walkers that he came across when out & about in his area of the sheep clear period & asked that they contact him if they saw anything. This proved useful & enabled him to collect a few strays.

### **8. Report on TB Working Group Meeting with APHA**

Michael Reddaway reported on this meeting held Thursday 25 November 2021. The representatives from APHA were Jenny Heard, Maria Reyero & Manuel Cortes. The Group discussed a number of topics including the number of tests per year, the interval between biannual tests, environmental issues & legal minimum stocking levels. There was also an opportunity for an outing onto Dartmoor. Although APHA informed the Group that legal policy meant they were not able to do away with the 6 monthly testing, they did give a verbal say-so that once a herd's first surveillance has been completed, keepers can ask APHA for a one-off change & bring the window for their next test forward. There is also a 2-month window to complete the test, so it may be possible to 'stretch' the interval between tests. The Group have requested that APHA put this in writing & will give a further report to Council once APHA have responded. The Chairman thanked the Group for the time & effort spent in preparing & holding this meeting.

### **9. News Article for January 2022**

The suggested topics were swaling, dog worrying & night-time activities. Members were asked to submit prepared pieces to the office in order that the draft article can be brought to the next council meeting for approval.

#### **Night Events**

Members questioned the forthcoming organised recreational night events that appear to have been recently approved by DNPA, as it was understood that the Recreation Events Policy did not support night events. Will Dracup offered to clarify the position with DNPA.

## 10. Members representing Council at Meetings:

- **Dartmoor Society Conference 2021:** 22 12 November 2021 – Layland Branfield
- **Trading Standards Farming Partnership – Mental Health & Wellbeing in Farming:** 18 November 2021 – Charlotte Faulkner

### 10.1 Dartmoor National Park Management Committee

Council wrote to Secretary of State to request that, as part of any future National Park policy review, local farmer organisations have a seat on the Committee. Council has received a reply stating that such appointments are made following open competition & eligible candidates are invited to apply through the standard appointments process when a vacancy arises.

## 11. Update from Dartmoor National Park Authority

Rob Steemson reported on the following:

- DNPA are awaiting confirmation of Farming in Protected Landscapes funding for years two & three.
- The Dartmoor Fire Partnership recently met & an update was given in regard to the progression of a Dartmoor wide wild fire plan to help combat any outbreaks. One of the key things will be to harness, improve & add more practical fire breaks on the Dartmoor Commons & elsewhere. Some of this work may be able to draw upon funding within the present Farming in Protected Landscapes project.

On Saturday 27 November there was a training exercise on the south moor enabling the Fire Service to tactically train with their new equipment which consists of Argo cats & trailers with fire fogging units to use alongside Commoners & Rangers. Three of the five newly purchased sets of equipment are strategically located at fire stations around Dartmoor.

For the last two seasons it was requested by the Fire Service, & supported by Natural England, Commoners' Council & DNPA that swaling was suspended whilst the Fire Service worked closely with the NHS as part of the COVID emergency. It is not presently anticipated that this request would be extended to a third season. **Those that are planning to swale need to note & contact Devon & Somerset Fire Control on their new number 03333 990 014 as per the current guidelines.**

## 12. Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Council will be held on **TUESDAY** 11 January 2022\* at 7:30pm at Two Bridges Hotel, Princetown.

**\*Postponed due to COVID. Held Monday 7 February 2022**

The Chairman thanked those in the public gallery for attending & declared the meeting closed.

A motion to go into a closed session was then proposed by the Chairman. The outcome of these discussions is recorded in the confidential section of the meeting minutes, available to Council Members only.

**Signed: Philip French**

**Date: 7 February 2022**



## MEETING DATES OF THE DARTMOOR COMMONERS' COUNCIL 2022

Tuesday — 11 January 2022  
Postponed to  
Monday 7 February 2022

(10-minute slot for members of public to address the Council)

Tuesday 08 March 2022

Wednesday 06 April 2022

Wednesday 25 May 2022

Wednesday 20 July 2022 (Annual Meeting)

(10-minute slot for members of public to address the Council)

Wednesday 07 September 2022

Wednesday 19 October 2022

(Accounts presented to Council)

Wednesday 07 December 2022

## ELECTION DATES OF THE DARTMOOR COMMONERS' COUNCIL 2022

North Quarter: Monday 06 June 2022

South Quarter: Tuesday 07 June 2022

East Quarter: Monday 13 June 2022

West Quarter: Tuesday 14 June 2022

VENUES TO BE CONFIRMED NEARER THE TIME