

## DARTMOOR COMMONERS' COUNCIL

### Minutes of the Meeting of the Dartmoor Commoners' Council held at Two Bridges Hotel, Princetown on Wednesday 25 May 2022.

#### Participants:

Mr P French – Chairman	Mr A Coaker	Mrs K Little
Mr L Branfield – Vice Chair	Mr J Cooper	Ms T May
Mr P Abel	Mr P Cottington	Mr M Radmore
Mr C Alford	Mr K Edwards	Mr R Steemson
Mrs M Alford	Mr G Hill	Mr T Stratton
Mr R Ashford	Mr J Jordan	Mrs P Warren
Mr P Cleave	Mr S Lake	Mrs A Willcocks

Mrs S Sloman

Mrs K McKechnie (DLPO)

#### 1. Chairman's Introduction

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the Meeting. He advised Council Members that he had represented Council at the launch of the Dartmoor Way Walking Route on Friday 29<sup>th</sup> April 2022.

#### 2. Apologies for Absence

Received from Mr W Dracup, Mrs C Faulkner, Mr R Leigh & Mr M Reddaway.

#### 3. Confirmation of Minutes

The minutes of the last Council Meeting had been circulated to all Council Members requesting that any comments be made in advance of tonight's meeting. No comments were received & the minutes of the Meeting held 6 April 2022 were confirmed & signed.

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

##### 4.1 News Article (Summer 2022)

The group designated with the task of producing an article for release in the summer had put together a piece titled 'Why do Dartmoor Commoners continue to burn the Moor?' It was agreed that now was the appropriate time to submit this to media outlets, accompanied by suitable photographs, which both Karla McKechnie & Tracy May offered to provide. The Chairman thanked Mary Alford, Charlotte Faulkner, Rob Steemson & Ann Willcocks for their work on this.

#### 5. Correspondence received

A list of correspondence received was circulated to Council Members with the agenda. The following items of correspondence were discussed:

##### 5.1 Dartmoor Forest Parish Council - Livestock straying onto roads

Concerns regarding number of sheep straying onto roads from fenced off areas along the B3357 & B3212. As the livestock are not straying from common land, this is not within Council's remit. However, several Council Members offered to liaise with the farmers who keep livestock in the fields along these two main roads.

## 5.2 Bovine Viral Diarrhoea (BVD)

The Chairman read out a letter from a commoner who runs closed herds & flocks. Unfortunately, earlier this year, they had their first positive reading for BVD. The commoner asked if Council plans to proactively encourage graziers to only turn out stock that is fit & healthy & leared within the bounds of common law. Following a discussion, Council Members empathised with the commoner's situation. However, it was acknowledged that there is a risk to grazing livestock on the common & commons graziers have had to accept that they cannot be given a high herd health status if they are part of commons grazing. However, some Members consider livestock to be more bio-secure on the Moor, in lears with natural boundaries, with disease far less likely to spread than in-country. The Government's Animal Health & Welfare Pathway is to launch later this year, one of the priorities being to tackle BVD. It was agreed that Council would liaise with other organisations & explore this further.

## 6. Members representing Council at Meetings:

- **Vision Zero South West\***: 13 April 2022 – Attended by Karla McKeckinie & Sara Sloman
- **Vision Zero South West\***: 11 May 2022 – Attended by Karla McKechnie
- **Dartmoor Commons Owners Association**: 13 May 2022 – Philip French

\*Notes available.

If any Council Member wishes to receive copies of any notes, please email [office@dartmoorcommoners.org.uk](mailto:office@dartmoorcommoners.org.uk)

Council Members were reminded to advise the secretary of meetings that they attend on behalf of Council.

## 7. Matters brought forward at the direction of the Chairman

None.

## 8. Natural England Update

The Chairman thanked those who attended the recent meeting, hosted by the NFU & chaired by Sir Geoffrey Cox QC MP, which he was invited to speak at, along with Marian Spain & Wesley Smyth (Natural England) & Tom Stratton (Duchy of Cornwall). The meeting topic was 'Finding the Right Condition for Dartmoor' & the purpose of the meeting was to openly discuss the challenges & look to future delivery. The meeting was very well attended & hopefully demonstrated to Natural England the huge amount of concern & feeling of frustration that there is across Dartmoor. The NFU have agreed to facilitate further discussions with Natural England & other stakeholders.

## 9. Rights Issues Working Group

Formally called the Shaugh Prior Commons (CL190) Issues Working Group. However, as some of the issues being addressed by the Group are likely to crop up on other commons, it is appropriate to give the Group a generic name. The Terms of Reference for the Rights Issues Working Group were approved by Council Members.

## 10. Update from Dartmoor National Park Authority

Rob Steemson reported the following:

- **Farming in Protected Landscape** funding is still available.
- Rangers will be undertaking a formal **Public Rights of Way Survey** this year which involves checking the conditions & infrastructure of routes on behalf of Devon County Council.
- The **Miles without Stiles Project** is underway to try & persuade landowners to replace stiles with swing-shut gates to make existing routes more accessible.
- **Erosion Surveys:** 209 sites which were last surveyed between 2013-2015 are due to be surveyed this year.

## **11. Consultations**

### **11.1 Changes to measurement used to report on the condition of SSSIs in England**

Council responded to this consultation last year & reported in June 2021 that responses were being analysed. We have been advised that the consultation report will be published in 'Spring 2022'.

### **11.2 Nature Recovery Green Paper: Protected Sites & Species**

The Chairman thanked those members who helped to formulate a response on behalf of Council. A copy is available from the Office upon request.

### **11.3 Improvements to Equine Identification & Traceability in England**

Defra has launched a consultation seeking views about improving England's equine identification & traceability system. Council intends to respond & all Council Members are encouraged to submit their comments to the Office so that a response can be put together.

### **11.4 Environment Act 2021: environmental targets**

Defra are seeking views on their plans to introduce new environmental targets under the Environment Act 2021. These targets will help meet the government's vision of leaving the environment in a better state than it was found. It sets out their proposals for biodiversity on land & in the sea, water quality & availability, resource efficiency & waste reduction & air quality. However, the consultation document is complex, in-depth & extremely lengthy. It was therefore decided that individuals would look at different sections & draft relevant responses which would then be submitted by Council as one document. The Chairman thanked Anton Coaker, Kate Little, Tracy May, Penny Warren & Ann Willcocks for offering to do this.

## **12. Date of Next Meeting**

The next meeting of the Council will be the Annual Meeting to be held on Wednesday 20 July 2022 at 7:30pm at Two Bridges Hotel, Princetown.

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: 20 July 2022**