

## DARTMOOR COMMONERS' COUNCIL

### Minutes of the Meeting of the Dartmoor Commoners' Council held at Two Bridges Hotel, Princetown on Wednesday 31 July 2024.

#### Participants:

Mr P French – Chairman	Mr J Cooper	Ms T May
Mr L Branfield – Vice-Chairman	Mr W Dracup	Mr M Radmore
Mr P Abel	Mr K Edwards	Mr J Reddaway
Mrs M Alford	Mr P Heard	Mr J Shears
Mr R Ashford	Mr J Jordan	Mrs P Warren
Mr P Cleave	Mr R Leigh	Mrs A Webber
Mr A Coaker	Mrs K Little	Mrs A Willcocks
Mrs S Sloman	Mrs K McKechnie (DLPO)	

#### 1. Chairman's Introduction

The chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting & explained that the AGM will follow straight on from this Meeting.

He reported that a letter of congratulations had been sent to The Rt Hon Steve Reed, OBE, MP on his appointment as Secretary of State for Defra. The letter also raised concerns at the lack of progress in implementing one of the key recommendations from the Fursdon Review, the establishment of a Dartmoor Land Use Management Group.

#### 2. Apologies for Absence

Received from Mrs C Faulkner, Mr S Lee & Mr T Stratton.

#### 3. Confirmation of Minutes

The minutes of the last Council Meeting had been circulated to all Council Members requesting that comments be made in advance in order that they can be dealt with ahead of the meeting. On the night, it was requested that remarks made about signage for cycling on the commons be incorporated in the minutes under the update from Dartmoor National Park section. The Chairman reiterated to Members that there is a procedure in place for making comments. He suggested that the minutes be approved & the matter be put on the agenda for the next Council Meeting.

Following a vote, the Minutes of the Council Meeting held 1 May 2024 were confirmed & signed.

#### 4. Local Commoners Association Secretary Support Group

It was reported that the inaugural meeting was being held on 1 August 2024 at the Two Bridges Hotel, Princetown providing an opportunity for LCA Secretaries to be in touch with each other & to share issues, best practice & knowledge.

#### 5. Council Member's Code of Conduct

Following on from the last meeting, a revised draft Code of Conduct, incorporating Council Member's comments, was recirculated with a request that any further comments be put in writing to the office in advance of tonight's meeting. It was pointed out that this document is an essential guide outlining the personal conduct & behaviour of Council Members & as requested, contains a clause that it is to be reviewed in 12 months.

As no further comments were received, the Chairman proposed that the document be adopted by Council.

**The motion was carried to adopt the Code of Conduct with 19 Members voting in favour, 1 against with 1 abstention.**

**6. Introduction of Council's new internal structure & operation**

This was adopted by Council at the last meeting & will take effect from the AGM. It focuses on increasing Council's effectiveness through trying to improve the internal workings of Council & the decisions Council has to make with the resources available.

**7. Pre-action protocol for judicial review letter from Leigh Day on behalf of Wild Justice**

The Chairman read out a statement which had been prepared by Council's solicitors:

*We have received a pre-action protocol letter from Leigh Day on behalf of Wild Justice. They are threatening to bring a judicial review claim against the Council in respect of alleged failures, mainly around stocking levels. We have instructed Foot Anstey LLP to advise us & prepare a response to that letter. We are also seeking the advice of specialist barristers. The deadline we are working to, to respond to that letter is 9 August 2024. Given the legal nature of this matter, it is not appropriate to discuss this openly at this time. Council wishes to stress that they have actively participated in the Fursdon Review & the Council's focus going forward is on the recommendations made by that report & engagement with the Land Use Management Group, once set up.*

The Chairman thanked the NFU Staff for their support & advice on this matter & the NFU Legal Assistance Scheme for the financial support given to Council.

**8. Date of Next Meeting**

The next meeting of Council will be held on Wednesday 11 September 2024 at 7.30pm at the Two Bridges Hotel, Princetown.

The Chairman declared the meeting closed & advised that the Annual Meeting will start shortly.

**Signed: Layland Branfield**

**Date: 11 September 2024**