

DARTMOOR COMMONERS' COUNCIL

Minutes of the Meeting of the Dartmoor Commoners' Council held at Two Bridges Hotel, Princetown on Wednesday 23rd October 2024.

Participants:

Mr L Branfield – Chairman
Ms T May – Vice-Chairman
Mrs M Alford
Mr P Cleave
Mr J Cooper
Mr W Dracup
Mr K Edwards

Mr J French
Mrs C Faulkner
Mr P Heard
Mr R Jordan
Mr S Lee
Mrs K Little

Mr M Radmore
Mr J Reddaway
Mr J Shears
Mr T Stratton
Mrs P Warren
Mrs A Willcocks

Mrs S Sloman

Mrs K McKechnie (DLPO)

1. Chairman's Introduction

The Officers of Council are currently working on recruiting a new Secretary. Sara is working under contract at the moment & has agreed to stay on until her replacement has been recruited & trained.

Charlotte Faulkner, Tracy May & the Chairman have met with Geoffrey Cox MP & Natural England's Devon, Cornwall & Isles of Scilly team, Simon Lee (Principal Officer) & Andrea Ayres (Deputy Director) to establish a working relationship going forward.

2. Apologies for Absence

Received from Mr P Abel, Mr R Ashford, Mr N Cole, Mr A Coaker, Mrs A Webber & Mr R Leigh.

3. Confirmation of Minutes

The minutes of the last 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. No comments had been received by the set date & following a vote, the minutes of the Council Meeting held 11 September 2024 were confirmed & signed.

4. Financial Accounts: Year Ending 30 June 2024

These had been circulated prior to the meeting & no questions were received. Consequently the accounts were agreed & signed.

5. Matters Outstanding from Previous Meetings:

5.1 **Co-Opted Position** (NFU rep): Put into abeyance until the next meeting.

5.2 **Council's Sub Committees:** Terms of Reference have been received from the following sub committees:

- Landscape and Conservation Sub Group - Ann Willcocks as the lead person
- Pony Sub Group - Neil Cole as the lead person
- Policy & Procedures Sub Group - Will Dracup as the lead person
- TB Sub Group - James Reddaway as the lead person

Still waiting the terms of reference from the Commons Issues Sub Group. John Cooper will be the lead person.

6. **Correspondence Received**

This has been circulated.

7. **Matters Brought Forward at the Direction of the Chairman**

The Chairman made reference to correspondence received from Belstone Commoners' Association requesting Council's support in an overhaul of the DNPA's Recreational Event Policy & procedures. The Association intends to write to Dr Kevin Bishop, CEO, DNPA. Council will be copied in at which point this matter will be considered further.

8. **Meetings with Council Representation**

8.1 **Dartmoor Rural Crime Initiative:** Tracy May attended & gave a report to Council. Formal meeting notes have been produced & these are available to Council Members from the office upon request.

The Chairman reported that there has been interest from an online reporter about a number of rural crime matters.

Following further discussions on dog attacks, Karla McKechnie suggested that a national database holding dog microchips/DNA information would assist neighbouring police forces to know about the history of specific dogs moving from area to area.

A number of livestock thefts (sheep) have been reported by commoners to the Council. It was discussed that, in December, post clear days, it may become clearer which areas are experiencing thefts & there may be merit in sharing general information with the relevant Local Commoners' Associations & Council's Quartermen. The Police say the hotspot on the west side of the moor for this type of theft is a triangle from Postbridge, Sourton to Tavistock.

8.2 **Dartmoor Commons Owners' Association:** The Chairman attended & reported that the same matters as listed above were discussed, plus the use of the moor.

9. **Update from Dartmoor National Park Authority**

Simon Lee reported on:

Legalities of Electric Bikes on bridleways – legal limits: 250watts & 15.5mph, otherwise it is an electric moped. If an electric bike is seen on the open moor, photograph it & report it to DNPA & then a ranger can react to the information.

DNPA is unable to chase up car registrations for groups who are meeting to cycle on the moor. Looking at designing a system for others to feed information into.

Rangers' App - records all the conversations that are taking place which allows the creation of heat maps of areas with particular issues & the use of the right yellow signs.

Ranger for section D - Luke Engle has been appointed & will probably start at the beginning of December. There will be a slight section change which will be circulated.

Dartmoor Marshalls were out again this year from the end of May until 9 September. They were quite successful, dealing with over 100 conversations; a lot of them relating to motor homes, some of the occupants of which were living in their vehicles & these were directed to homeless charities. Other issues were fly camping, mountain bikes & dogs.

DNPA worked on the **Dogs on Dartmoor** campaign this year with Karla and the police - gave out lots of free dog leads to help get the message across.

The **Rainbow Family of Living Light** reappeared this year and were removed by the police.

10. Potential Meeting Dates for 2025

It was agreed that as part of the new way of working, the number of Council meetings would be reduced. There will be six in 2025 – 22 January, 5 March, 4 June, 30 July (AGM), 24 September & 3 December.

11. Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting of Council will be held on Wednesday 4 December 2024 at 7.30pm at the Two Bridges Hotel, Princetown.

12. Potential candidate for the Position of Vet on the Council

Ray Williams attended & introduced himself. He retired as a vet in the Cotswolds in 2009/10. He latterly specialised in cattle, sheep & deer. Happy to consider joining the Council. He counts Widdicombe-in-the-Moor as his country home. He talked a little about bluetongue & provided the following links to websites providing a wealth of information & advice on this notifiable disease which must be reported immediately.

[Bluetongue: news, information and guidance for livestock keepers - GOV.UK](#)

[Bluetongue \(BTV\) – NFUonline](#)

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

Signed: *Layland Branfield*

Date: 4 December 2024