

DARTMOOR COMMONERS' COUNCIL

Minutes of the Meeting of the Dartmoor Commoners' Council held at Two Bridges Hotel, Princetown on Wednesday 5th March 2025.

Participants:

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

Mrs D Butterfield - Secretary Mrs K McKechnie (DLPS)

1. Chairman's Introduction

The Chairman welcomed members and shared insights from a recent Land Use and Net Zero Workshop. The government, in collaboration with the University of East Anglia, is exploring land use interventions, initially focusing on arable farming in East Anglia. However, the Southwest, home to approximately 20% of the country's farmers, primarily in livestock, was notably overlooked. As the sole representative for uplands and commons, the Chairman highlighted that these areas remain on policymakers' 'too difficult' list. While peatland restoration was discussed, the focus was largely on lowland peat.

The key takeaway is that policy decisions are being shaped now, and it is crucial to ensure farmers' role in sustainable land management is not overlooked.

2. Apologies for Absence

Apologies received from Mr N Cole, Mr P Heard, Mr R Leigh, Mr M Morris, Mr J Shears, Mrs A Webber and Mr R Williams

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 5 February 2025 were confirmed & signed.

4. Matters Arising from Previous Meetings:

Prior to the meeting, Simon Lee, Head Ranger at DNPA, provided Council members with an email update on the Dartmoor Outdoor Festival, the Dartmoor Partnership Plan website link, and copy of the Ranger map, requesting feedback from Council members.

- **Recommendation:** Dartmoor Commoners' Council to ask Local Area Commoners Associations to mark maps indicating no-go zones to prevent erosion.
Proposed: Ann Willcocks | **Seconded:** Phil Abel.
- **Further Recommendation:** Email Hannah Burdin of Dartmoor Outdoor Festival to request details on which commons and contacts she's working with.
Proposed: Anton Coaker | **Seconded:** Phil Cleave.

4.1 Cattle Incidents & HSE

HSE Cattle Incidents Report Provided by Robert Jordan Livestock Sub Committee Member. A recent informal meeting was held with Miriam Parker, a cattle behaviour specialist recognised by HSE. She has extensive experience advising abattoirs, livestock markets, and the veterinary sector on cattle safety and liability. The discussion raised key questions for the Council, including existing protocols for cattle on commons, and the Council's liability. Miriam highlighted the issue's complexity, referencing HSE Safety Guidance 17, which she recommended all Council members' review. She also noted the increasing scrutiny from HSE, including the potential for cattle DNA testing in incidents.

Miriam's consultation services were discussed, with a proposed cost of £700 per day plus travel expenses. There was a suggestion that the Dartmoor National Park Authority (DNPA) might share the cost on a joint approach to increase public safety. With the next HSE meeting scheduled for 24 March 2025, it was agreed that the DaCC will collaborate with DNPA to develop a structured plan to demonstrate progress. In the longer term, a strategy should be in place by summer to address key risks. The **Livestock Sub-Committee** will continue to investigate the most appropriate course of action with Miriam Parker to ensure a well-informed and effective approach.

The Secretary reported that all 'blue light incidents' reported to the Dartmoor Commoners' Council office will be reported using the RIDDOR form on the HSE website.

Action: Dartmoor Commoners' Council representatives will hold an update meeting with DNPA on 10 March to discuss the Livestock Sub-Committee's recommendations and prepare a joint plan to present to the HSE inspectors on 24 March 2025.

Action: Secretary to circulate an HSE Safety 17 Guidance Leaflet 17 and membership to a Safe Visitor Management Advice Service to Council members

4.2 Shaugh Prior Commoners (CL190) – Information gathering update

All interested parties (landowners, rights holders via Shaugh Prior Commoners Association, tenants and land agents) have been contacted and offered the opportunity to provide any historic information regarding CL190. This has been limited to 2 pages of A4, to prevent the office being overwhelmed with paperwork. The office already holds a plethora of information for the review. The deadline is 31 March 2025. Following this date the office and Phillip French will collate a chronological history of decisions made by Council, from this information a briefing document will be produced for a Round Table session on the 21 May 2025 for Council Members only. Any decisions or recommendations will be presented at the 4 June 2025 Council meeting.

4.3 Local Commoners' Association Secretary Support Group Update

The Secretary provided an update on a potential collaboration with the Dartmoor Hill Farm Project (DHFP) to strengthen local commons governance. DHFP has recently emphasised the importance of this initiative and reaffirmed its commitment to offering support and guidance in this area. They have been reviewing key issues identified in the previous Test and Trial, exploring ways to enhance assistance for Local Commoners Association Secretaries. Both DaCC and DHFP are eager to pursue funding opportunities to advance this work.

Action: The Secretary will draft a proposal that could be the basis for a funding application and circulate it to Council members and David Attwell (Dartmoor Hill Farm Project) for review.

5. Correspondence received

No comments received

6. Matters brought forward at the direction of the Chairman –

No Comments received

7. Any Reports from Members Representing Council at Meetings:

7.1 Land Use Management Group – The Chairman provided a verbal report

8. Reports from Sub-Committees:

8.1 TB: Meeting with APHA – See report attached (Appendix A)

A proposal was made by Ann Willcocks to contact Camille Harrison at the NFU TB Group to make a case higher up with Defra policy makers. The proposal was unanimously supported.

Action: Secretary to contact Camille Harrison at NFU TB Group and make case for Policy Review.

8.2 Ponies: Updating of Council's records

A meeting with DEFRA's Equine ID & Movement Team will be held on the 18 March to improve communication and discuss the Derogation map. Chair, Vice-Chair, both Secretaries, Neil Cole Lead and Ken Edwards representatives on the Equine Sub Committee will represent DaCC.

9. TB Control Plans 2025

TB Control Plans will be sent out to Local Commoner Association secretaries for circulation before 31/03/2025.

10. Update from Dartmoor Livestock Protection Officer - See attached (Appendix B)

11. Financial Estimates for 2025/2026

These were approved by a majority vote by email before the 1 March 2025

12. Co-Opted Position: NFU Representative

A proposal for Sophie Heard to join Dartmoor Commoners' Council short term while the regional director becomes established was made by the Chairman.

Action: Chairman write to Sophie Heard and invite to join DaCC as a co-opted member of Council

Ann Willcocks proposed Simon Lee, Natural England is co-opted on to Council to continue improving DaCC relationship and communication with Natural England and to officially access reports whilst completing a gap Council. The Chairman to consider for next meeting.

13. Council Member Vacancy: East Quarter

The Chairman proposed David Reddaway for the position of East Quarter representative following his approach to Council. There then followed a discussion regarding transparency. Ken Edwards proposed all Local Area Commoners Association Secretaries in the East Quarter notify their graziers of the opportunity to stand. Council will then nominate from the current nominee and any other grazier choosing to stand at the 4 June 2025 Council meeting.

14. Wild Boar Sightings

On 11 February 2025, the Dartmoor Commoners' Council formally notified Natural England of unverified sightings of Wild Boar on Dartmoor. The Council will continue to liaise with the Dartmoor National Park Authority and will actively monitor and report any further developments to Natural England as necessary.

15. Date of Next Meeting: 4 June 2025

16. Confidential Matters (to be discussed 'in committee')

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: *10 June 2025*

TB Group Report
Annual Meeting with APHA Vets – Thursday, 27 February

1. Present

- **James Reddaway** – Representing Dartmoor Commoners' Council
- **Mary Alford** – Representing Dartmoor Commoners' Council
- **Colin Abel & Helen Radmore** – Co-opted onto the Group
- **Maria Reyero** – APHA (Animal and Plant Health Authority)
- **Raquel Gallardo** – APHA

Apologies: Anton Coaker

2. Six-Month Testing

The six-month testing regime continues to be a challenging issue, particularly for larger moorland cattle herds with extended grazing windows (April to December). Despite repeated concerns, there is no prospect of changing the requirement to an "8+4" model, which would better accommodate the majority.

APHA maintains that the only available solution is to test at the end of one grazing window and at the beginning of the next. However, this remains unsatisfactory for many.

3. Post-Breakdown Six-Month Test

Following a herd breakdown and the subsequent lifting of restrictions, the post-breakdown six-month test remains mandatory. Policy makers have insisted on this requirement with no exemptions.

Herd owners have two options:

- Gather cattle mid-summer for testing.
 - Opt not to test but face overdue movement restrictions, which may soon carry penalties (although none currently exist).
-

4. Moving Your Testing Window

The **Cattle Graziers Pack** still provides guidance on adjusting TB testing windows to align with turnout schedules. APHA continues to encourage graziers to utilize this option, which remains a **one-time** adjustment unless a breakdown occurs, in which case a new application can be made after restrictions are lifted. The pack includes a table outlining the dates, timings, and procedures required for shifting a testing window.

5. 10-Mile Movement Rule

The issue of the **10-mile movement rule** continues to pose challenges for graziers moving cattle to and from common land. Despite repeated inquiries, Defra maintains that the policy is **non-negotiable**.

Maria Reyero has agreed to investigate the specific interpretation of the **10-mile starting point**—whether it is measured from the **farm address** or the **edge of the holding**.

Given the ongoing difficulties, the group agreed to explore the possibility of a direct meeting with the **Defra policy team** to determine if any flexibility can be achieved.

Summary

The meeting highlighted several ongoing concerns, including six-month testing, post-breakdown testing, and movement restrictions. While some flexibility remains in shifting testing windows, key policies—such as the 10-mile movement rule—continue to present challenges.

The group will pursue further discussions with Defra in an attempt to address these persistent issues.

LIVESTOCK PROTECTION OFFICER Karla McKechnie**REPORT TO DARTMOOR COMMONERS' COUNCIL****5th MARCH 2025**

Kenny and Wendy Watson have been missing 17 ponies, including a stallion, from just outside their Postbridge Newtake from October 2024. This has been recorded with the police. I said I would mention it at Council. Kenny has been out numerous times looking.

A special thank-you to Russell Ashford for picking up a dead pony beside the path from Ludgate to Chalk Ford, Buckfastleigh, and taking it to his farm for collection.

There have been several pokey-looking ponies which owners have removed when I've spoken to them.

There have been a few foals born already which I have no concerns about, but I'm keeping an eye on them.

Twin Lamb Disease

I have had a few cases of twin lamb disease on the commons.

RTAs

There have been 5 livestock road traffic accidents since the beginning of the year, one was a pony wearing a reflective collar. This is a lower number than usual.

Dog Attacks

Dog related incidents number 31 to date. This is horrifying. This needs to be addressed. A dog chasing a flock of sheep on Monday at Haytor, ran the sheep into the road. A ewe ran into an 86-year-old woman's car killing the ewe outright as she then aborted twin lambs into the middle of the road. The sooner the by-laws are in place and give some clarity to the question "should dogs be on leads on Dartmoor?" the better.

I have taken DNA evidence in a further 3 cases of dog attacks and I'll be really keen to hear back from Dr. Nick Dawney of John Moore's University Liverpool as to a) if they can get a canine match and b) that I've been doing it correctly.

Please let me know if you have any dog attacks so I can come out and take samples. Time is of the essence.

Trading Standards Farming Partnership

I have spoken to Trading Standards and I will be going on the TSFP Group, which will be slightly different from the previous three years. There are going to be regular newsletters and different support services going forward and certain webinars that I'll be involved in. If anyone has any questions or would like me to feed anything back to Trading Standards, please let me know.

I notice how busy the moor is at any time of day or night when I'm out on calls. Campervans, tents, cars parked anywhere, etc.

Karla