



# DARTMOOR COMMONERS' COUNCIL

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**Minutes of the Annual Meeting held on Wednesday 30 July 2025**  
**Two Bridges Hotel, Princetown, at 7.30pm.**

**Present:**

Mr L Branfield - Chair (outgoing), Ms T May - Vice-Chair (outgoing)/Chair (new), Mr R Jordan - Vice-Chair (New), Mr P Abel, Mrs M Alford, Mr P Cleave, Mr A Coaker, Mr N Cole, Mr J Cooper, Mr W Dracup, Mr K Edwards, Mr J French, Mr P Heard, Ms S Herd (NFU), Mr S Lee (NE), Mr R Leigh, Mrs K Little, Mr M Radmore, Mr D Reddaway, Mr J Reddaway, Mr J Shears, Mrs P Warren, Ms A Webber & Mrs A Willcocks.

**In Attendance:** Mrs D Butterfield & Mrs S Sloman (Joint Secretaries) & Mrs K McKechnie (DLPS)

## **1. Chairman's Introduction & Welcome New Council Members**

The Chairman welcomed council members to the AGM, provided a brief resume of his recent activities and welcomed new council member for the East Quarter Dave Reddaway to Council.

## **2. Apologies for Absence**

Apologies were received from Mr R Ashford, Mr S Lee (DNPA) & Ms E Magee (Duchy of Cornwall)

## **3. Approval of Minutes (Meeting held 4 June 2025)**

The 4 June Minutes were approved as a correct record and approved by Council.

Signed by Chairman: Layland Branfield 30/07/2025

In addition, the previously presented minutes 5 March 2025 had been amended, circulated and signed by the Chairman.

## **4. Chairman's Report**

Attached report Appendix 1.

## **5. Elections/Confirmations/Appointments**

### **5.1 Election of Chair**

Elected: Tracy May

Proposed by: Anton Coaker

Seconded by: James Reddaway

## **5.2 Election of Vice-Chair**

Elected: Robert Jordan

Proposed by: John Shears

Seconded by: Penny Warren

## **5.3 Confirmation of Honorarium**

The Chair and Vice-Chair currently receive honoraria of £5,000 and £1,000 respectively. While the need for a review was acknowledged given the demands of the roles, it was agreed to retain the current amounts pending the outcome of the Wild Justice legal case.

## **5.4 Appointment of DNPA Representative**

Appointed: Will Dracup & Simon Lee (DNPA)

## **5.5 Duchy of Cornwall Representative**

Appointed: Emma Magee Head of Communities and Nature for Dartmoor.

## **5.6 Veterinary Surgeon Position**

Due to ill health Ray Williams has resigned. The position for Veterinary surgeon is currently vacant

## **5.7 Confirmation of Co-opted Positions**

The Chair welcomed newly co-opted members Simon Lee (Natural England) and Sophie Herd (NFU). Both introduced themselves to Council.

# **6. Review**

## **6.1 Council's Sub-Committees & Members**

New members will have a six-month induction period before sub-committee appointments. Layland Branfield was appointed to the Commons Issues: Fencing/Illegal Grazing Sub-Committee.

## **6.2 Council's Representation on Outside Organisations**

Anton Coaker stepped down from his position on the Peatland Partnership.

## **6.3 Council Member's Code of Conduct**

Council members reviewed the Code of Conduct and agreed to refer it to the Policies Sub-Committee for further review and recommendations. During the discussion, John Shears raised a point regarding the Standing Orders, which will also be reviewed.

# **7. Review of Delegated Powers**

Delegated powers to Chair, Vice-Chair & Secretary reviewed in accordance with Standing Order 7(4).

This will continue unchanged as previously agreed

Proposed by: Layland Branfield

Seconded by: Kate Little

## **8. Proposed Dates for:**

### **8.1 Stallion Accreditation Day**

Agreed Date: w/c 27 October (tbc further details will be sent to pony keepers and Local Commoners Associations)

### **8.2 Sheep Prohibition Period 2025**

Agreed Dates:

South Moor: 8–22 November

North Moor: 15–29 November

## **9. Date of Next Meeting**

Wednesday 24 September 2025

## **10. Confidential Matters ('In Committee')**

Separate minutes

Meeting closed at: 8.15 pm

Minutes prepared by: Dru Butterfield Secretary

Date: 31 July 2025

Signed by Tracy May (Chair):

Date: 24 September 2025

## Appendix 1.

### Chairman's Report

This is a Chairman's report on an eventful year. 12mths ago we hadn't heard of Limitation Notices although we had been using them for years. Having responded to enquiries about stocking levels and procedures honestly and accurately, and were surprised when a Pre-action Protocol letter seemed to demand them in a legal format by way of a Judicial Review of the 1985 Dartmoor Commons Council Act.

A team was quickly assembled to respond to the letter and organise a defence. Thanks need to go to Ann Willcocks, Anto Coaker and the Vice Chairman but especially to the previous Chairman Phil French and the Secretary for putting exceptional amounts of time and effort into this while I was dealing with an unrelated previous commitment.

I have attempted to promote a team effort in what we do, prompted mostly as a response to Fursdon's recommendations on the workings of Council. The system of committees has worked reasonably well, and, like any new process, will need a few tweaks.

A central member of the team is the Secretary, and never was this more the case than with Sara, whose commitment, and depth of knowledge cannot be overstated! Her decision to step back from the role meant a search for a new secretary, and Dru Butterfield joined the team, learning alongside Sara the specifics of this role. My personal thanks go to them both for their help in steering the ship in very rugged seas.

Sara has continued with Council for this period, and she is using her considerable knowledge and skill checking the Register for, and helping to resolve, any anomalies.

Considerable change in personnel for a major landowner means we are building new relationships within this period of change. Add uncertainty around AE schemes, and the role of Council has never been more important.

HSE has for a number of years watched the number of incidents involving cattle and members of the public rise, and has now decided that we all, including DNPA, need to see some action to mitigate this. I must say a thank you to the Livestock committee for grasping the nettle and taking this forward.

Since the Act was issued in 1985 the world of Agriculture, Access, Environment and Climate has changed in a way that the sponsors or legislators wouldn't have comprehended at the time. We are left with trying to fit a square peg in a round hole. We would be silly to try and change the Act at this point, but we have to stretch the hole a little bit and convince the other sides that they need to shave some of the corners off their peg.

Thank you.

Layland Branfield.