



# DARTMOOR COMMONERS' COUNCIL

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## **Minutes of the Meeting held on Wednesday 28 January 2026 Bedford Hotel, Tavistock, at 7.30pm.**

In accordance with the Commoners' Council's Standing Orders, prior to the meeting commencing, members of the public were provided a 10-minute slot to address the Council

### **Present:**

**The Officers:** Ms Tracy May - Chair, Mr Robert Jordan - Vice-Chair & Mrs Dru Butterfield - Joint Secretary.

**Council Members:** Mr P Abel, Mrs M Alford, Mr L Branfield, Mr P Cleave, Mr N Cole, Mr J Cooper, Mr W Dracup, Mr K Edwards, Mr J French, Mr P Heard, Mr S Lee (DNPA), Mr R Leigh, Mrs K Little, Mrs E Magee (Duchy of Cornwall), Mr M Radmore, Mr J Reddaway & Mrs P Warren.

**Non-Council Member:** Mrs K McKechnie (Dartmoor Livestock Protection Officer)

### **1. Chair's Introduction**

The Chair welcomed members and observers to the meeting and noted housekeeping matters including the requirement to declare conflicts of interest.

**George Hill** - George Hill a founding member of Council had passed away on the 11 December 2025. He was part of the committee who worked to bring about the Dartmoor Commons Act 1985 and sat on the Council from its formation until 2024. As a mark of respect, a minute's silence was held.

**Resignation** - Council member Mr Simon Lee (Natural England) has resigned from the Council, due to a change in position with Natural England.

### **2. Apologies for Absence**

Apologies were received from: Mr R Ashford, Mr A Coaker, Ms S Herd (NFU), Mr D Reddaway, Mr J Shears, Ms A Webber & Mrs A Willcocks.

### **3. Minutes of the Previous Meeting**

**Approval of Minutes** - No further amendments or comments were received by 22 December 2025 deadline. The Chair proposed that the Minutes be signed as a true and accurate record.

### **Decision:**

- Minutes signed: 28 January 2026
- Outcome: All agreed

#### 4. Financial Matters

1). **Approve the Financial Estimates 2026/2027** – The Financial Estimates were circulated to all Council members on 16/01/2026. Members were requested to submit any questions to the Treasurer by 26/01/2026, in advance of formal approval at the full Council meeting on 28/01/2026.

**The Chair proposed the following recommendation:**

Following the preparation of the estimate of income and expenditure under section 16 of the Dartmoor Commons Act 1985, commoners' contributions shall not be increased for the financial year 1 July 2026 to 30 June 2027, and the prescribed sums shall remain unchanged at 90p per livestock unit for registered graziers, and 15p per livestock unit for registered non-graziers, subject to a minimum contribution of £7.00.

The Council considers that the estimated income for the 2026–2027 financial year, together with existing reserves, is sufficient to meet the Council's anticipated expenditure. Maintaining contributions at current levels supports affordability for commoners while ensuring the effective administration and management of the commons.

**Decision:**

- **Outcome:** Council members unanimously supported the recommendation.

2). **Fee Introduction** – Following a round-table discussion in February 2025, a proposal was developed to introduce fees for handling information requests from land agents and other parties. The proposal was circulated to council members on 06/01/2026 and subsequently approved by email on 12/01/2026. It was agreed to keep a copy of the Charging Sheet on the Dartmoor Commoners' Council website.

**Decision:**

- **Outcome:** Council members unanimously supported the recommendation.

#### 5. Matters Arising from the Previous Meeting

1). **Veterinary Surgeon Position** - The chair resolved to take this matter into confidential due to GDPR.

2). **Peatland Restoration** – A letter has been sent to the Peatland Partnership. The Chair will follow up prior to the next meeting if no response is received.

3). **CL192** – Awaiting the supplemented entries from Devon County Council.

4). **CL96 & CL97** – Maintenance of boundary fence – Following a recent family bereavement, a condolence letter will be sent to the family, with a follow-up letter regarding fencing against the common to be issued in due course.

#### 6. Correspondence

A copy of the Correspondence has been circulated to all members as part of the regular monthly update.

A council member queried a Planning Inspector's use of 'and/or', and its potential implications for future registration changes.

#### Appendices

- **Appendix 1** December Correspondence List
- **Appendix 2** January Correspondence List
- **Appendix 3** December Monthly Report

### 1). Ram lambs on Whitchurch Common –

- There are concerns that entire ram lambs are running on Whitchurch common that could lead to welfare issues.

A notice based on Regulation 10 will be included on all invoices. In June, the office will write to all Local Commoners' Associations with a reminder based on Regulation 10 - No person shall depasture on the commons:

*c) A ram or ram lamb between the 31st day of July and the 10th day of November in any year or in respect of any common land units which are not contiguous with any other unit such other dates as the Council may from time to time determine (such dates to be made pursuant to an application made to the Council by the Commoners' Association in the area of which the common land unit lies).*

**Correction:** A notice based on Regulation 10 will be included with the Animal Marks Books not the invoices.

## 7. Matters Brought Forward at the Direction of the Chair

### 1). Lamb Castration and Tail Docking Consultation

It was agreed that the consultation paper would be circulated to the Livestock Sub-Committee for consideration and preparation of a response. As the submission deadline is Monday 9 March, completed responses must be returned to the office by Thursday 5 March. Council members were invited to assist the Livestock Sub Committee.

N Cole Proposed R Jordan Vice Chair

M Alford offered assistance via the CLA.

Action: Secretary to send Consultation document to Livestock Sub Committee members, R Jordan and M Alford.

## 8. Reports from Members Representing Council at Meetings

Dartmoor Working Party 13 December - J Cooper – Appendix 4

Peatland Partnership – 15 December - T May – Appendix 5

## 9. Election of Council Members –

The following council members are up for re-election: North - Mr Peter Heard & Mr James Reddaway, South – Mr Philip Cleave & Mrs Ann Willcocks, East – Mr Layland Branfield & Mr John Shears, West – Mr Philip Abel & Mrs Mary Alford

In addition, Mr. Ken Edwards has also notified the Office he will be stepping down from his position in June 2026.

## 10. Sub-Committees

### 1). Commons Issues – CL190 Area C - T May

The chair resolved to take this matter into confidential

### 2). TB – Annual meeting with APHA – 21 January – J Reddaway – Appendix 6

### 11. Report from the Dartmoor Livestock Protection Officer

Council members considered the report – Appendix 7

### 12. Date of Next Meeting

Confirmed as Wednesday 4 March, 7.30 pm at The Two Bridges Hotel, Princetown.

### 13. Confidential Section

(The Chair resolved to exclude the public due to the confidential nature of the business.)

### Resolved

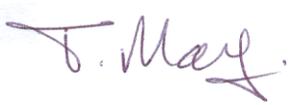
1.) That Vanessa Childs be appointed as Veterinary Surgeon to the Dartmoor Commoners' Council with immediate effect.

### Update

2.) The Commons Issues Sub Committee provided an update on CL190 Area C

The meeting ended at - 8.50 pm

Minutes prepared by: D Butterfield Secretary

Signed:  (Chair)

Date: 25 March 2026

## Appendices

### Appendix 1

Dartmoor Commoners' Council – Correspondence List Summary - December 2025

Ref: Dec1 – Land at Walkhampton Common (CL192) and Part of Ditsworthy Warren (CL188)

Ref: Dec2 – Email Acknowledgment – Walkhampton Commoners Association

Ref: Dec3 – Over Grazing Notices – Response with consultation link sent

Ref: Dec4 – HSE Introduction of New Inspector & Follow Up Emails – Response from Secretary

Ref: Dec5 – Conclusion of Mediation Opportunity

### Appendix 2

Dartmoor Commoners' Council – Correspondence List Summary - January 2026

- Ref: Jan 1 – Grazier of South Tawton Application Decision, Council's Letter & Solicitor's Letter
- Ref: Jan 2 – Passing of a Council Member and Acknowledgement
- Ref: Jan 3 – Property at Horrabridge
- Ref: Jan 4 – CL192 and Acknowledgment
- Ref: Jan 5 – Peatland Partnership
- Ref: Jan 6 – Ram Lambs on Whitchurch Common

### Appendix 3

## Dartmoor Commoners' Council

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### December Monthly Officers' Update

*(For Council Members – overview of key activities, not day-to-day office operations)*

#### 1. GDPR Compliance – Local Association Secretaries' and Council Members' Contact Details

- **Local Association Secretaries:** It was identified that the contact details published on the Dartmoor Commoners Council website required formal confirmation to ensure compliance with UK GDPR. All Local Commoners' Associations Secretaries were therefore contacted and asked to provide explicit consent for their details to be held and published. Nineteen Associations responded by the stated deadline, following several reminders. Officers subsequently wrote to the remaining Associations to confirm that, in the absence of consent, their contact details had been removed from the website. The Council now

holds written email confirmation from all responding Secretaries granting permission to publish the contact details they provided.

- **Council Members:** In parallel, consent has been obtained from all Council Members except one, who is currently out of communication. Officers are actively pursuing contact via email, text message, and an officer visit where appropriate. These actions demonstrate the Council's proactive and ongoing commitment to GDPR compliance.

## 2. Cost-Saving Measures – Cancellation of BT Contract

- As part of an ongoing review of operational expenditure, officers have identified a substantial cost saving through discontinuing the use of the office landline and transitioning to a mobile phone and email service only. Commoners will be formally advised of this change through the annual invoice circulation.

## 3. Health and Safety Executive (HSE) Liaison

- The Health and Safety Executive has advised officers that it is liaising with its agricultural specialist team and will require a meeting in January 2026 to receive an update on cattle-related incident reporting during 2025.

## Updates to the Dartmoor Commoners' Council Register of Commoners

- **14 Entries:** CL38 x 3, CL93 x 5, CL173, CL188, CL192 x 4
- **2 Enquiries:** Responses were provided to land agents, buyers, and solicitors regarding the following registrations: CL103, CL156

*In accordance with GDPR requirements, specific registration details are not disclosed in this public document.*

## Chair's Activities on behalf of Council

- 15<sup>th</sup> December DLUMG Nature Recovery Workstream meeting
- 17<sup>th</sup> December DNP Partnership Plan meeting
- 17<sup>th</sup> December DLUMG Grazing and Farm Viability Workstream meeting

## Appendix 4

### Report of Dartmoor Working Party Meeting – December 2025

*John Cooper, Council Member Representative*

Since the last meeting, there have been three reported incidents involving military debris and two range incursions.

The Dartmoor National Park Authority (DNPA) has undertaken a public opinion survey. In this survey, the public ranked the challenge of balancing military training with public access and nature and wildlife needs as 15<sup>th</sup> out of 18 identified issues.

Penny Endersby has resigned as Chair of the Dartmoor Steering Group (DSG) due to ill health.

The fence line at Holming Beam has been breached again by members of the general public. The Duchy of Cornwall is considering the installation of a gate to prevent vehicular access.

Simon Lee of Natural England has moved to a national Habitats Team, there are no plans to replace him at this time.

There are plans to improve the Taw Marsh track at Belstone.

## **Appendix 5**

### **South West Peatland Restoration Report**

Tracy May Meeting Attendance 15 January 2026

There is significant uncertainty regarding future funding for peatland restoration in the South West.

The Partnership has secured an extension of Nature for Climate Peatland Grant Scheme (NCPGS) funding to support delivery of works up to the end of March this year. Restoration activities under this funding include Cranmere, which is now complete, and Little and Great Kneeset and Langcombe, where works are ongoing.

An application has been submitted for further NCPGS funding for 2026/27. Potential sites identified for this phase include Blackhill, Tavy Hole, Pinswell, Little Gnats' Head, and Shavercombe.

Beyond this period, the Partnership has some confirmed funding from South West Water for work in specific catchments; however, no additional funding streams are currently confirmed.

Unexploded Ordnance (UXO) presents an ongoing operational risk. During restoration works, unexploded ordnance is occasionally encountered. Historically, the Ministry of Defence (MOD) bomb disposal unit has attended and managed these incidents. Going forward, the MOD will no longer provide this service, and responsibility for the safe disposal of UXO will rest with the landowner.

## **Appendix 6**

### **Annual Meeting APHA – James Reddaway**

Another year has passed, and on the 21 January the TB Sub Group held its annual meeting with APHA. The meeting was very well attended by council members, along with invited cattle graziers and representatives.

This year we were joined by four members of the APHA team: Maria, Raquel, Rebecca Gristy, and Alison Holingdale. Twelve months ago, many of us were dissatisfied with the 6+6 month testing rules that a large number of graziers are facing, as well as the 10-mile movement rule. With support from Secretary Dru Butterfield and Council member Ann Willcocks, we were able late last summer to escalate our concerns and arrange an online Teams meeting with senior veterinary staff. This allowed us to share our concerns in more detail and explore whether any flexibility could be offered to support our cattle graziers.

Unfortunately, the outcome was that all rules remain compulsory, and no exceptions will currently be made for Dartmoor. We were also informed that discussions are ongoing as to whether the 10-mile movement rule could potentially be shortened.

We were given a very detailed slideshow presentation outlining the current TB statistics for Devon. In 2024 there were 524 new TB breakdowns, and in 2025 there were 427 new TB breakdowns. While this represents a reduction of nearly 100 cases, these figures relate only to new breakdowns and do not include holdings that remain under restriction from previous years. As such, the overall figures are still far too high.

A significant amount of time was spent asking questions and updating ourselves on current TB legislation, with everyone around the table actively contributing to the discussions.

Finally, we reviewed the Dartmoor TB Control Plan and unanimously agreed that it remains fit for purpose. This vital document continues to be key in supporting cattle graziers across Dartmoor.