



DARTMOOR COMMONERS' COUNCIL

Minutes of the Meeting held on Wednesday 10 June 2026
Two Bridges Hotel, Princetown, at 7.30pm.

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 R Ashford, Mr L Branfield, Mr P Cleave, Mr J Clitherow (Duchy of Cornwall), Mr A Coaker, Mr N Cole, Mr K Edwards, Mr S Lee (DNPA), Mr R Leigh, Mr M Radmore, Mr D Reddaway, Mr J Reddaway, Mr J Shears, Mrs P Warren, Ms A Webber & Mrs A Willcocks.

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.

Phase 3 of the Dartmoor-wide Fire Plan, a FIPL-funded project, has been completed. We are finalising the details of how to share maps with the Fire Service, commoners and other stakeholders. Consideration is also needed regarding the future administration and funding arrangements necessary to maintain the maps as live documents.

The Animal Marks Books have been distributed to all graziers recorded within them. Several copies remain available and any individuals requiring additional copies are invited to contact the office.

2. Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from: Dr V Childs, Mr J Cooper, Mr W Dracup, Mr J French, Mr P Heard, Ms S Herd (NFU) & Mrs K Little

3. Minutes of the Previous Meeting

Approval of Minutes –

The minutes were circulated to members prior to the meeting; amendments were made by the 17 April 2026. The Chair approved the Minutes and signed them as a true and accurate record.

Decision:

- Minutes signed: 10 June 2026
- Outcome: All agreed

4. Matters Arising from the Previous Meeting

1). Peatland Restoration –

The South West Peatland Partnership sent a letter to the Dartmoor Commoners' Council which was included in the April Correspondence. The contents of the letter and their activities were discussed at length.

To ensure the welfare of commoners and livestock, it was generally accepted that effective communication and consultation are important parts of the process and should be encouraged among commoners.

It is noted Mr Anton Coaker believes the council should no longer lend support to this initiative.

Mrs Ann Willcocks proposed: To create a report to collate and monitor evidence from users of the commons undergoing peatland restoration works.

This positive action sits within our statutory framework under maintenance of the commons (4) 1 of the Dartmoor Commons Act 1985.

Mr R Ashford seconded the proposal.

2). CL192 Awaiting Supplemented Maps –

Devon County Council have provided the maps.

3). CL96 & CL97 Fencing Against the Common Update –

The office has been advised that fencing will take place.

4). Declaration of Interest –

The Chair reminded all Council Members that any outstanding Declarations of Interest forms should be completed as soon as possible.

5). Update on Judicial Review & Grazing Assessment –

The Chair reported that the Council had received the court order issued by Justice Mould, dated 14 April 2026. The order requires that, pursuant to the Council's duty under section 4(1) of the Dartmoor Commons Act 1985, an assessment of the number of animals which can properly be depastured on the commons from time to time must be completed within 18 months of the date of the order. This establishes a deadline of October 2027 for completion of the assessment.

The Chair further noted that, in his judgment, Justice Mould stated that it is for the Council to determine how the assessment is undertaken within the limits of its resources, but that, as a regulatory body exercising statutory functions, the method adopted must be reasonably fit for its purpose.

Given the legal and operational sensitivity of the matter, the Chair resolved that detailed consideration of the approach to the assessment would take place during the confidential session of the meeting.

5. Correspondence

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

Appendices

- **Appendix 1** April Monthly Report
- **Appendix 2** May Monthly Report
- **Appendix 3** March Post Meeting Correspondence List
- **Appendix 4** April Correspondence List
- **Appendix 5** May Correspondence List

Mrs A Willcocks noted that the Heather and Grass Management Code provides guidance on the timing of swaling rather than setting a mandatory requirement.

6. Appointment of Members to Commoners' Council

1). Election Update provided by the Secretary:

North Quarter: Mr Peter Heard & Mr James Reddaway

South Quarter: No nominations came forward by the deadline

- Two seats on the South Quarter declared vacant.
- Moving forward a further election will be called.

East Quarter: Nominations are expected to meet vacancies available

West Quarter: Nominations are expected to meet vacancies available

2). Appointment by DNPA – Nominated Representative for Owners of Common Land

Mr J Howell will replace Mr R Ashford

3). East Quarter Small Grazier Representative –

The Secretary advised that Mr K Edwards will retire at the AGM and that a casual vacancy on the Council will consequently arise following that meeting.

4). Co-opted Positions – one vacancy

It was proposed by Mr A Coaker and seconded by Mrs M Alford that the appointment of co-opted members be held in abeyance pending future consideration.

7. Matters Brought Forward at the Direction of the Chair

The current office lease expires in July 2027. The annual cost of the existing office accommodation is approximately £9,900 and may increase should a new lease be negotiated. Council support was sought to investigate alternative office and storage options, with proposals to be brought back to Council for consideration.

It was unanimously agreed that officers investigate alternative office and storage options and report back to Council with recommendations.

8. Reports from Members Representing Council at Meetings

South West Peatland Partnership – minutes to follow

Working Parties

9. Sub-Committees

1). *Commons Issues – Recommendation*

Process for Enforcement and Prosecution of Illegal Grazing

The proposed document had been circulated to all Council members in advance of the meeting. No comments had been received by the office.

Members were asked whether they were content to approve the document as the Council's *Process for Enforcement and Prosecution of Illegal Grazing*.

Resolved: That the document be approved.

- Votes in favour: 13
- Votes against: 0
- Abstentions: 4

2). *Ponies – Recommendations*

• **R. Ashford – Request for a Clear Period as previously recorded in the minutes of 4 June 2025**

Recommendation: At present there is no justification for a whole moor clearance of ponies. In due course efforts will be made to clear areas regionally.

• **Unmarked Ponies – Clarification of Local Association Responsibilities**

Recommendation: Where a common has no active pony keeper, the Association for that common is expected to work collaboratively with neighbouring commons and their pony keepers to support and facilitate coordinated pony drifts.

The Chair suggested that both recommendations be considered together and asked Members if they agreed.

It was proposed by the Chair that the recommendations be adopted.

Resolved: That the recommendations be adopted.

- Votes in favour: 15
- Votes against: 0
- Abstentions: 3

3). *Landscape & Conservation - EFRA Wildfires Consultation*

The Council's response was submitted before the 15 May 2026 deadline. Members expressed thanks to the Landscape & Conservation Sub-Committee, with particular appreciation to Mrs A Willcocks for her work in coordinating and drawing together the response.

10. Report from the Dartmoor Livestock Protection Officer

Council members considered the report. Members noted the importance of ensuring that a thorough and effective pony gather is undertaken in those areas where drifting was not possible due to the equine strangles outbreak. – **Appendix 6 DLPS Report**

11. Date of Next Meeting

Confirmed as the Annual General Meeting on Wednesday 29 July, 7.30 pm at The Two Bridges Hotel, Princetown.

12. Confidential Section

Resolved

(It was resolved that the Council move into confidential session to consider matters relating to the court order. Due to the confidential nature of the business to be transacted, members of the public were excluded from the meeting.)

The Chair updated council members on current legal proceedings in connection with the court judgement. A working group was formed to design how the Council fulfills the Court Order.

The following members were appointed to the Working Group:

- **Chair:** Tracy May
- **Vice Chair:** Robert Jordan
- **Secretary:** Dru Butterfield
- **North Quarterman:** James Reddaway
- **East Quarterman:** John Shears
- **West Quarterman:** Mary Alford (Landscape & Conservation Sub-Committee)
- **South Quarterman:** Anton Coaker (Legal Working Group and Commons Issues Sub-Committee)
- **Small Grazier:** Robert Leigh
- **Member:** Ann Willcocks
- **Member:** Layland Branfield

It was noted that Ann Willcocks and Layland Branfield would serve on the Working Group to provide continuity of knowledge and guidance from the Legal Working Group.

The meeting ended at – 8.57pm

Minutes prepared by: D Butterfield Secretary

Signed:



(Chair)

Date: 29/07/2026

Dartmoor Commoners' Council

April Monthly Officers' Update

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

- **Draft Process, Evidence Gathering and Enforcement Mechanism:** Secretary Dru Butterfield produced a draft document for Officers to review prior to Commons Issues Sub Committee members comments and Councils approval.
- **Event Consultations:** Processed 3 event consultations and liaised with the Dartmoor National Park Access and Recreation Team.
- **Farming in Protected Landscapes Grant:** The third phase of the Dartmoor Strategic Fire Plan has been delivered, with the final report nearing completion. The Animal Marks Book initiative is also complete, and copies are available in the office for distribution on request.
- **Elections:** As part of an ongoing exercise to achieve maximum cost efficiency while ensuring that the Dartmoor Commoners' Council continues to meet its statutory functions, the following arrangements have been made for this year's election process.
The Council has kindly been offered the use of several Dartmoor National Park car parks as venues for the election meetings, as outlined below:
- **North Quarter**
Date: Monday 15 June 2026
Time: 7:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m.
Location: Meldon Reservoir Car Park, Okehampton, EX20 4LU
Vacancies: 2 Members
Eligibility: Representing persons whose names are recorded in the Commons Register as grazing not less than 10 livestock units.

- **South Quarter**
Date: Tuesday 16 June 2026
Time: 7:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m.
Location: Venford Reservoir (East) Car Park, near Holne, TQ13 7SJ
Vacancies: 2 Members
Eligibility: Representing persons whose names are recorded in the Commons Register as grazing not less than 10 livestock units.

- **East Quarter**
Date: Wednesday 17 June 2026
Time: 7:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m.
Location: Haytor Lower Visitor Centre Car Park, TQ13 9XT
Vacancies: 2 Members
Eligibility: Representing persons whose names are recorded in the Commons Register as grazing not less than 10 livestock units.

- **West Quarter**
Date: Thursday 18 June 2026
Time: 7:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m.
Location: Pork Hill Car Park, Tavistock, PL19 9JU
Vacancies: 2 Members

Eligibility: Representing persons whose names are recorded in the Commons Register as grazing not less than 10 livestock units.

- A half-page advertisement containing the above election details will be placed in the *Western Morning News* on Wednesday 29 April 2026.

Updates to the Dartmoor Commoners' Council Register of Commoners

- 3 quotes have been issued for commons enquiry work totaling £160 of which £110 has been received
- **29 Entries:** CL48 x 2, CL56 x 2, CL69, CL70, CL84 x 2, CL85 x 3, CL86, CL112, CL125 x 2, CL126 x 2, CL164 x 6, CL173, CL176 x 2, CL210 x 3
- **49 Enquiries:** Responses were provided to land agents, buyers, and solicitors regarding the following registrations: CL56 x 4, CL64, CL73, CL84 x 4, CL85 x 4, CL86 x 4, CL96 x 3, CL 97 x 2, CL135 x 2, CL155 x 2, CL153, CL161, CL164 x 10, CL176 x 2, CL194 x 4, CL210 x 4

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

Chair / Vice Chair Activities on behalf of Council

- The Vice Chair attended the Rural Crime Meeting on 30 April 2026

Appendix 2

Dartmoor Commoners' Council

May Monthly Officers' Update

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

- **Blackhill (Manaton Down) Common CL103** — Proposed Works to Spring and Fencing – Officers have provided guidance to the local Commoners' Association, including undertaking a site visit with commoners and meeting with a representative from the Environment Agency. Officers also responded to a letter from the landowner seeking views on a potential consent under Section 38 to undertake fencing works on the common.
- **Haytor Down CL25** – Officers and East Quartermen were able to successfully diffuse a potential fencing against the common issue. Thanks are due to the Quartermen for their swift action in meeting with the parties involved to resolve the matter.
- **Event Consultations:** Processed 2 event consultations, 6 consultation responses and liaised with the Dartmoor National Park Access and Recreation Team.
- **EFRA Wildfires Consultation Response:** The Dartmoor Commoners' Council submitted a response to the EFRA Wildfires Consultation, which closed on 15 May 2026.
- **Office and Invoicing Update** – All invoices have been issued, and the new QuickBooks system is settling in. However, the Secretaries noted that over 150 graziers and non-graziers continue to pay by cheque and do not have email access, resulting in ongoing administration and postage costs for invoices and payment reminders.
- **46 Entries:** CL48, CL56 x 4, CL70 x 2, CL84 x 4, CL85 x 4, CL86 x 4, CL93, CL135, CL153, CL155, CL156, CL162 X 3, CL164 x 9, CL173, CL176, CL190 X 3, CL194, CL210 x 3, CL236.
- **13 Enquiries:** Responses were provided to land agents, buyers, and solicitors regarding the following registrations: CL73, CL146 X 3, CL153 X 2, CL164 x 6, CL176.

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

Chair / Vice Chair Activities on behalf of Council

- **The Chair attended the following meetings:**
- **3 May – Ashburton Arts Centre – Nature Recovery on Dartmoor – Is It Too Late**
- **6 May – DEFRA – How to Sustain Pony Genetics On Dartmoor**
- **11 May – Land Use Management Group Wildfire and Swaling**

Appendix 3

Dartmoor Commoners' Council – Correspondence List Summary

March 2026

- **Ref: March 1**
Date received: 15/03/2026
Dartmoor Hill Pony Association - Request for Support
- **Ref: March 2**
Date received: 17/03/2026
Email of Support to Dartmoor Commoners' Council
- **Ref: March 3**
Date received: 22/03/2026
Dartmoor Hill Pony Association – Information Update
- **Ref: March 4:**
Date sent: 16/03/2026
Email to HSE – Request for Guidance – Historic Cattle Incident
Date received: 27/03/2026
HSE Guidance
- **Ref: March 5**
Historic Cattle Incident
Date Received: 11/03/2026
Date Sent: 30/03/2026 Incident Report Form
- **Ref: March 6**
Date received: 21/03/2026
Website Enquiry – Shifting Dartmoor Management

Appendix 4

Dartmoor Commoners' Council – Correspondence List Summary

April 2026

- **Ref: Apr 1**
Date received: 02/04/2026
Matters relating to compliance
Response: 13/04/2026
- **Ref: Apr 2**

Date received: 21/04/2026

Request to post supporting documents alongside Agenda prior to Dartmoor
Commoners' Council meetings.

Response: 27/04/2026

- [Ref: Apr 3](#)

Date received: 22/04/2026

Blackhill Common – Proposed Works to Spring and Fencing

Response: 28/04/2026

- [Ref: Apr 4](#)

Date received: 30/04/2026

Response to letter sent 12/01/2026 from South West Peatland Partnership

- [Ref: Apr 5](#)

Date Received: 30/04/2026

Link to EFRA Wildfire Consultation

Appendix 5

Dartmoor Commoners' Council – Correspondence List Summary

May 2026

- [Ref: May 1](#)

Date received: 19 May 2026

Notice of application to amend the register to record an historic event

Appendix 6

KARLA McKECHNIE Livestock Protection Officer

REPORT TO DARTMOOR COMMONERS' COUNCIL

18TH May 2026

Hello All

As you can imagine my phone over the last few months has
been red hot (not unusual).

Strangles Update

It has been a terrible time for the ponies over the winter
months.

Naive and older ponies have really suffered. I monitored
them closely. Several were too ill to recover and were
put down.

Ponies have finally pulled through on Whitchurch and Holne.

My thanks to all the pony keepers in strangles infected areas for help when asked.

Swelltor Pony

A pony that had fallen over the edge of Swelltor quarry needed immediate attention.

Sadly the pony had to be put down because of its injuries but because of the inaccessibility and the rocky surround the carcass had to remain there.

Some bright spark on social media suggested that I get a chopper in to lift it out!

Haytor Pony

A collapsed elderly pony at Haytor needed immediate attention and had to be put down.

The owner of this pony has been dead for over ten years.

The local association sorted pick up and disposal.

An unmarked mare at Haytor at the weekend with a broken leg had to be put down and DLPS paid for disposal.

Haytor ponies are of a great concern to me as there are so many stallions/colts and unmarked ponies.

Foaling

There have been several bad foalings with foals malpresented. This is quite unusual for moor ponies but a quick response from myself and their owners meant the mares weren't left to suffer.

Several thin ponies have had to come off the moors. Most of these are from strangles areas.

RTAs

24 to date.

Although these numbers are greatly reduced there have been six ponies in the last month hit on the roads.

Only two of these ponies were reported via the correct procedure.

If anyone would like any reflective collars please ask.

Dog Attacks

39 dog attacks to date.

The updated Dogs (Livestock Protection) Bill came into force on 18 March 2026.

There has been plenty of public opinion on this highly controversial subject.

We need to make it socially unacceptable to be an irresponsible dog owner.

Please keep any livestock attacks coming in to me.

Thank you James Reddaway for helping me with a radio interview recently on this matter.

Plaster Down Leat

I have received many calls and messages of complaint regarding the dry leat on Plaster Down. Someone even suggested I should be taking water buckets out for the sheep, cattle and ponies... Could anyone let me have an update please.

Ticks

Already having issues with tick problems. A cow recently died. Bloods were taken and results have come back with cow tick fever. Lambs and ewes are also suffering in certain areas of the moors.

Wild cats

Over the last few weeks I have received a couple of calls regarding wild cat sightings. One on Plaster Down, a light brown cat the size of a small Labrador, travelling at the speed of light. The second, a black wild cat in fields near Brimpts.

Thank you

Karla Mckechnie

Livestock Protection Officer
07873587561

Working with Dartmoor Livestock Protection Society &
Dartmoor Commoners' Council.