



DARTMOOR COMMONERS' COUNCIL

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting of the Dartmoor Commoners' Council held on Wednesday 29 July 2026 at the Two Bridges Hotel, Princetown, commencing at 7.30 p.m.

Present:

The Officers: Ms T May - Chair, Mr R Jordan - Vice-Chair, Mrs D Butterfield - Joint Secretary and Mrs S Sloman Joint Secretary & Treasurer.

Council Members: Mrs M Alford, Mr L Branfield, Dr V Childs, Mr P Cleave, Mr A Coaker, Mr N Cole, Mr J Cooper, Mrs R Dance, Mr K Edwards, Mr J French, Mr P Heard, Mrs K Little, Mr P Mann, Mr D Reddaway, Mr J Reddaway, Mr J Shears & Mrs P Warren.

Representatives: Mrs P Warren (Representative of the Owners of Common Land), Ms F Wilkinson (Duchy of Cornwall Substitute).

Guest Speaker: Mr T Surrey (Chief Executive Officer, Dartmoor National Park Authority).

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

1. Chair's Introduction

The Chair welcomed Council members, invited guests and members of the public to the Annual Meeting.

The Chair welcomed Ms F Wilkinson (Duchy of Cornwall), and Mr T Surrey, Chief Executive Officer of the Dartmoor National Park Authority.

On behalf of the Council, the Chair thanked Mr Russell Ashford for his 40 years of dedicated service to the Council and to Dartmoor commoning, and wished him well for the future.

The Chair reminded members to declare any conflicts of interest as they arose during the meeting and outlined the meeting and voting procedures.

2. Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from: Mr P Abel, Mr W Dracup, Ms S Herd (NFU), Mr J Howell, Mr S Lee (DNPA), Mr R Leigh, Mrs E Magee (substitute sent), Mr M Radmore and Mrs A Willcocks.

3. Minutes of the Previous Meeting

Approval of Minutes –

The minutes were circulated to members prior to the meeting; amendments were made by the 6 July 2026. The Chair approved the Minutes and signed them as a true and accurate record.

Decision:

- Minutes signed: 29 July 2026
- Outcome: All agreed

4. Correspondence

A copy of the correspondence had been circulated to members as part of the regular monthly updates.

The correspondence was noted.

- **Appendix 1** June 2026 Monthly Report
- **Appendix 2** June 2026 Correspondence List Summary

5. Chairman's Report

The Chair presented and read the Chairman's Annual Report, which had been circulated to members in advance of the meeting. The report was noted.

6. Secretaries Report

The Secretaries' Annual Report had been circulated to members in advance of the meeting. The Secretary presented a summary of the principal activities undertaken during the year. The report was noted.

7. Treasurer's Report – Financial statement

The Treasurer presented the accounts and financial statement for the year ended 30 June 2026. The financial position was discussed, including concerns that expenditure had exceeded income. Members noted the need to address the longer-term financial viability of Council.

Decision:

It was **proposed** by **Mr J Shears** and **seconded** by **Mrs K Little** that the Draft Accounts and Financial Statements be approved.

Vote:

All 17 members present voted in favour. The motion was therefore carried unanimously.

8. Appointment of Authorised Signatories for the National Savings & Investments (NS&I) Investment Account

The Council considered the appointment of authorised signatories for the National Savings & Investments (NS&I) investment account following changes to Council membership.

Decision:

It was proposed by **Mr L Branfield** and seconded by **Mrs P Warren**, and

Resolved that **Mrs Sara Sloman** remain an authorised signatory for the National Savings & Investments (NS&I) investment account held by the Dartmoor Commoners' Council and that **Ms Tracy May** and **Mr Robert Jordan** be appointed as additional authorised signatories. Any two authorised signatories shall be empowered to act jointly on behalf of the Council in relation to the operation and administration of the account, subject to the Council's Financial Procedures and any applicable NS&I requirements.

Vote:

All 17 members present voted in favour. The motion was therefore carried unanimously.

9. *Elections / Confirmations / Appointments**9.1 Election of Chairman**

The Vice-Chair took the Chair for the election of Chairman.

Decision:

Following nominations, **Ms Tracy May** was elected Chairman of the Dartmoor Commoners' Council for the ensuing year.

Proposed **Mr A Coaker** Seconded **Mrs P Warren**

9.2 Election of Vice-Chairman**Decision:**

Following nominations, **Mr Robert Jordan** was elected Vice-Chairman of the Dartmoor Commoners' Council for the ensuing year.

Proposed **Mrs P Warren** Seconded **Mr J French**

9.3 Confirmation of Honorarium

The Council considered the Honoraria for the Chair and Vice-Chair for the forthcoming year.

Decision:

It was agreed that the Honoraria remain unchanged at **£5,000** for the Chair and **£1,000** for the Vice-Chair.

Proposed **Mr J French** Seconded **Mr P Heard**

Vote:

All 17 members present voted in favour. The motion was therefore carried unanimously.

9.4 Appointment of North Quarter Representatives

The Council noted the re-appointment of **Mr Peter Heard** and **Mr James Reddaway** as North Quarter Representatives.

9.5 Appointment of East Quarter Representatives

The Council noted the re-appointment of **Mr John Shears** as an East Quarter Representative.

The Chair thanked **Mr Layland Branfield** for his many years of dedicated service to the Council, including his service as Vice-Chairman and Chairman, and for his valued contribution to a number of Council Working Groups.

The Council welcomed **Mr Peter Mann** following his appointment as an East Quarter Representative.

9.6 Appointment of West Quarter Representatives

The Council noted the re-appointment of **Mrs Mary Alford** and **Mr Philip Abel** as West Quarter Representatives.

9.7 Appointment of South Quarter Representatives

The Chair thanked **Mrs Ann Willcocks** and **Mr Philip Cleave** for their many years of dedicated service to the Council and their significant contribution to Dartmoor commoning.

The Council welcomed **Mrs Rebecca Dance** following her appointment as a South Quarter Representative.

It was noted that one South Quarter vacancy remains unfilled following the election process.

9.8 Casual Vacancy – East Quarter (Commoner entitled to graze less than 10 livestock units)

Council expressed its sincere thanks to **Mr Ken Edwards** following his resignation, recognising his valued contribution, particularly his knowledge and experience of Dartmoor ponies.

As two years remain of his term, a casual vacancy has arisen. The office will notify all East Quarter Local Commoners' Associations and invite qualifying commoners to put their names forward for consideration at the next Council meeting.

Action: Office to notify all East Quarter LCAs of the casual vacancy and invite expressions of interest from qualifying commoners for consideration at the 23 September 2026 Council meeting.

(**Mr L Branfield**, **Mr P Cleave** and **Mr K Edwards** left the table and **Mrs R Dance** and **Mr P Mann** joined Council as new members).

10. Appointment of Reeves

The Council considered the appointment of Reeves for the ensuing year.

It was unanimously agreed that the existing Quartermen, together with the Dartmoor Livestock Protection Officer, be appointed as Reeves for the ensuing year, in accordance with the provisions of the Dartmoor Commons Act 1985, to support the discharge of the Council's statutory functions.

Decision: All 16 members voted in favour.

11. Review

11.1 Council's Sub-Committees and Members

The Council undertook its annual review of the Council's Sub-Committees and membership.

It was agreed that the Terms of Reference and membership of the Sub-Committees be reviewed by the **Policy Working Group**, with recommendations to be brought back to the Council for consideration at the 23 September 2026 meeting.

11.2 Council's Representation on Outside Organisations

The Council reviewed its representation on outside organisations.

- **Dartmoor Common Owners Association** – Chair / Ms T May
- **Dartmoor Fire Partnership** – Chair / Ms T May
- **Dartmoor Hill Farm Project** – Mr J Shears and Mr P Abel
- **Dartmoor National Park Partnership Plan** – Members were invited to nominate a representative for the Chair. The Vice Chair was proposed; however, the Chair advised that she did not wish to place the Vice Chair under any pressure to undertake the role and would discuss the matter outside the meeting. Following the meeting, the Chair asked Mrs R Dance to act as the Dartmoor Commoners' Council representative, which she accepted. If Mrs R Dance is unable to attend a meeting, the Vice Chair will cover for her.
- **Dartmoor Rural Crime Partnership** – Mr R Jordan, Mr N Cole and Mrs K McKechnie (Dartmoor Livestock Protection Officer)
- **Devon TB Management Group** – A member of the TB Sub Committee
- **Devon & Somerset Trading Standards Partnership** – A member of the Livestock Sub Committee and Mrs K McKechnie (Dartmoor Livestock Protection Officer)
- **Farming in Protected Landscapes (FiPL)** – The Chair requested a substitute to replace her on the panel. Mr J French stood for the position and, there being no other nominations, was appointed as the Chair's substitute.
- **MOD Dartmoor Working Group** – Chair and Mr J Cooper
- **MOD Dartmoor Steering Group** – Chair
- **South West Peatland Partnership** – Mrs M Alford and Ms T May

Any amendments to Council representation will take effect for the ensuing year.

12. Review of Delegated Powers of Chairman, Vice-Chairman & Secretary (in accordance with Standing Order 7 (4))

The Council reviewed the delegated powers granted to the Chairman, Vice-Chairman and Secretary in accordance with Standing Order 7(4).

Decision:

It was proposed by **Mr A Coaker**, seconded by **Mrs K Little**, and agreed that the existing delegated powers be continued for the ensuing year.

Vote:

All 16 members present voted in favour. The motion was therefore carried unanimously.

13. Proposed Dates for:

13.1 Stallion Accreditation Day

The Council noted that the **Stallion Accreditation Day** will take place during the week commencing **26 October 2026**.

13.2 Sheep Prohibition Period 2026

The Council noted the following dates for the **2026 Sheep Prohibition Period**:

- **South Moor:** 7–21 November 2026
- **North Moor:** 14–28 November 2026

Decision: The proposed dates for the Stallion Accreditation Day and the 2026 Sheep Prohibition Period were approved.

14. Tom Surrey, Chief Executive Officer, Dartmoor National Park Authority – Introduction and Priorities for Commoning on Dartmoor

The Chair introduced Mr T Surrey, Chief Executive Officer of the Dartmoor National Park Authority, and explained that his presentation would cover the current priorities of the Dartmoor National Park.

Mr Surrey outlined a number of key issues and priorities for Dartmoor, including the ongoing risk of wildfire and the importance of partnership working with the Fire Service, Dartmoor Commoners' Council and other partners in assessing and responding to the level of risk. He also highlighted the importance of the emerging **Dartmoor Local Plan 2026**, which will provide the planning framework for the National Park and guide future development and land use.

Mr Surrey referred to the **Vision for Dartmoor 2045**, which sets out the ambition for a climate-resilient, nature-rich Dartmoor where people can live, work and visit, and to the review of the **Dartmoor National Park Partnership Plan**, which will establish the priorities and framework for partnership working over the coming years.

Members were encouraged to engage with the consultation processes and contribute to the development of these important plans, which will help shape the future of Dartmoor. Members were given the opportunity to ask questions following Mr Surrey's presentation. The Chair thanked Mr Surrey for his presentation and for attending the meeting. A number of members expressed strong reservations regarding the position presented on peatland rewetting.

15. Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Council was confirmed as **Wednesday 23 September 2026**, commencing at **7.30 p.m.** at the **Two Bridges Hotel, Princetown**.

It was noted that a **Round Table Governance Review and New Member Welcome Session** for Council Members would follow the meeting.

The meeting closed at: 20.59 p.m.

Minutes prepared by: D Butterfield Secretary

Signed:



(Chair)

Date: 23/09/2026

June Monthly Officers' Update

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

- The Secretary updated 'Job Descriptions' for council members, these are currently with officers.
- The Ram & Ram Lamb Notification in accordance with Regulation 10 (C) was sent to all local association secretaries for onward circulation.
- Terms of Reference have been circulated for the Court Order Working Group
- DEFRA consultation – Call for evidence - The future of England's Uplands submitted before the deadline of 26 June 2026.
- Either the Chair or Vice Chair attended the meeting in the North, South and East quarters to declare the nominated council members to council.
Representing persons whose names are recorded in the Commons Register as grazing not less than 10 livestock units.
North Quarter - Mr Peter Heard and James Reddaway
East Quarter – Mr Peter Mann and John Shears
West Quarter – Philip Abel and Mary Alford

No nominations were forthcoming for the South Quarter; a further election will be held on the 27 July 2026.

- A quarter page advertisement containing details below will be placed in the *Moorland Newspaper* on Friday 26 June 2026.
- **South Quarter**
Date: Monday 27 July 2026
Time: 7:00 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.

Updates to the Dartmoor Commoners' Council Register of Commoners

- To date, 3 quotes have been issued for commons enquiry work totaling £160 all of which has been paid.
- **59 Entries:** CL3, CL33 x 2, CL56 x 2, CL64, CL69, CL70, CL84 x 2, CL85 x 2, CL86 x 2, CL96 x 5, CL97 x 4, CL109, CL110 x 2, CL126, CL135 x 3, CL147 x 2, CL148 x 2, CL155 x 3, CL161 x 2, CL164 x 12, CL173, CL176, CL190, CL193, CL194 x 3, CL210.
- **8 Enquiries:** Responses were provided to land agents, buyers, and solicitors regarding the following registrations: CL33, CL64, CL97, CL93 x 3, CL164, CL190.

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

Chair / Vice Chair Activities on behalf of Council

- South West Peatland Partnership meeting on the 4th of June

Appendix 2

Dartmoor Commoners' Council – Correspondence List Summary June 2026

- **Ref: June 1**
Date received: 08/06/2026
SFI & CSHT for Commoners' Associations
Response: 08/06/2026
- **Ref: June 2**
Date received: 08/06/2026
Natural England Pony Cull Concerns
Response: 08/06/2026
- **Ref: June 3**
Date sent: 08/06/2026
Yarner Wells / Blackhill Common – letter from Chair
- **Ref: June 4**
Date sent: 08/06/2026
Incident No. 2512525 Yarner Wells Livestock defecating in watercourse TQ13 9XJ
- **Ref: June 5**
Date received: 13/06/2026
Moorland Ponies
Response: 15/06/2026
- **Ref: June 6**
Confidential DCC Agenda Item
Received: 12/06/2026
Response: 18/06/2026 (Dartmoor Commoners' Council)
Received: 20/06/2026