

DARTMOOR COMMONERS' COUNCIL

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

Participants:

Mr L Branfield – Chairman

Ms T May – Vice-Chairman

Mr P Abel

Mr R Ashford

Mr P Cleave

Mr A Coaker

Mr J Cooper

Mr W Dracup

Mr K Edwards

Mr J French

Mr P Heard

Mr R Jordan

Mr S Lee

Mr R Leigh

Mrs K Little

Mr M Radmore

Mr J Reddaway

Mr J Shears

Mr T Stratton

Mrs P Warren

Mrs A Willcocks

Mrs D Butterfield

Mrs K McKechnie (DLPO)

1. Chairman's Introduction

The Chairman provided a report on the meetings he has attended. Of particular importance, he met with David Fursdon, who has recovered well and expressed his appreciation for the card sent by the Council.

A recent trip to Geneva to attend the European Commoning Conference highlighted many shared challenges. The Chairman's key takeaway from the conference was: *"When you meddle with the environment, you kill a culture, and if you kill a culture, you lose the environment."* This served as a stark warning.

Since the last Council meeting, he has attended several meetings with the Chair and Secretariat of the Land Use Management Group, as well as the inaugural meeting of the new committee. He also participated in the 'Visioning' process with the Duchy of Cornwall and Dartmoor Landscape Recovery and remains engaged with the Dartmoor National Park Partnership Plan. Additionally, he attended the Farming in Protected Landscapes (FiPL) evaluation.

Several FiPL-funded projects are nearing completion, including the Molinia trials and the Dartmoor Wildfire Plan.

2. Apologies for Absence

Received from Mary Alford & Ray 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. Following a vote, the minutes of the Council Meeting held 4 December 2024 were confirmed & signed.

4. Matters Outstanding from Previous Meetings:

4.1 Commons Issues Sub Committee:

The Terms of Reference were emailed to the Secretary before the meeting, and it was agreed that Anton Coaker would serve as the lead for the Sub-Committee.

5. Correspondence Received

A list of correspondence was circulated to Council members prior to the meeting.

6. Matters Brought Forward at the Direction of the Chairman

6.1 Neil Cole was invited to present questions to the Council on behalf of *some* commoners from his quarter. (See Appendix A) It was agreed that a roundtable session would be held in May to provide Council members with an update on the historical context of CL190. This date was selected to accommodate the lambing season and other Council commitments, ensuring sufficient time to gather all relevant information. Any decisions arising from this session will be presented at the Council meeting on 4 June 2025; establishing a clear and structured process for addressing issues through the Council.

6.2 Land Use in England Consultation – The consultation opened on 31 January 2025 and closes on 25 April 2025. Landscape & Conservation Sub Committee will lead the consultation. Anyone wishing to input, to pass comments to Ann Willcocks by 5th March 2025.

7. Any Reports from Members Representing Council at Meetings:

7.1 Land Use Management Group: Layland Branfield attended on behalf of Council and provided a verbal report to Council Members. Formal meeting notes will be posted on the LUMG website in due course.

7.2 Dartmoor Partnership Plan – Layland Branfield provided a verbal report.

7.3 Review List of Council Representation on outside Organisations

Devon & Somerset Trading Standards Partnership – Position currently vacant. Following the Council meeting Karla McKechnie has volunteered to attend these meetings on behalf of Council.

8. Reports from Sub Committees:

8.1 Livestock: Husbandry & Management – Cattle Incidents & HSE

This group met on 31 January 2025; meeting notes are attached (Appendix B). The recommendations were approved by Council. Additionally, Robert Jordan proposed that Miriam Parker, a Cattle Behaviour Expert, meet with the Livestock Sub-Committee at the end of February 2025 to provide expert advice. Following this meeting, any further recommendations will be incorporated into the proposal in preparation for the scheduled meeting with the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) on 24 March 2025.

Proposed by: Robert Jordan

Seconded by: James Reddaway

8.2 Ponies: Equine ID – Live Export Ban meeting report attached (See Appendix C)

The Code of Guidance for Grazing Ponies on the Commons of Dartmoor was circulated prior to the meeting, and the Chairman reminded the Quarterman of their duties.

8.3 TB: Meeting with APHA

It was agreed to reissue previous correspondence and co-opt Helen Radmore and Colin Abel onto the TB Sub-Committee.

9. Local Commoners' Association Secretary Support Group

The inaugural held in August 2024 was very successful highlighting the need for additional resources, templates, information, and structured work plans. It was agreed that a follow-up meeting should be organised to advance these initiatives. Furthermore, consideration must be given to the most effective way to support Local Commons Association Secretaries, whether through an integrated portal within our existing system or the development of a bespoke platform.

10. Update from Dartmoor National Park Authority

Simon Lee reported on:

Princetown Visitor Centre – DNPA Committee met on 10 January to consider next steps in proposals to close the Visitor Centre and agreed to keep the Centre open until the end of October 2025.

Dartmoor Marshalls Scheme - The effectiveness of the 2024 scheme is being reviewed and support for the 2025 season is undergoing consideration.

Extra funding from Devon County Council for a number of capital projects have been identified on the **Rights of Way Network**. Managing Public Rights of Way continues to be one of the Ranger Teams priorities.

Dogs on Dartmoor campaign to raise awareness of the issues of out-of-control dogs - this campaign continues.

DNPA will be represented at the **Dartmoor Rural Crime Initiative** meeting on the 3rd April.

Voluntary Warden Scheme – this is being reviewed.

Supreme Court Hearing on Wild Camping - a judgment is awaited.

11. Financial Estimates for 2025/2026

It was agreed finances would be discussed at a round table session for Council members only on Thursday 20 February 2025.

12. Dartmoor Wide Animal Marks Book

Tracy May provided an update on this initiative, which is being funded by FiPL and the Forest of Dartmoor Commoners Association. A copy of the book will be distributed to each grazier with an entry in the book. Additionally, copies will be held by the Police, the Dartmoor Livestock Protection Officer, and the Dartmoor Commoners' Council office.

13. Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting of Council will be held on Wednesday 5 March at 7.30pm at the Two Bridges Hotel, Princetown.

Signed: *Layland Branfield*

Date: 5 March 2025

Neil's Questions Relating to CL190 – 5 February 2025

- How did this situation arise?
- What are the historic grazing rights attached to the land?
- How were the historic rights quantified into 380 units?
- Before agri-environmental schemes how did quartermen quantify 380 units, and....
- Is that still appropriate for current land management schemes or fair to registered 1965 rights holders.
- Considering there was already a tenant on the common, was it appropriate to produce and let a second tenancy.
- Who is responsible for the tenant holders grazing and livestock rules i.e., if it stipulates in the tenancy, they're not allowed to jeopardise any agri-environmental scheme, do we have any power in DCC to do anything about it?

Livestock: Husbandry & Management Sub Committee

Meeting Notes: 31 January 2025

RECOMMENDATIONS INTO CATTLE INCIDENTS

Livestock Group

Mark Radmore Lead

James French

Robert Jordan

James Reddaway

Karla McKechnie

Meeting of Livestock Group at Hillbridge Farm Peter Tavy

Friday 31st January 2025 at 7.00 pm.

All members present

James Reddaway declared an interest

Members agreed the following recommendations:

1. Negotiations to take place between local Associations and Natural England to prevent 'pinch-points' on over-grown paths and tracks in order for the public to have early awareness of grazing livestock and to avoid being in close proximity.
2. Signage. Work with DNPA and collaborate with DaCC.
3. Greater communication and education around recreational events, with the number of events limited.
What do the public and participants know about the moor and livestock?
DNPA to address this.
4. Have a Cattle Code, alternatively called a Livestock Code (comparable to Countryside Code).
5. On-going behavioural monitoring of depastured cattle throughout the year by graziers as per the Advice Notes for Cattle Graziers. DaCC office to resend this guidance, or link, to graziers.
6. Robert Jordan to contact Miriam Parker MBE, Consultant on Livestock Handling and Cattle Behaviour. (Update: Contact established. RJ to report to Council on Wed. 5th Mar 2025).

KMc

03.02.25

Live Export Ban Meeting Report

The Dartmoor Commoners' Council was invited to meet with **Defra's Welfare in Transport policy team** to discuss implementation options for last year's **Live Exports Ban**.

Council Attendees:

Admin Support Dru Butterfield and Neil Cole Committee Member & Pony Lead Sub Committee.

Briefing Note: The Animal Welfare (Livestock Exports) Act 2024

Overview: The Animal Welfare (Livestock Exports) Act 2024 bans the export of live cattle, horses, sheep, pigs, and goats from Great Britain for fattening or slaughter. This legislation aims to reduce the stress and suffering associated with long-distance transport.

Implementation and Scope: The new law started in July 2024 and was created to stop animals from suffering during long transport journeys. The UK government put this rule in place after Brexit to improve animal welfare. However, it doesn't apply to Northern Ireland or transport within Ireland. It also stops livestock from passing through Great Britain if they're traveling to places outside the British Islands.

Exemptions: The ban applies specifically to exports for fattening and slaughter. However, exports for breeding purposes remain permissible under the Act.

Potential Schemes: To ensure compliance, the following schemes may be considered:

- **Animal Livestock Export Enforcement Approved Exporter Scheme** – Establishing a system to regulate approved exporters.
- **Intelligence-Led Checks** – Targeting enforcement actions based on risk assessments and intelligence gathering.
- **Export/Transit Permits** – A permit system to control and monitor the movements of livestock.

Stakeholder Concerns and Issues Raised:

- **Administrative Burden:** Concerns regarding the paperwork requirements and the frequency of veterinary checks.
- **Minimum Value Consideration:** Some stakeholders suggest that setting a minimum export value could be beneficial.
- **Clarification on Equine Herds:** Request to clarify the distinction between semi-feral and semi-wild equine herds.
- **Conservation Grazing:** It was indicated that there is potential to grow a conservation grazing market if administration is cost-effective.
- **Germany:** This is a good market for Dartmoor Hill Ponies. A minimum value for ponies would support the European export market for riding/driving/conservation purposes.
- **Re-establishment of the Semi-Feral Equine Forum:** A request was made to reinstate this forum to address ongoing concerns related to equine welfare and management.

Conclusion The Animal Welfare (Livestock Exports) Act 2024 represents a significant step in enhancing animal welfare standards in Great Britain. While its implementation is expected to improve conditions for transported livestock, concerns regarding administrative processes and specific exemptions need to be addressed to ensure smooth enforcement and compliance. Further dialogue with stakeholders will be essential to refine enforcement mechanisms and clarify administration issues.