

THE DARTMOOR PONY ACTION GROUP

The Pony Action Group's purpose is to provide a cohesive approach to pony management on Dartmoor. The importance of the pony is reflected in its adoption as the logo of Dartmoor National Park Authority. The group reviews and monitors the effectiveness of agreed strategies to secure the ponies' short and long term viability.

Members are committed to supporting and preserving healthy ponies, in sustainable numbers, that will continue to graze on Dartmoor to help maintain its cultural heritage, biodiversity and landscape qualities, and for the enjoyment of the general public and tourism.

The group comprises the three statutory bodies: Dartmoor National Park Authority (DNPA), Natural England (NE), Dartmoor Commoners Council (DaCC), alongside the Dartmoor Pony Society (DPS), Dartmoor Hill Pony Association (DHPA), Dartmoor Pony Heritage Trust (DPHT), Dartmoor Pony Moorland Scheme (DPMS - Co Funded by the Duchy Of Cornwall and Dartmoor Pony Society), Dartmoor Livestock Protection Society (DLPS) and two independent pony keepers.

Research is being undertaken by independent specialists, largely funded and coordinated by members of PAG, over the next three years. This will undoubtedly contribute to the better understanding of mixed animal grazing on Dartmoor. It will be fundamental to the future management and preservation of the ponies on Dartmoor and the development of a cohesive strategy for the Group.

The Pony Action Group's main objectives are:

- To monitor the numbers of all ponies grazing on Dartmoor
- To promote the qualities of the ponies as conservation graziers and general purpose domesticated ponies; to seek new markets that will be sustainable; and ensure sensible prices to uphold their value
- To provide clear information for visitors about the different types of pony grazing on Dartmoor, the contribution that they make to the management of the landscape, why they are important to Dartmoor both historically and for the future as part of a mixed grazing regime
- To coordinate efforts to ensure a high standard of health and quality in every pony running on Dartmoor

PONY ACTION GROUP ACTION PLAN – February 2016

Objective 1 - *To monitor the numbers of all ponies grazing on Dartmoor*

Issues:

The number of foals born annually should be managed to match their market.

Actions:

- All ponies on the common must accord with DaCC rules and regulations. **Lead: DaCC with support from DLPS as appropriate**
- Support projects that manage the number of foals born each year: **Lead: All**
- Continue researching stallion control and contraception. **Lead: DHPA**

Objective 2 - *To promote the qualities of the ponies as conservation graziers and general purpose domesticated ponies; to seek new markets that will be sustainable; and ensure sensible prices to uphold their value*

Issues:

Positive promotion and PR must remain an on-going priority with all groups presenting a shared message and placing ponies from Dartmoor high in the market place as desirable to own.

Actions:

- Maintain and expand existing markets for ponies. **Lead: All**
- Continue to promote and support the role of ponies for conservation grazing. **Lead: All**
- Promote only the sale of quality ponies. **Lead: DHPA and DPHT**
- Identify and develop new markets for ponies: **Lead: All**
- Seek funding to support joint initiatives to control breeding and to collate scientific evidence to support the ponies' future as grazing animals on Dartmoor. **Lead: All**
- Continue the development of conservation meat and promoting its supply; **Lead: DPHA**

Objective 3 - *To provide clear information about the different types of pony grazing on Dartmoor, the contribution that they make to the management of the landscape, why they are important to Dartmoor both historically and for the future as part of a mixed grazing regime*

Issues:

Ponies have a long association with Dartmoor and their importance is highlighted by the pony being adopted as the logo of Dartmoor National Park Authority. People enjoy coming to see them, and they also care very much about their welfare. People therefore need a clear and consistent message which explains the importance of all types of pony, why they differ and why they are important to Dartmoor both historically and for the future as part of a mixed grazing regime on the commons.

Farmers must be free to continue to choose the type of ponies they keep, depending on their own preference and the market price. It is recognised that most ponies will do the

same job in terms of grazing and therefore all types can contribute positively to land management. Nevertheless, it is important for the cultural heritage of Dartmoor that ponies on the moor are protected.

Actions:

- Research is being undertaken by independent specialists, largely funded and coordinated by members of PAG, over the next three years. This will undoubtedly contribute to the better understanding of mixed animal grazing on Dartmoor. It will be fundamental to the future management and preservation of the ponies on Dartmoor and the development of a cohesive strategy for the Group. **Lead: All**
- To agree key messages amongst all interested parties and then communicate effectively: **Lead: All**
- To develop co-ordinated PR and a communication plan with a strong and single message which promotes ponies on Dartmoor and their vital role in providing a mixed grazing regime. It is recognised that all groups will liaise with the press and add new information on occasion but this should not contradict the agreed messages. **Lead: DNPA to facilitate and all to support and act**
- Whenever possible PAG members should value, promote, increase awareness and celebrate the good job that farmers and their ponies do in regard to managing cultural heritage on Dartmoor. **Lead: All**
- Update all website references. **Lead: DNPA**
- Look for new ways of communicating the pony message via podcasts, blogs, downloadable walks etc. **Lead: DNPA**

Objective 4 - *To coordinate efforts to ensure a high standard of health and quality of ponies running on Dartmoor*

Issues:

On some areas of Dartmoor there have been ponies abandoned or left out unmarked that cause a problem with ownership and management.

Actions:

- In the longer term to improve the overall health and conformation of ponies on Dartmoor whatever their type. Continue improving the quality of stallions through inspection. **Lead: DaCC, DHPA, DPHT, DPMS**
- To support the whole commons annual drifts on Dartmoor. **Lead: All**