

Dartmoor Farming in Protected Landscapes

Local Assessment Panel

Wednesday 3rd September 2025 - Parke

Attending: Russell Ashford, Peter Harper, Sarah Blyth, Alison Clish-Green, John Howell, Christine Malseed, Shirley Mudge, James Wright, Ann Willcocks (*attending as the designated representative for the DCC*), Mark Williams (*DNP Authority member who will be replacing Peter Harper. Mark attended to shadow Peter, who will no longer be our DNP Authority representative*).

Dartmoor staff attending: Bea Dunscombe, Kaitlin Perryman, Columb Hague

Apologies: Will Dracup, Katie Wynter, Dan Alford

Introductions:

- Mark Williams was introduced to the FiPL Panel, he will be taking the place of Peter Harper as the DNPA representative after today's meeting and will be a voting member from October onwards. Mark will not be able to vote in today's meeting but is here to be inducted and learn the process.
- Ann Willcocks was formally welcomed to the Panel as the Dartmoor Commoners Council representative in place of Layland Branfield. Tracy May is the new Chair of the Dartmoor Commoners Council and will cover for Ann Wilcocks in the event that Ann can't attend.

Finance Update:

- FiPL team gave the Panel updates re. the financial position of the programme to date, and the number of internally approved projects since the last LAP meeting in July
- Team offered reassurance to the Panel that good progress on grant allocation had been made so far
- Discussed SM posts and newsletters advertising the programme
- Team asked Panel to continue encouraging people within their networks on Dartmoor to come to FiPL, enquire and see what support we can offer and utilise the funding
- Panel discussed the eligibility of repeat applicants, what the rules are on return applicants and any limits on number of applicants or total grant value.

Applications

Greenwell Farm – Wool Packing and Storage

(Presented by Bea Dunscombe)

Summary of application:

This project aims to purchase a Wool Press, with accompanying Weigh Bars, in order to improve the management and efficiency of packing and storing Dartmoor sheep's wool on site at Greenwell Farm. In conjunction with this, we are proposing to make improvements (concreting and wall panels) to the existing barn used for wool storage, therefore enabling a cleaner and drier wool baling and storage system. These improvements should facilitate increased and improved processing of wool on Dartmoor.

Declarations of interest: None

Discussion points:

- If this project did not work with Twool, as one of their main wool buyers, would there be concerns over viability and longevity of the funding. Is this project sufficient as a standalone project?
- Is there a predicted uplift in the volume of wool that will be able to be stored/processed as a result of this funding – what are the quantifiable deliverables? Panel would like to see the projected increase of suppliers and volume of wool. This should demonstrate the need for additional capacity for wool storage at Greenwell Farm.
- The Panel discussed the different breeds of wool the applicant stores and if it is just White-face Dartmoor sheep. The FiPL team confirmed that the applicant does store wool from other breeds, but that Twool takes the majority of this wool. The Enchanted House Beds company and the Dartmoor Hill Farm Project take the remaining amount.
- Confirmation that applicant works with 50 farmers, producing 50 tonnes of wool annually.
- Concerns were again raised over the legacy of this project, the Panel re-iterated that they wanted clarity over the breakdown of suppliers and buyers, in terms of quantifiable numbers.
- Panel acknowledged that as a self-standing application, with the acknowledgement that the price of wool and its low value, should we be investing this money into this industry? It was discussed that this project, through seeking a capital cash injection to the industry, would help support Dartmoor farmers longer term by making wool production more economically viable.
- It was suggested the applicant could reach out to HERDY, a company based in the Lake District who produce wool products. This could be an avenue for the supply/sale of Herdwick wool.
- Panel re-iterated that the barn must be used for wool storage for a minimum of 5 years as per FiPL agreement terms.
- Panel requested confirmation of the projected number of suppliers, as well as volume of wool as a result of the funding, to be sent to Panel via email before issuing an Agreement.

Scoring

The scoring by the FiPL team was confirmed:

	Score	Score after weighting
Project outcomes (Climate, Nature, People and Place) – 40%	6	2.4
Ability to deliver - 20%	8	1.6
Sustainability / legacy of projects - 20%	8	1.6
Value for Money - 20%	6	1.2
Total	28	6.8

Decision:

Panel voted to approve this application in full, subject to the applicant meeting the below conditions:

1. The barn must be used for storing wool for the full 5-year maintenance period, as stated in the terms of their FiPL Agreement.
2. To show quantifiable uplift, the applicant must provide the projected increase of suppliers and volume of wool, as a result of the funding. This should demonstrate that there is a need for additional wool storage at Greenwell Farm.

For: 9

Against: 0

Abstained: 0

Ruddycleave - Rhos Pasture Restoration

(Presented by Columb Hague)

Summary of application:

This project involves a series of works to restore and enable the appropriate grazing of an area of degraded Rhos Pasture. As recommended by an ecologist from Butterfly Conservation, the removal of scrub and encroaching willow and the addition of fencing to manage stock, will allow for an increased area of, and connectivity to, of higher quality habitats on the adjacent common. Works will be conducted by hand due to the site's sensitivity. These works include:

- Clearance of scrub, trees and overhanging branches along the access track
- 560m of fencing the boundary to facilitate conservation grazing to manage and restore the area
- Clearing encroaching scrub & trees on the Rhos Pasture.

Declarations of interest: None

Discussion points:

- What will be the primary grazing animal in this area? Will it be ponies? Can we ensure cattle are the primary grazer here as they are the appropriate choice to ensure the right level and intensity of grazing. Specifically relating to the protection/preservation of devil's-bit scabious.
- Panel member raised that there is no mention of any monitoring of the habitats in the Application. It was named as a condition that must be included. FiPL team confirmed that Butterfly Conservation will be engaging in monitoring, conducting surveys before the works and after the initial period and then ongoing. The FiPL team will have access to these surveys as evidence.
- Panel member raised questions over why the area has become dominated with scrub and the biodiversity of the area decreased. Why has it not been grazed sufficiently? FiPL team member confirmed the previous owner had not grazed the area sufficiently. It is not that the current owners/applicants are applying for funding for an area they have let become degraded themselves.

- Concerns raised regarding the balance between encouraging tree growth on Dartmoor, in line with recommendations in the Fursdon Review, and the protection and enhancement of important habitats for species such as Marsh Fritillary Butterflies. Whilst the scrub is present currently, but the butterflies are not. The FiPL team reported that not only has the project scale been limited with this in mind, but that in this area the quality of the Rhos pasture habitat outweighs that of the potential for wood pasture. It was also noted that the trees are willow and therefore this does not present valuable diversity.
- Is this area access Land? Why would we be fencing/limiting access to an area like this? FiPL team confirmed that the Definitive Map shows that the OS Map is actually incorrect here. The boundary of the in-bye land is mapped correctly but it is not CROW Act access land. FiPL confirmed this needs to be corrected on the maps to avoid criticism and confusion.
- It was raised that this is quite a considerable grant for a relatively small area of land. Would the applicant not be better to use a few cattle grazing with collars?
- Panel requested as a condition to see the method statement for the burning of the willow brash which will be conducted on site.
- Could the wood be chipped on site and left in stacks to create additional habitats instead of being burnt? Panel member recommended that the applicant looks into using a self-propelled tracked chipper. FiPL team confirmed that due to the topography of the site and the wetness of the ground, it would not be possible to transport a chipper on site.
- Panel raised the concerns of the use of cattle which may have been treated with endo or ectoparasite treatments such as Ivermectins. It is essential the cattle are not allowed in the sensitive areas if/when they are being treated due to the impact on the habitat. FiPL member stated this will be considered and the grazing regime clarified with the applicant as a condition. It was again confirmed the intention will be to exclude cattle interactions in the larval season. Panel requested this information is confirmed from the applicant (and Butterfly Conservation).
- Does this project intent to increase public access in the area, as concerns over creating a habitat that is delicate where large volumes of walkers etc would damage the newly restored habitats. Again, the clarification over the land designation is needed here to understand this.
- School visits; will be hosted at the main farm (through DFA) whereby this area of land will be included in the walk/visits. Improved access infrastructure gained through Capital Grant scheme on behalf of main farm (gates etc). FiPL team confirmed these won't have trombone handles as access will be on guided basis for the visits, rather than for the public.

Recommendations:

- The FiPL team to confirm the land designation of the proposed area and ensure it is not Open Access land.

Scoring

The scoring by the FiPL team was confirmed:

	Score	Score after weighting
Project outcomes (Climate, Nature, People and Place) – 40%	6	2.4
Ability to deliver - 20%	10	2
Sustainability / legacy of projects - 20%	8	1.6
Value for Money - 20%	6	1.2
Total	30	7.2

Decision:

Panel voted to approve this application in full, subject to the applicant meeting the below conditions:

1. There is to be appropriate and ongoing monitoring of the site, with surveys conducted before and after the work has been completed. The FiPL team are to receive copies of these surveys as appropriate.
2. The applicant must produce a method statement relating to the burning of the cut brash and willow to ensure safety to both contactors and the habitats.
3. The applicant must confirm and clarify the intended grazing regime in place after the initial works have taken place. The applicant is to graze in accordance with recommendations from Butterfly Conservation. The grazing regime should be considered in relation to the use of stock that have been treated with insecticides, particularly during the larval season.

For: 9

Against: 0

Abstained: 0

Brimpts Farm – Access for All & Biodiversity Trail

(Presented by Bea Dunscombe)

Summary of application:

A project looking to create a new formal permissive path around Brimpts Farm, including an 'Access for All' Trumper/walking route (approx. 0.80km), which will facilitate a more diverse range of people to enjoy the surrounding landscape.

Secondly, funding to improve to a longer 'Biodiversity Trail' (approx. 3km), which would benefit from surface improvements, picnic benches, signage and interpretation.

Declarations of interest:

- Shirley Mudge is their neighbour but would not benefit financially or have any commercial gain as a result of this project.

Discussion points:

- It was felt that the FiPL theme and outcome of supporting nature needs to be mentioned, as the protection and better management of habitats is relevant. FiPL team to amend the Application Form so that the project supports Outcome N3.
- Members supportive of the increase in Access for All tracks and happy to endorse an application of this nature.
- It was noted as a condition that the landowner, the Duchy of Cornwall, must support the permissive access agreement for the full 20-year period, covered under the Central Dartmoor Landscape Recovery. This must ensure that the route and facilities are managed and maintained throughout this period, even if there is a change of tenant.
- Panel raised as to why the application is named 'Biodiversity Trail' – what is the justification and how is this quantified? Panel requested the name of the trail to be re-named as appropriate.
- Is it appropriate to welcome/encourage picnicking in this area due to the risk of littering or impact on land holding from food and rubbish, especially if this is claimed as a place with particular biodiversity. Who would be responsible for managing the litter along the walk if it becomes an issue? Panel requested that the applicant ensures the public is responsible for managing litter around the site and this is communicated by them appropriately.
- Concern over the use of limestone as the surface material due to its potential impact of the surrounding land. FiPL team confirmed this was raised with the applicant in the internal review meeting and the applicant confirmed they have found this material best to work with for its longevity. The applicant found working with Growan difficult as it washes away, and on a Tramper route, the surface needs to be appropriate. The risk with Growan is its ability to turn into an uneven, spongy layer on the top. It was noted that this would negate the fully accessible nature of the path.
- The Panel discussed at length different appropriate materials and the on-going maintenance of the surface, weighed up against the scale of the impact on this localised site. Is there a suitable alternative? And what impact would this have?
 - Request for the panel to vote on whether they are happy to approve the use of limestone or specify another material.
 - Clarity that the focus of project is to improve access and therefore the Panel should approve the use of limestone 803.
- Are there any Planning Permission concerns over the extension of the existing boardwalks? FiPL team confirmed they have recommended the applicant seeks pre-planning advice. The Panel agreed that the applicant needs to seek formal confirmation as to whether Planning Consent is needed for the described works.
- Panel members questioned lifespan of untreated timbers. It was confirmed that the maintenance required was as per the FiPL Agreement terms.
- Has the applicant included a cost for their time/labour in hauling the stone needed? As FiPL has funded this in the past, would it be appropriate to include/add these costs into this project for consistency? The Panel members concluded it was not applied for and therefore weren't inclined to add it in.

- Clarification over the available parking spaces; the members discussed whether there was enough parking for the scope of the routes offered. Team confirmed there will be 2 parking spaces and there is overflow parking which will be sign posted.
- Panel returned to the discussion around the use of limestone and the top dressing on the path.

Scoring

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Ability to deliver - 20%	8	1.6
Sustainability / legacy of projects - 20%	8	1.6
Value for Money - 20%	8	1.6
Total	30	7.2

Decision:

To approve subject to meeting the below conditions:

1. The Duchy of Cornwall, as landowner, must support the permissive access agreement for the full 20-year period, covered under the Central Dartmoor Landscape Recovery. This must ensure the route and facilities are managed and maintained throughout this period.
2. The applicant should consider renaming the 'Biodiversity Trail' to something that is appropriate for what is being offered. For example, 'Woodland Walk'.
3. The applicant must ensure the public are responsible for managing the potential litter around the site, and that they communicate this appropriately to the public.

For: 8

Against: 0

Abstained: 1

AOB:

- FiPL Showcase Event; what is the appetite for the panel members to attend another show case event this year, when would be a good time? FiPL team to present on follow ups on projects from previous years?
 - o Panel request an evening event, as well as a day out on the ground, this autumn or winter, where FiPL welcome successful applicants back to speak to Panel & FiPL team. Panel requested if the scope could be widened to include prospective applicants and others to attend this, such a Parish Councils etc. FiPL team to sort and arrange.
- Drop-in Event: 17th September; Bea and Columb will be at the Two Bridges Hotel. This has been advertised in both the Dartmoor Hill Farm project Facebook account and in the DaCC Newsletter and aims to welcome & support prospective applicants.
- Thank-you from the Chair to all Panel members and FiPL team.
- Thank you and well done and goodbye from Peter Harper, for which this is his last meeting.

Date of next meeting:

Wednesday 8th October, Parke.