

Pony Action Group Meeting

Friday 21 September 2018

10:30 above Princetown Information Centre

Present

Elizabeth Newbould Young (ENY)	Dartmoor Pony Society (DPS)
Karla McKechnie (KM)	Dartmoor Livestock Protection Society (DLPS)
Marion Saunders (MS)	Dartmoor Livestock Protection Society (DLPS)
Sue Martin (SM)	Dartmoor Pony Society (DPS)
Helen Radmore (HR)	Independent
Sue Hutchings (SH)	Independent
Judy Fawcett (JF)	Dartmoor Pony Heritage Trust (DPHT)
Dru Butterfield (DB)	Dartmoor Pony Heritage Trust (DPHT)
Sara Sloman (SS)	Dartmoor Commoners Council (DaCC)
John Shears (JS)	Dartmoor Hill Pony Association (DHPA)
Rob Steemson (RS)	Dartmoor National Park Authority (DNPA)

RS Chairman and minute taker

1 Apologies

Ann Came (AC), Kerry Smith (KS), John Waldon (JW), Tom Stratton (TS), Claire Stanton (CS), Viv Brown (VB), Mary Alford (MA),

2 Minutes of last meeting & matters arising

RS tabled an amended set of minutes and gave time for all present to read them. He reported that TS on behalf of the DofC as a major landowner had drawn up a licence for the Friends of DHPA to undertake the darting of ponies on their common land. The licence had been shared with DaCC, DNPA and the Forest of Dartmoor Commoners Association. It covered everything that was required by the Friends of DHPA to undertake the contraceptive scheme on that common, with particular regard to the requirement to inform the relevant agencies beforehand. The licence will run until 31st August 2019 and then be reviewed. DNPA will be issuing a similar licence on their three areas of common land. It is also anticipated that other common land users might also issue a licence.

PAG members present again supported the roll out of the scheme on to the commons and thought it would be useful to be aware of all commons that had given permission and the protocols within the darting process.

Action: RS to ask Charlotte for information

PAG members present were again concerned about sustainability and potential expansion of the scheme on just one trained person. It was suggested that perhaps KM could be trained up to support or stand in for Charlotte. The DLPS were happy to help and would look in to getting KM trained up and pay for the cost. The DPHT indicated they would potentially pay half of the cost of getting KM trained.

Action: DLPS to progress

JF mentioned that unfortunately the DPS, DPHT & DHPA had not been able to have another constructive and cohesive meeting before today as they did before the last meeting in June. It appears that the DHPA no longer want to meet up which was a great shame. JS replied that he had had a recent meeting with Charlotte but she was reluctant to attend another smaller meeting or re-join PAG. As Chairman he was going to have a meeting with the DHPA President and Charlotte to address the issue as he

thought it was very important to be cohesive and support the PAG fully as requested by NE ready for potential DEFRA pony policies post Brexit. **Action:** JS

3 Dartmoor Commoners Council report

SS reported that DaCC had been asked for a formal view on the use of darting on the commons. Council members wished to support the scheme as long as consent of the landowner is secured and all actions are carried out within the law and Council's regulations.

In regard to the Council's pony database which was reviewed in 2016 all pony keepers were sent a letter to remind them that Defra require all ponies that are kept on the commons, which are not officially pass ported or microchipped, to be identified and listed with DaCC. They were advised that individuals who have not registered correctly are at risk of losing their derogation and will then have to microchip and passport. Further letters have been sent in April, September 2017 and September 2018. SM mentioned that the law was changing at the end of the year. Any pony with a passport will have to be microchipped and the derogation may eventually go.

4 Dartmoor Pony Society report

SM reported that they are taking a stall to the Horse of Year show and a local pony bred by Ken Edwards in the newtake scheme has qualified and will be competing at this event which is excellent news.

5 Natural England report

Reminder that NE are keen for PAG to continue having cohesive meetings and reporting back information against the Partnership Action Plan and in shaping up DEFRA policies.

6 Dartmoor Pony Heritage Trust report

Demand for ponies was good and eight had recently gone to Cornish coast for conservation grazing. Lots of practical work on the Bellever management area particularly essential stone walling and vegetation clearance. Research project moving forward and Ponies inspiring People has grown with service level agreements with schools, but has also branched out to do work with people with dementia.

7 Dartmoor Pony Moorland Scheme report

Just undertaken pony round ups and ponies were looking good. The scheme is celebrating 30 years and was soon to receive the Glen Spooner award for promoting Dartmoor Ponies. Three new information boards are to be erected in the newtakes used.

8 Dartmoor Hill Pony Association report

Pony sale on 11 October at Chagford. This year no silhouettes however the Friends of DHPA are lobbying Defra to allow photographs to be taken instead of all four sides of each pony.

9 Dartmoor Livestock Protection Society – report

Total RTA's from 1/1/18 to 7/9/18 is 130 which has resulted in 16 dead and 4 injured ponies. There is widespread feeding of the ponies and no adequate roadside signs or warnings that it is an offence to feed the ponies and we ask for this to be addressed. The DLPS are asking for bold signs at cattle grids warning "Livestock grazing – please slow down" as well as other signs saying "Do not feed the ponies".

Seven foals which succumbed to a debilitating condition after becoming weak and scouring were dispatched. Two emaciated and unmarked mares in a remote area of the moor were also dispatched.

Generally speaking after difficult weather conditions all moorland ponies' maintained good bodily condition however two emaciated and unmarked mares in a remote area of the moor were dispatched. After reports come in to Karla she may have to walk many miles to inaccessible areas of Dartmoor to ensure that sick foals or emaciated mares are not left to collapse and suffer a long drawn out death with eyes pecked out, etc and she pays a pivotal role in looking after livestock issues across the moor.

10 Dartmoor National Park Authority report

The present DNPA Recreational Policy is being revised after ongoing concerns about increasing recreational use (both day and night) from Common Land Owners (CLO) and DaCC. The new Recreational policy is a tri-party approach with full DaCC and CLO support and is going to DNPA meeting soon for sign off. A different approach and process to requests for recreational events will be adopted.

DNPA has this year promoted a Ranger Code and one of the key messages is in regard to Feeding ponies. To pick up the DLPS concerns regarding signage the DNPA are going to be having meetings with Highways regarding old signs and new signs across many issues. DNPA are also having meetings with Police regarding speeding and signs as well as supporting their Rural Crime Initiative.

11 AOB

None

12 Date and venue of next meeting

10.30 on 1 March 2019 at Princetown