

## **Pony Action Group Meeting**

**Friday 1 March 2019**

**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)
Eamon Crowe (EC)	Natural England
Helen Radmore (HR)	Independent
Ann Came (AC)	Independent
Judy Fawcett (JF)	Dartmoor Pony Heritage Trust (DPHT)
Dru Butterfield (DB)	Dartmoor Pony Heritage Trust (DPHT)
Philip French (PF)	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**

Sue Hutchings (SH), Tom Stratton (TS), Claire Stanton (CS), Viv Brown (VB), Neil Cole (NC), Charlotte Faulkner (CF)

### **2 Minutes of last meeting & matters arising**

RS updated the meeting in regard to the action from last time. He had requested information from CF but apart from learning that no darting had taken place he does not know what land owners (apart from Duchy & DNPA) have given permission yet.

MS updated that DLPS had asked about the cost of sending KM on a darting course, which for three days was £600. KM will speak to CF about providing a supporting role.

JS mentioned again that unfortunately the DPS, DPHT & DHPA had not been able to have another constructive and cohesive meeting before today however CF was planning to attend but had just given her apologies. All agreed it would be great if CF could attend in the future as she knows so much.

RS reminded all that in PAG Terms of Reference represented organisations are required to send a written report two weeks before a meeting so that they can be submitted with the agenda a week before.

### **3 Dartmoor Commoners Council – submitted report**

Council's Pony Working Group has undergone an overhaul & the inaugural meeting restructured group was held on 7 November 2018. A Committee, comprising of both members of Council & some non-Council members with expert knowledge has been recommended. Under Council's Standing Orders, non-Council members on the Committee will not be entitled to vote, but can contribute to a debate. Additionally, non-non-Council members must not exceed one third of the Committee. Neil Cole is now Council's representative at Pony Action Group (PAG) meetings & Phil Abel is his deputy.

Following new Equine ID regulations which came into force on 1 October last year, a representative from Council's Pony Working Group will be meeting with key partners in the drift sales to discuss the difficulties experienced last year & consider a way forward. They will, of course, report back to the Pony Working Group in due course.

In the wake of the autumn pony drifts, concerns have been raised that there appears to be an increase in the number of families of unmarked ponies & that some areas have not been cleaned up properly following its drift. Council is following this up with Local Commoners' Associations.

Finally, Council's Pony Working Group is due to meet again on Wednesday 6 March 2019. Council's Pony Database & its derogation on equine ID will be discussed.

At the meeting PF introduced himself as Vice Chair of DaCC and apologised for NC not turning up. He mentioned that the new set up within DaCC with its Pony Working Group should be beneficial to PAG in the future. Everybody needed to work together as a team to promote good quality ponies.

#### **4 Dartmoor Pony Society – no submitted report**

SM verbally reported that the Horse of the Year show was a great shop window and 15 new members have been recruited. ENY is now President and SM Chairperson and DPS was looking to improve breed quality and increase membership.

#### **5 Natural England – no submitted report**

EC said that NE is keen for PAG to continue having cohesive meetings and reporting back information against the Partnership Action Plan to help shape up DEFRA policies.

There used to be Native Breed schemes and now new ELMS initiatives are being developed however any scheme needs to be fit for purpose and this requires clarity. Discussion around potential payment for commoners needs to be based on guidelines around 'What we can offer the public'. Having an accurate number of ponies grazing on the commons would be advantageous along with the capacity, allocation and need. There is talk of a separate scheme for ponies with particular reference to the value of ongoing winter grazing and their relevance as a management tool. New schemes start in 2024.

#### **6 Dartmoor Pony Heritage Trust – submitted report**

We continue to have an active pony keeper group and have decided to provide another round of grants to support them in their efforts to maintain the Dartmoor pony on the moor. We have also agreed to host a showcase day in July to demonstrate the quality and skills of their Dartmoor ponies.

As part of the Dartmoor National Park experience collection, we are working with Emma Cunis to offer a 'wild pony experience'.

The Ponies Inspiring People continues to flourish and there is increasing interest in the Bellever guided walks. We are developing a new Fresh Tracks programme, as an alternative to Ten Tors, this year, which will involve going to the beach amongst other inspiring venues.

The Research Project in Bellever, investigating the value of pony grazing, is proving to be very worthwhile, as we enter the third year. We now have a very capable master's student from Plymouth University working on the project to provide relevant empirical evidence. We are thrilled that the Dartmoor Society has chosen us for their 2019

research lecture.

At the meeting DPHT were able to update that the Bellever conservation grazing project second year report is about to be published and the project will continue in to its third year soon. The molinia research was very useful and the Native Wilderness survey had included every Dartmoor based herd. The information was now being collated.

#### **7 Dartmoor Pony Moorland Scheme – no submitted report**

No attendance

#### **8 Dartmoor Hill Pony Association – no submitted report**

JS apologised for not producing a written report and confirmed that MA was president of DHPA, he was Chair and CF was secretary, therefore between them two people should attend PAG in future. He fully supported PAG and strived to get greater unity. JF thanked JS for his ongoing efforts and attending PAG and looked forward to the sub group meeting being arranged before the June meeting.

#### **9 Dartmoor Livestock Protection Society – submitted report**

In the 12 months to 31<sup>st</sup> December 2018 there were 191 Road Traffic Accidents recorded by Karla (DLPS and Dartmoor Commoners' Council). This total included 32 ponies killed and a further 8 hit but survived.

This year, 2019, the RTAs from 1<sup>st</sup> January to 18<sup>th</sup> February stand at 14, including 3 ponies killed and a further 3 hit but surviving.

During January and early February we have found several ponies in very poor condition. Five ponies have been removed from the moor to better grazing and three emaciated ponies have been dispatched. On Roborough Down we know of four ponies with nasal discharge.

There are a number of unmarked ponies on the moor, with several in the Haytor area. We understand that these ponies were owned by a grazier who has since died.

The speed visors at Sharpitor and Bennett's Cross have recorded vehicles travelling at speeds in excess of 100 mph.

There is to be a meeting on 15<sup>th</sup> March organised by SpeedWatch to discuss vehicle speeds on Dartmoor, in particular the importance of only one speed limit to apply on all unfenced roads. At present some roads on Dartmoor are restricted to 40 mph but others to 60 mph. Key authorities and organisations are being invited to the meeting and Geoffrey Cox, M.P., is hoping to attend.

Last September Karla, John Waldon (DaCC) and I met Alan Hiscox, the Director of Safety for the British Horse Society (BHS) to discuss traffic accidents on Dartmoor which involve equines. Karla has supplied the BHS with her details of the number of ponies killed and injured. The BHS is now hosting a Road and Rider Awareness Evening at the Bedford Hotel, Tavistock, on Thursday 7<sup>th</sup> March 2019 from 19.30 to 21.20 to *guide you through what you need to know and do to keep you and your horse's safe on the roads on Dartmoor and the surrounding area*. Everyone is welcome, entry is free of charge.

A Dartmoor Rural Crime Initiative is being set up headed by Martin Beck (Devon & Cornwall Police) who will lead a team of officers with responsibility for dealing with rural crime. We attended an inaugural meeting at Parke in December 2018. We will be present at a further meeting for key stakeholders this March 2019.

#### **10 Dartmoor National Park Authority – submitted report**

We are still in discussion with Devon County Council with regard to updating and changing the messages on the DNP boundary gateway signs around. Other smaller signs, to support specific targeted issues, of which pony feeding is one are also being designed.

The partnership arrangement within the revised DNPA Recreational Policy (mentioned at last meeting) which started in 2019 appears to be going well. Various erosion sites have been repaired with others to be repaired soon.

Within the MTMTE project (Pounds, Ponies & Driftways) further work has been completed with some others ready to be funded.

Along with the Police, DNPA hosted the inaugural meeting of a Dartmoor Rural Crime Initiative and as part of this the DNPA Ranger Service has renewed its Community Safety Accredited Scheme status with full press coverage on 26 February.

#### **11 AOB**

Organisations written reports to RS by 17 May, agenda and reports sent out on 22 May.

#### **12 Date and venue of next meeting**

18.30 on 5 June 2019 at East Dart hotel, Postbridge