

Dartmoor Farming in Protected Landscapes

Local Assessment Panel

Wednesday 13th March 2024, Parke

Attending: Russell Ashford, Will Dracup, Layland Branfield, Peter Harper, Eamon Crowe, Laurie Phippen, Sarah Blyth, Alison Clish-Green, John Howell, Shirley Mudge, James Sharpe

Dartmoor staff attending:

Rachel Cooper, Bea Dunscombe, Kaitlin Perryman, Simon Pryor (*for the second half of the meeting*).

Apologies:

Christine Malseed (*Shirley Mudge attended in her absence*), Dan Alford

Applications over 10k

Tor Royal No Fence

Presented by Rachel Cooper

Summary of application:

A project aiming to use 50 No-Fence Collars for cattle grazing Tor Royal Newtake and the Burrator Catchment. The collars will be used to keep cattle off the main footpaths and away from the roads (including the busy B3212, route from Plymouth to Exeter via the moor), and will also be used to keep the cattle out of wet, boggy ground that harbour mud snails, a host to liver fluke larvae.

Declarations of interest:

- Shirley Mudge declared a Conflict of Interest because her son works on this farm.
- Layland Branfield declared a Conflict of Interest as he is the direct neighbouring farmer.
- Members of the Panel flagged that they know the applicant for this project because they farm on Dartmoor. However, no-one had any commercial or direct interest so it was decided that this would not need to be declared as a conflict of interest.

Discussion points:

- The Panel endorsed this application, but queried the cattle that are on the neighbouring common at Walkhampton, which will still stray into the road. It was agreed that the collars would help the issue of cattle being injured by cars nonetheless
- It was suggested that a small crossing place could be created using No Fence technology to allow an area that is visible for cattle to cross the road, as opposed to grazing one side of the road and then the other.
- The Panel agreed that liver fluke results would be informative for farmers on Dartmoor, and it was suggested that the findings from the liver fluke survey might be a topic for discussion at one of the Nofence Knowledge Exchange Group meetings.
- The Panel requested access to the final report from Liverpool University. The FiPL team confirmed that this will be in public domain, and they will have full access to it.
- There was concern over whether excluding cattle from wetland areas might lead to vegetation management problems. Will we see negative results in 5-10 years' time due to

cattle exclusion in these areas? It was suggested that the applicant should receive advice from a Vet regarding the best times to allow cattle into wetland areas, to continue managing these areas to some degree i.e. at lower risk times of the year.

- The Panel requested fixed point photography every 6 weeks in the areas where cattle are being excluded, so that we can visibly see impact.
- It was also suggested that the Vet involved in this project could be invited to the Knowledge Exchange Group to contribute peer-to-peer learning on this project.
- It was requested that signage could be installed to explain and spread awareness of cattle collars to the public. It was agreed that the FiPL team should investigate this outside of this project and speak to the DNPA Comms team to organise a way of spreading awareness of No Fence collars with the public (Dartmoor Magazine, DNPA Website, Visitor Centres etc).

Scoring:

The scoring recommended by the FiPL team was confirmed:

	Score	Score after weighting
Project outcomes (Climate, Nature, People and Place) – 40%	8	3.2
Ability to deliver - 20%	8	1.6
Sustainability / legacy of projects - 20%	8	1.6
Value for Money - 20%	10	2
Total	34	8.4

Decision:

Project approved subject to meeting the below three conditions:

1. The final report must be publicly accessible and shared with the Panel, so that farmers on Dartmoor can learn from the test, perhaps through the Hill Farm Project.
2. The applicant must seek advice from a Vet after the trial period to find out when would be an appropriate time for cattle to be let into wet areas.
3. If cattle are being excluded from wetland areas, the applicant must do fix point photography every 6 weeks at the same point, so that we can visibly see impact.

For: 9

Against: 0

Abstained: 1 (*Will wasn't present for the whole presentation, and so couldn't vote*)

Glen Iris No Fence

Presented by Rachel Cooper

Summary of application:

This project aims to trial 60 No-Fence Collars on open moorland to target areas of dense Molinia to break up the thatch and allow smaller dwarf shrubs to thrive or to exclude cattle from vulnerable areas for protection from grazing.

Declarations of interest:

- Eamon and Laurie declared a Conflict of Interest because there is currently a Natural England stock notice in this area. They therefore abstained from voting on this application.
- Layland Branfield declared a Conflict of Interest as he is the near neighbouring farmer.

Discussion points:

- The Panel requested more information about why cattle don't like eating Molinia, and if there are any negatives to pushing cattle to graze these areas. It was explained that Molinia isn't palatable to cattle, but if the cattle are grazing these areas earlier in the season, the Molinia is more palatable and when the cattle eat it, it promotes more palatable regrowth.
- It was explained that the applicant's cattle will calve in the autumn and spring. The strength of this application comes with the commitment that the applicant is happy for this system to work with their existing management system. It was explained that the applicant is committed to this – but we'd need to confirm exact grazing dates with the applicant.
- The Panel requested a map of the applicant's paddocks and their grazing plan, which should be part of their final report, along with results of using their current GPS collars. It was suggested that the applicant could share the results of their GPS collars with the Knowledge Exchange Group.
- The Panel emphasised that Nofence collars are certainly a useful tool on the common, farmers need to be focussing on Molinia and this could be a resolution.

Scoring:

The scoring recommended by the FiPL team was confirmed:

	Score	Score after weighting
Project outcomes (Climate, Nature, People and Place) – 40%	8	3.2
Ability to deliver - 20%	8	1.6
Sustainability / legacy of projects - 20%	6	1.2
Value for Money - 20%	8	1.6
Total	30	7.6

Decision:

Project approved subject to meeting the below three conditions:

1. The applicant must confirm that their existing management system and farming methods will work with this trial. They must supply exact dates for grazing ahead of signing an Agreement.
2. The applicant's paddocks and their grazing plan should be part of their final report, along with results of using their current GPS collars.
3. The Duchy students should be encouraged to present their findings to the FiPL team, and to the Panel, at the end of the project. Depending on their confidence (or just a FiPL Officer).

For: 9

Against: 0

Abstained: 1

Coombe Court

Presented by Rachel Cooper

Summary of application:

This project aims to create a new sheep milking parlour and a small production kitchen, establishing a supply of ewe's milk and a new sheep's cheese manufacturing business on Dartmoor.

Declarations of interest:

None.

Discussion points:

- The Panel endorsed the application, and they agreed that it would be good to support a young farmer with an ambitious new business venture on Dartmoor. But this project is certainly a risk.
- In terms of legacy, what if this business doesn't work out. The applicant is asking for a lot of money on something that might not work out in the long run.
- The Panel wanted more information on where the interpretation board would be going, this information was confirmed by the FiPL team.
- The Panel queried the equipment in the application, and whether the applicant had considered second hand to keep costs down. The FiPL team confirmed that we are not allowed to fund second hand equipment, we can only fund new. The applicant will decide on this depending on the outcome of this Panel meeting, whether they look at purchasing second hand equipment themselves at full price, or new equipment at a 50% intervention rate through FiPL.
- The Panel questioned whether the applicant could complete everything in 1 year, considering that FiPL ends in March 2025. The applicant still needs to apply for Planning Permission for the building work.
- There was concern from the Panel about the logistics of getting the milk off the farm to the buyer in the South Hams, this means that they will be obliged to transport it to the buyer.
- There was also concern about the breed of sheep the applicant is using. Although this breed will be appropriate for cheese making, this is a 700ft farm, and they might not last on the pasture in this location. Is this the wrong farm for sheep milking and cheese production? The Panel then questioned the viability of this project, given the poor ground. Therefore, more details about how they will be improving the grassland would be required.
- The Panel questioned why the applicant hasn't allowed for any stock losses.
- The Panel questioned the range in value within the quotes provided and also the size of parlour, 24 point, for a relatively small flock of sheep, 90 – 100. More quotes would be needed in order to justify funding this element.
- It was suggested that we could ask the applicant to come back with more information once they've obtained Planning Consent and builders timelines, then we can see what might be possible in the remaining time of FiPL.
- The FiPL team confirmed that the equipment the applicant has requested isn't eligible under other schemes (E.g. The Farming Equipment and Technology Fund).
- The Panel suggested that the application could be split into two. We could fund the milking parlour and interpretation first, and then return when this is complete so that the Panel can then consider the cheese making element. This can then be a two-phase project.

Scoring:

The scoring recommended by the FiPL team was confirmed:

	Score	Score after weighting
Project outcomes (Climate, Nature, People and Place) – 40%	8	3.2
Ability to deliver - 20%	8	1.6
Sustainability / legacy of projects - 20%	8	1.6
Value for Money - 20%	8	1.6
Total	32	8

Decision:

The Panel approved the first part of their project (the parlour works, parlour equipment and interpretation board). The applicant must apply for planning permission in the first instance, complete their grazing analysis, obtain more comparative quotes for the parlour, and install the interpretation board. The application should return to the Panel once this first element has been completed, to consider the second element. This will now be a two-phase project.

For: 9

Against: 0

Abstained: 1

Eggworthy Farm

Presented by Rachel Cooper

Summary of application:

This project aims to restore historic farm features including a stone wall, field ditches that were once a livestock watering system and a section of a historic leat.

Declarations of interest:

None.

Discussion points:

- The panel asked if the gates were for public access or just for the landowner. It was confirmed that these were just for the landowner and for stock.
- The Panel questioned where the source of the leat is, and where the water will be going to. It was explained that this will not be a fully functioning leat, it is no longer functional. Instead, it will be restored to preserve its history.
- The Panel emphasised that they would like the leat to serve a useful function if possible. It was agreed that the leat could be used for natural flood management. It would help to drain water in heavy rain.
- It was suggested that an Archaeological brief could be needed for this work.

- The Panel felt that cactus guards could be used instead of the post and wire guards the applicant has requested. These would be far cheaper and easier to manage.

Scoring:

The scoring recommended by the FiPL team was confirmed:

	Score	Score after weighting
Project outcomes (Climate, Nature, People and Place) – 40%	8	3.2
Ability to deliver - 20%	8	1.6
Sustainability / legacy of projects - 20%	8	1.6
Value for Money - 20%	8	1.6
Total	32	8

Decision:

Project approved subject to meeting the below condition:

1. The applicant must use cactus guards to protect their trees instead of post and wire guards.

For: 10

Against: 0

Abstained: 0

AOBs:

- June 5th and April 24th Panel meeting cancelled. May 8th confirmed instead.
- FiPL drop in event – to book a date for the end of May.
- Pipeline projects slide should be added at the beginning of each LAP meeting.
- FiPL team to work with the Comms team to get Comms on the website about cattle collars, this can be topline, but would help to spread awareness. We should include a link to Nofence in this.

Date of next LAP meeting: Wednesday 8th May, Parke