

Dartmoor Farming in Protected Landscapes

Local Assessment Panel

Wednesday 17th July 2024, Parke

Attending: Russell Ashford, Peter Harper, David Hazlehurst, Sarah Blyth, Alison Clish-Green, John Howell, Christine Malseed, James Sharpe, Shirley Mudge (attending as Dan Alford's substitute).

Dartmoor staff attending: Rachel Cooper, Bea Dunscombe, Kaitlin Perryman

Apologies: Will Dracup, Dan Alford, Layland Branfield (Ann Willcocks was unable to attend as Layland's substitute).

Applications

Great Dunstone Historic Fold Yard

Presented by Rachel Cooper

Summary of application

To repair a historic Fold Yard at Great Dunstone Farm, including repointing a historic wall, fencing, a new gateway and replanting traditional orchard trees to match the existing trees. This project will be carried out by hosting a traditional lime pointing course for the public so that they have an opportunity to learn a heritage skill, organised by the Dartmoor Hill Farm Project.

Declarations of interest:

None.

Discussion points:

- The Panel requested clarification regarding whether the course would be over 1.5 days or 2 days. The FiPL team confirmed that it was a 1.5 day course. The Panel had concerns that the course would provide enough learning for attendees, especially since lime pointing is complex and takes a lot of time.
- Will students be paying to attend the lime pointing course? It was confirmed that FiPL will pay 100% of the course, but students are being encouraged to donate to Dartmoor. The FiPL funds will go towards paying the course instructor.
- The Panel queried where the students will be coming from, and how it will be advertised? It was confirmed that the Dartmoor Hill Farm Project will advertise the course via their network, which includes retiring Navy members.
- Question regarding whether the fencing, gateways and tree planting could be claimed via CS Grants. It was reasoned that this project might come under the threshold for CS Grants. This FiPL project could also provide a stepping stone for the applicant to get into Higher-Tier. FiPL team confirmed that they are in CS currently.

- Query regarding whether there is any negotiation with the cost of the courses? Panel felt this was a high cost; will this provide enough value for money?
- FiPL team should suggest that the applicant experiments with the different materials to ensure consistency along the wall (using sand/growan).

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:

To approve subject to meeting the below one condition:

1. The pointing material must blend with what has been used in the past to ensure consistency with the rest of the wall and adjoining farm building. This should be signed off by an expert at DNPA.

For: 9

Against: 0

Abstained: 0

Yellends Farm

Presented by Rachel Cooper

Summary of application

A project to create habitat and provide water security at Yellends Farm. This will involve planting 165m of 'gold-plated' hedgerow and planting 100 trees with cactus guards. In addition to drilling a borehole and associated pump and power supply to provide a more reliable water system and allow better stock management through the adoption of rotational grazing.

Declarations of interest:

None.

Discussion points:

- The Panel decided to consider the hedgerow, tree planting and borehole individually, rather than as a whole.
- The FiPL team confirmed that the farmer is currently in Mid-Tier, and they can't claim for the new hedge boundary through CS, they can only claim an existing hedge line.
- The Panel flagged that you can get cactus guards through Higher Tier.
- Should the newly planted trees be guarded or fenced off with a gate? It was explained that fencing off the trees with an entrance would be more expensive than using cactus guards.

- The Panel discussed whether the applicant could go to Moor Trees for the trees, and then trees can be planted by volunteers.
- It was suggested that the hedgerow could be re-aligned with the hedgerow to the south. This would provide greater connectivity, which would have more ecological benefits.
- The Panel were surprised that the spring on their farm was so low, given the wet year we have had. Therefore, whether there was something bigger wrong with the water source was questioned.
- The Panel highlighted that the farmer does not have their own livestock, and therefore the borehole would only benefit their grazier.
- Why have they not gone for a water bowser? Why are they not harvesting their own water off roofs etc, this would be a more sustainable and cost-effective plan.
- There was concern that boreholes are a huge risk and drilling one might not work. This is a big financial commitment, and this project therefore does not show sufficient value for money for 10ha of land when the applicant does not have their own livestock.
- The Panel suggested that the applicant is directed to look at a water bowser in the first instance. It was then explained that they could connect the water supply to their mains and go through CS for their troughs under LV6/LV7/LV8.
- Should FiPL be used to provide water to both the fields and the farmstead? There was significant concern that the farmstead would count as domestic use.
- The Panel showed concern about the precedent that is being set with this project, and applicants who might enquire about a borehole in the future.

Scoring

The scoring 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:

To split this project into three parts and consider them individually.

A. 'Gold-plated' hedgerow, fencing and gateway

For: 9

Against: 0

Abstained: 0

To approve subject to meeting the below one condition:

1. The new hedgerow should be re-aligned with the hedgerow to the south to provide better connectivity and ecological benefits.

B. Tree planting and cactus guards

For: 4

Against: 4

Abstained: 1

To decline through FiPL, and direct the applicant to Countryside Stewardship for funding.

C. Borehole

For: 0

Against: 6

Abstained: 3

To decline.

Holne Moor Ringleshutes Track

Presented by Rachel Cooper

Summary of application

Repairs to Ringleshutes Track and adjacent habitat enhancements. This includes cutting back gorse alongside Ringleshutes Track, clearing ditches, filling in eroded sections with growan and 803 type 1, installing two new small granite clapper bridges, reinstating a section of original track to prevent erosion alongside it and using granite slabs to create cross ditches to divert water off the track.

Declarations of interest:

The following declarations of interest were discussed in detail, and the declarations recorded below were agreed and approved by the Chairman.

- **Peter Harper** declared a conflict of interest because he is a Dartmoor National Park Authority member, and DNPA is one of the landowners for this project. It was agreed that he had no commercial or direct interest so it was decided that he could participate in the discussion and vote.
- **James Sharpe** declared a conflict of interest because he is a Dartmoor National Park staff member, and DNPA is one of the landowners for this project. It was agreed that he had no commercial or direct interest so it was decided that he could participate in the discussion and vote.
- **Russell Ashford** declared a conflict of interest because he is involved in Holne Moor and knows the applicant. It was agreed that he had no commercial or direct interest so it was decided that he could participate in the discussion and vote.

- **Sarah Blyth** declared a conflict of interest because the RSPB own half the land that is involved in this project, and half of the track where the repair work will take place. It was agreed that, although she had no commercial or direct interest, she could participate in the discussion, but could not vote.
- **Shirley Mudge** declared a conflict of interest because she is a commoner on Holne Common. It was therefore agreed that she could have a commercial and direct interest so it was decided that she could not participate in the discussion or vote.

(Shirley left the room for the following discussion).

Discussion points:

- It was clarified that the trees being planted would primarily be Hawthorn and this would also be for Whinchats, as well as helping to direct people towards the improved track.
- The Panel questioned what 803 stone is? It was confirmed that this is the dust that will be used to fill the eroded sections of the path. The Panel queried what the PH is of 803 stone. If the PH is quite high, then using this up on the Moor might have an impact on the ground flora. Water running off and through the granite-based material would leach this into the surrounding soil and could have an impact. It was reasoned that this stone has been used previously to repair erosion on this track, and so this is being used again to ensure consistency.
- It was therefore suggested that FiPL & RSPB should check this with the supplier and ensure the PH is not too high.
- The Panel questioned who would maintain the track afterwards because the ditches along the route will need cleaning. It was confirmed that there is an ongoing discussion going on about this. The Panel suggested that DNPA & RSPB need to come to a decision on this.
- There was concern that repairing the track might encourage more people to drive down it and increase the chances of further damage. Might it be sensible to install a barrier at the entrance to stop people driving up to the mines. It was flagged that this would require further upkeep and maintenance, and DNPA & RSPB do not have capacity for this.

Scoring

The scoring 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:

To approve subject to the below five conditions:

1. The FiPL team must check that the granite-based materials being used for the track repairs aren't too high in PH and won't have an impact on the ground flora.
2. DNPA, RSPB and Holne Commoners must agree on a maintenance plan regarding how the track will be maintained going forward. This maintenance plan should be finalised and agreed on ahead of work commencing.
3. The maintenance plan must include a section on monitoring the usage of the track. The Holne Commoners and the Sector Ranger should report any inappropriate access.
4. Kevin Cox should provide written consent for the work, as he is the adjacent landowner.
5. The wording in the application should be changed to state that *"The landowners and the named contractor are responsible for co-managing the project"*

For: 7

Against: 0

Abstained: 0

(Sarah Blyth and Shirley Mudge did not vote on this application)

DaCC Fireplan 2

Presented by James Sharpe

Summary of application

This project builds on the work completed in phase 1 of the DaCC's Fireplan which aims to create a Dartmoor wide wildfire plan, which will reduce the risk of wildfire and enable fires to be extinguished faster when they happen. This project aims to improve access, speed of response and safety, by widening 50km of existing paths, improve 8 river crossings and repair 800m of tracks. To do this, the DaCC will work with Commoners Associations to draw up individual Fire Response Plans and add this data to their fire mapping layer.

Declarations of interest:

- It was flagged that some Panel members are commoners, but it was agreed that they had no commercial or direct interest so it was decided they could participate in the discussion and vote.

Discussion points:

- The Panel queried whether phase 2 will be an interim phase, or if there will be a phase 3. It was confirmed that if a phase 3 is planned, it is unlikely that FiPL could fund it given the timeframe of the programme.
- The Panel questioned what has been completed in phase 1 of the project. The FiPL team confirmed that so far, all commons have had their fire plans drawn up, collated and put together into one GIS package. Phase 2 aims to provide a more strategic approach, so that the fire plans can be connected.
- Who is managing these funds and over seeing this project, is there a formal partnership in place? It was confirmed that the DaCC are managing and overseeing the project.

- The Panel wanted to know what the DaCC will have to provide as evidence for this project’s completion. Is there a tangible outcome that can be evidenced?
- A question regarding the river crossings – if the applicant has specified 8 river crossings, then should they know the locations of these crossings. It was therefore suggested that the applicant finalises where these locations will be. The FiPL team confirmed that the crossings will be confirmed in the final strategical map.
- The Panel expressed concern regarding the timeline for this project, they will need a plan in place ahead of carrying out the works before the winter.
- The Panel requested some tangible outcomes, the plan needs more solidity. Further information is required, what are the DaCC trying to gain from this? We need evidence from commoners that there is uptake for the plan.
- It was suggested that the FiPL team should ask why 30% of commoners have not engaged positively with the application.
- The Panel felt strongly that a finalised and approved management plan needs to be finalised in order to start their consultation process. This would ensure better project legacy.
- The Panel endorsed this project, they agreed that it is a great example of landscape-scale recovery activity. The plan just needs to be more concrete.

Scoring

The scoring 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%	6	1.2
Sustainability / legacy of projects - 20%	6	1.2
Value for Money - 20%	8	1.6
Total	28	7.2

Decision:

To approve this project subject to meeting the below two conditions:

1. A delivery plan must be produced for practical work, consultation and planning that specifies deliverables, location and timescales as well as relationships to other related strands of work and justification of identified priorities.
2. A management and maintenance plan must be produced that shows commitment to sustaining the practical outcomes into the future.

For: 9

Against: 0

Abstained: 0

Haymaking Collective

Presented by Rachel Cooper

Summary of application

To provide a small farmer collective, consisting of three farms, with the equipment to make their own small bale hay, so that they don't have to rely on contractors to gather it in. The farmer group will then be able to produce and collect hay independently during the weather window.

Declarations of interest:

None.

Discussion points:

- The Panel asked if all of the farms are committed to Plantlife going forward. It was confirmed that two of the three farms are fully committed, and the third farm is interested in joining.
- There was concern that the group are late in the season for haymaking, and if they were to be granted this machinery then this is the way they are committed to farming, which is a high risk.
- What happens if there is a tight weather window, and all three farmers want to use the machinery on the same day?
- The Panel flagged that some contractors do deal with smaller landholdings and specialise in this. Could the applicant not approach a contractor that specialises in small landholdings?
- The panel felt strongly that this machinery restricts the applicant and doesn't allow them with any flexibility once this machinery is being purchased. The machinery being requested is specialised, if they decide not to make hay down the line then the items being requested will no longer be used. Is this value for money?
- What will the hay will be used for? The FiPL team confirmed that it will feed two of the farmer's stock.
- It was confirmed that FiPL cannot fund standard agricultural vehicles, which is why this particular trailer was chosen.
- The Panel requested further information regarding where the machinery will be stored and who will maintain it. The FiPL team confirmed that this will be finalised in the applicant's collaboration agreement. But as it stands, it will be stored on one of the 3 farms - there is already a plan in place for this despite not having an agreement signed.
- The Panel suggested that the applicant could apply to CS and get a yearly CS payment for species rich hay meadow payments instead.
- The FiPL team need to check that they have a tractor that will be able to tow these items of machinery. The Panel expressed concern that this is a lot of money for not a large amount of land.
- The Panel questioned whether we could we fund this at 50% due to the high risk of the project, and the small size of the combined land holding. However, the FiPL team had concerns that this would be too low for a collaborative project, we would need to ensure we are consistent and in line with Defra guidance for shared use of items. Therefore, this project should be funded at 80% if the machinery is being shared.
- The Panel discussed whether the applicant could perhaps be granted the more flexible items of machinery (the mower, and the hay turner). These items are more flexible, and so the collective would not be restricted to just hay making.

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%	6	1.2
Value for Money - 20%	8	1.6
Total	28	6.8

Decision:

A. Vote on this project as it stands:

For: 3

Against: 3

Abstained: 3

To decline this project as it stands.

B. Vote on just the flexible items, for cutting, turning and baling (the mower and hay turner) at 80%.

For: 9

Against: 0

Abstained: 0

To approve this project subject to meeting the below three conditions:

1. The applicant must only be awarded the more flexible machinery, which will give them more flexibility regarding their crop collection.
2. The applicant must confirm they have a tractor that will be able to tow these items of machinery.
3. A collaboration agreement must be signed by all members of the collective, ahead of any items being purchased.

AOB:

- FiPL team to ask applicants where they are with their CS schemes when they approach us, and to let LAP know when presenting.
- FiPL team to organise a site visit for the Panel in September/October.

Date of next meeting: August 28th 2024, Parke