

Dartmoor Farming in Protected Landscapes

Local Assessment Panel

Wednesday 27th September 2023, 11:00am, Parke

Attending:

Russell Ashford (Chair), Alison Clish-Green, John Howell, Peter Harper, James Sharpe, Ann Willcocks, Will Dracup, Dan Alford, Emma Jones

Dartmoor staff attending:

Simon Pryor, Bea Dunscombe

Apologies:

Sarah Blyth (Emma Jones attending as substitute), Layland Branfield (Ann attending as substitute), Eamon Crowe

Applications over 10k

Lower Hapstead 2

Presented by Simon Pryor

Summary of application:

A revised application to the applicant's first submission, initially presented to the Panel in July 2023. This project aims to facilitate mob grazing of rare breed livestock to improve the biodiversity on the farm, and host educational visits for children so that they can learn about farming in Dartmoor.

Declarations of interest:

Russell Ashford declared a conflict of interest; he is a neighbouring farmer and so abstained from discussions and voting. Will Dracup substituted Russell as chair for the duration of this application.

Discussion points:

The Panel queried the native breeds at risk payment. This CS option can only be applied to specific livestock numbers on certain parcels of land, and there can be certain stocking rates for this supplement. Is this number of livestock sufficient to justify payment on the whole farm? Is it confirmed that the applicant's cattle are registered pedigree? For this to be paid under CS the applicant must be in Higher Tier, it must be linked to the specific fields and the cattle need ear tags and proof of pedigree registration. It was explained that the applicant already has low input grassland but not species rich grassland on most of the farm, and gets a cattle grazing supplement for 3 ha of land – where rare breeds supplement can't be paid.

The applicant has confirmed that he has completed organic conversion and is now certified. The Panel recommended that a certificate would need to be obtained ahead of an Agreement for this element of the application.

It was suggested that the applicant could explore the Farm Technology and Equipment Fund for the electric fencing, which may only provide 30 - 40% of the cost of such equipment. This option has been discussed with the applicant, but the packages of equipment are not well matched to the needs of this small farm.

Simon explained that the electric fencing was to be used to make some individual field boundaries stock proof, and to sub-divide the large fields to achieve the small paddocks needed for mob grazing. There was a discussion about the legacy of electric fencing. Is there an obligation on the applicant to maintain such equipment for 5 years from purchase – and to replace any lost or damaged items? Proper long-lasting fencing would be more suitable and would ensure longevity for the project. It was reasoned that the applicant’s fencing and gateways have been removed from the application, as was requested in our last panel meeting, and so perhaps the electric fencing could be justified.

There was a query about the tenancy timeline, and whether this project and agreement would outdate their tenancy on the Farm?

The Panel questioned the applicant’s previous educational visits, did they go successfully? Do we have evidence of this? One member of the Panel expressed strong support for this type of outreach work with disadvantaged children. But the Panel felt we will need better evidence for allocating more funds for this activity. They recommended using the standard CS Form for claiming ED1 payments, which prompts for all the evidence needed.

A discussion about why the applicant is requesting mobile water systems and not permanent troughs - which would have more long-term benefits to the farm. It was explained that the applicant wanted flexibility with grazing so mobile water troughs could be used in fields that are being sub-divided into paddocks. The Panel queried whether these should be paid at an 80% intervention rate, but were reminded that previous applications were paid at 80%, and there is a need to show consistency.

The Panel commended the applicant for coming back to us with revised applications, as this shows that they are keen to meet FiPL outcomes. But it was suggested that we fund the electric fencing and water troughs at an 80% intervention rate, fund educational visits as requested but only subject to a full set of evidence for each visit, and then leave them to claim under CS for the other elements.

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%	6	1.2
Sustainability / legacy of projects - 20%	6	1.2
Value for Money - 20%	8	1.6
Total	32	8

Decision:

The Panel divided the application into three parts in order to vote on the different elements of this project:

1. Educational visits:

Condition(s): Evidence of ED1s when claiming i.e. data capture form, photographic evidence, date of visits, numbers of people, content/activity and participant feedback

For: 8

Against: 0

Abstained: 1

2. Native breeds at risk supplement:

Condition(s): None

For: 1

Against: 7

Abstained: 1

3. Electric fencing, posts and wire

Condition(s): Subdividing fields is acceptable, but patching up fences is not. The applicant must have a maintenance agreement in place to say that they will maintain this equipment for the length of the FiPL Agreement. If the items get damaged, the applicant must replace themselves.

For: 7

Against: 1

Abstained: 1

To approve the educational visits, and the electric fencing, posts and wire, based on the above conditions. The Native breeds at risk supplement was not approved.

Runnage 2

Presented by James Sharpe

Summary of application:

This project aims to fence and plant up areas of new and existing hedging and woodland. The applicant plans to diversify, and gap fill existing hedgerows, using a native mix of plants. They also plan to create two small copses of native broadleaf and fruiting trees. These features together will form a series of shelterbelts and windbreaks across the farm.

Declarations of interest:

Members of the Panel flagged that they know this applicant because they are a farmer on Dartmoor, the applicant is also a part of the Central Dartmoor Farmers Cluster CIC. However, it was decided that this would not need to be declared as a conflict of interest.

Discussion points:

The Panel queried the CS rates used for the hedgerow work, and whether they are correct for this activity. It was explained that the gapping up areas are too small, and so the applicant is not

including this as a costed item, and so they will complete this work themselves. However, it was agreed that clarity was needed with regards to the BN11 rated elements. The FiPL team confirmed that this was raised verbally with the applicant, but they were assured that this was not a mistake. The Panel requested a site visit for this project so that we can make sure that the right CS rates have been used for each activity.

Clarity was requested with regards to connectivity – does the woodland join the hedgerow? A site visit would help confirm this.

The Panel also queried what hedging and banking is on site at the moment. Is it a bank or a stone-faced wall? What is the state of the hedgerow? Are there any traditional hedge laying techniques coming into place in this project, because this would ensure longevity. It was confirmed that this would be confirmed after a site visit.

The Panel commended the 20% contribution from other sources. This shows good tenant/landlord collaboration. However, could they look elsewhere for free trees obtained by donation? E.g. Moor Trees.

There was a discussion regarding access – does this project impact existing bridleways/public rights of way? It was confirmed that these are not showing on a map as a right of way, so perhaps this is not an issue. The FiPL team were unable to confirm this but will speak to colleagues in Access and Recreation.

There was uncertainty regarding the success of this project. We will need to seek out evidence, how do we know that these whips will thrive? It was agreed that it would be good to find out what trees would survive in this area as it is quite high up – can we request results?

The Panel questioned the location of the hedgerows and the trees. They requested more information about the state of these two areas currently – is this the right place to be planting trees? Have they sought out advice?

The Panel discussed the lack of tree protection in this application. There is no mention of tree guards. Deer will certainly eat the whips, and therefore we need to ensure that they have the best chance of survival - this might mean deer fencing. Could we have clarity, clearer map, site visit 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%	8	1.6
Total	32	8

Conditions:

- FiPL Officers to conduct a site visit to make sure that the right CS rates are being used for each activity.
- FiPL Officers to come to next LAP meeting with more clarity and confirmation of their proposal (with photographic evidence).

- This application should come back to the Panel in November for consideration.

Decision:

For: 9

Against: 0

Abstained: 0

The application should come back to the Panel for consideration in November, with the information outlined in the above conditions.

Higher Hurston

Presented by Simon Pryor

Summary of application:

Restoration of the historic corn ditch boundary where Higher Hurston Farm meets Chagford Common, and protection of, and improved connectivity between, existing and potential Marsh Fritillary wetland habitat. Simon explained that unusually he hadn't visited this farm, as after an initial telephone discussion the applicant had completed the whole application without further input. We have therefore not been able to verify things on the ground.

Declarations of interest:

None.

Discussion points:

The Panel questioned whether corn ditches alongside commons are eligible under CS, and if this could be a capital item? It was assumed that the cornditch was not owned by the owner of the Common, and we will need better evidence of the actual location and route of the cornditch, as the map could be misleading.

It was agreed that clarity was needed over whether farm boundaries are allowed – FiPL officer to check with NE. It was also flagged that Historic England, or a DNPA Archaeologist should be notified of this project as it could be classed as it to ensure it's historic interest is being conserved. The FiPL team confirmed that we would usually confirm corn ditch work with our Archaeology team ahead of approval.

The justification for Difficult Site Supplement was questioned. We need evidence to determine what proportion of the length actually merits this supplement, which is only paid in exceptional circumstances.

There was a query regarding Access – Does this project impact the nearby Bridleway, part of the Two Moors Way, and the Mariners Way? It was confirmed that the FiPL team would consult our Access and Recreation colleagues about this.

The Panel asked for verification as to whether the granite gateposts are new, or if they are reinstating existing but fallen granite gateposts.

It was requested that the applicant needs to take photographs of before and after each activity, e.g all gateways, hedgerows etc. So that we can understand the state of everything better.

The Panel also requested that the FiPL team explore a new FiPL application guideline form for submissions, providing tick boxes for applicants so that all elements of a submission are present ahead of a LAP meeting.

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%	6	1.2
Sustainability / legacy of projects - 20%	8	1.6
Value for Money - 20%	8	1.6
Total	30	7.6

Conditions:

- The FiPL team to verify the difficult site supplement.
- To obtain more information about the baseline surveys that have already been carried out.
- To obtain photographs and grid references (Magic Map preferable) of the location of all the gateways and earth banks.
- More information is required about the other schemes the applicant is in and confirm that work is compatible and is not being double funded.
- To check with the owner of the common (which could be Duchy) about the boundary work.
- To obtain information from Butterfly conservation information (Jenny Plackett?).
- The FiPL team to check with DNPA Archaeologists about the corn ditch, and to confirm its location and work needed to protect it.
- To run the application by Access and recreation officers to get their input as to whether the work is justified and will benefit users of the paths.
- To bring a revised application with all this clarification and evidence back to LAP in November for re-consideration.

Decision:

In favour: All

Against: 0

Abstained: 0

The application should come back to the Panel for consideration in November, with the information outlined in the above conditions.

White Wood Management

Presented by James Sharpe

Summary of application:

White Wood Management is a Dartmoor based woodland conservation specialist and supplier of locally sourced high-quality timber. This project aims to provide sawmilling equipment to continue the supply of timber into the South West Peatland Partnership 'Mires' project and support the economic management of many Dartmoor Woodlands.

Declarations of interest:

None.

Discussion points:

The Panel initially questioned how an applicant can apply for FiPL funding from multiple Landscapes. If this application was submitted solely for Dartmoor, would this then reserve this piece of machinery for Dartmoor only, and not to Exmoor or Bodmin?

A query as to whether there is enough of a benefit within Dartmoor to warrant a 50% grant?

The Panel discussed how this application fits into FiPL as a whole - does the applicant own all of the land in the application? There is a lot of land included - do we have written consent from all landowners/managers. It was reasoned that it would be difficult to confirm this because the applicant is a contractor, and his clients will be unpredictable.

Concern was raised over management control of the land being part of the FiPL criteria. The FiPL team confirmed that applications can also be accepted from organisations and individuals delivering projects which are in support of the programme outcomes and the relevant Protected Landscape Management Plan/Priorities, as long as they are applying in collaboration with a farmer or land manager. Therefore, the FiPL team accepted that we should seek written confirmation of correspondence with woodland owners.

Concern regarding whether there is a contract with the Woodland Trust that will endorse this application for the next 5 years? We will need to have written permission from them, and if the applicant has a long-standing contract with the Woodland Trust, this might be quite open ended?

It was suggested that we could seek written endorsement from the group that the applicant manages at Fingle Wood?

The Panel commented on how we balance out opportunities for others - by funding one piece of machinery for one individual, does this create less opportunities for others to apply?

Comment regarding competing timber prices. SWPP are the end user of this project, however there was concern about timber prices – are we giving this individual help to provide cheaper timber to SWPP, which will stop others from having an opportunity at the benefit of the woodland trust? Have we thought about the impact this will have on other private businesses?

The Panel commended the applicant for this application, it was agreed that it is nice to see a different proposal - it is adding value to the price of timber, it is helping the local economy, it is encouraging this positive activity.

The Panel discussed the promotion of this service. Could we ask the applicant to advertise and promote his services, not only in woodland, but also on farms. It was confirmed that there is certainly a demand for this - what is the minimum viable volume of timber that the applicant would work for, rather than the vast amounts he deals with for SWPP. How far does his service go? The

Panel agreed that this is a good concept, but there is a bigger market out there – not just through WT & SWPP. How versatile is this project?

Clarification was requested regarding how much of the applicant’s time is committed to sawmilling for the WT? How is his time even split between Landscapes?

The FiPL team suggested not only to lead the project, but to fund the project in its entirety, rather than between Landscapes. We confirmed that we fund based on benefit, and whether the benefit is sufficient to the cost?

Alternatively, we could fund this at 50%, and reserve it only for woodland on Dartmoor woodland? Might it be too complicated across multiple Landscapes.

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

Conditions:

- We need to see evidence that the applicant cannot get this piece of machinery with a moulding saw elsewhere.
- The applicant must advertise and promote his services within the farming community & not just within SWPP & WT.
- Where possible, the machinery is used on Dartmoor, and Dartmoor is prioritised.
- We must obtain written approval from Exmoor and Bodmin for the applicant’s plans.
- For DNPA to fund this project at the full 50% intervention rate, instead of through other PLS.

Decision:

For: 9

Against: 0

Abstained: 0

To approve subject to the above conditions.

Great Gnats Head

Presented by Bea Dunscombe. Emma Jones responded to some initial questions from members of the panel and then left the meeting.

Summary of application:

No-fence grazing technology for cattle grazing at Great Gnats Head. This project aims to control where 90 cows graze, partly to help with peat restoration work in this area of the common, with support from the local grazier.

Declarations of interest:

Members of the Panel flagged that they know the grazier involved in this application because they are a farmer 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.

Emma Jones declared a conflict of interest; she works for the National Trust and applied for this project, and she therefore left the meeting room after responding to some initial questions.

Discussion points:

It was clarified that this project will benefit the wider grazing pressures in the surrounding area. It was also confirmed that the collars would be owned by the National Trust - if the grazier decides not to use the collars down the line they will still be owned and maintained by NT, who will look elsewhere for cattle to use in a trial.

It was also clarified that that this is a pilot, the applicant is keen to learn about using the collars. This has been trialled by NT elsewhere, but this will be the first No-fence trial for NT on Dartmoor

The Panel questioned whether 90 collars were needed for 90 cows. It was confirmed that this is not necessarily the case, but a high percentage would need to be collared.

The Panel also requested some form of demonstration event/education day from NT to show people what they are doing on the common and share the successes of the collars in relation to grazing on the moor and peat restoration.

There was a query over what other grazing rights there are on this common, and whether they are for cattle/sheep/ponies?

Members of the Panel felt that by controlling cattle, you are controlling sheep, as the sheep will follow the cattle. Could this have a greater impact on the common?

There is a real risk that if one grazier's cattle are excluded from an area by the collars, other cattle belonging to other graziers will simply move in to graze that 'protected' area. So, it was suggested that this could be a much bigger application - could it be for the whole common (e.g. 200 collars), rather than selecting one grazier.

There needs to be clarity about the benefits to each individual grazier, and the benefits to the landowner.

There was Agreement amongst the Panel that the number of days estimated for training the cows with this technology was more than would be necessary.

Overall, the Panel were supportive of the concept, but felt it needed firming up. It was agreed that the application needs to come from the individual who owns or has management control of the livestock on the land. There is animal welfare involved in this, we need an experienced land manager/animal owner in control of the software and grazing pattern on this common. We have already set this precedent with other applications, and this livestock control should not come from the landlord i.e. NT.

Previous No-fence applications have been funded at 80%, as pilots. The FiPL team asked to explore what intervention rate other Landscapes are using for No-fence collars, though there remains flexibility on what level we award on Dartmoor. 80% funding could be justified for any cattle on commons because grazing such areas always involves collaboration.

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

Conditions:

- The application should come from the owner(s) of the cattle so that they have direct ownership of the collars on the common, with NT endorsing and supporting this application.
- Applicant should be encouraged to approach other commoners grazing this area to explore whether they want to be part of this project.
- The application should include demonstration days to show the benefits of using the collars.
- An application from graziers who are collaborating could be eligible for 80% funding. But significant wider public/wider benefit is encouraged.
- The FiPL team to bring a revised application – from the grazier(s) - to LAP in November incorporating these amendments.

Decision:

For: 8 (*Emma Jones had not attended this part of the meeting, and Peter Harper also had to leave the meeting ahead of voting*)

Against: 0

Abstained: 0

The application should come back to the Panel for consideration in November, with the amendments outlined in the above conditions.

AOBs

- New Panel member update
- Delamore Home Farm query
- FiPL applications that have not been progressed – FiPL team to share with LAP in due course.
- FiPL Panel requested ‘before’ photographs of proposed work to be included in their initial application. FiPL team agreed to this.

Date of next LAP meeting: November 8th, 11am at Parke