

Pony Action Group Meeting

Wednesday 5 June 2019

18:30 at East Dart hotel, Postbridge

Present

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)
Neil Cole	Dartmoor Commoners Council DaCC)
John Shears (JS)	Dartmoor Hill Pony Association (DHPA)
Mary Alford (MA)	Dartmoor Hill Pony Association (DHPA)
Rob Steemson (RS)	Dartmoor National Park Authority (DNPA)
Sue Hutchings	Independent

RS Chairman and minute taker

1 Apologies

Tom Stratton (TS), Claire Stanton (CS), Viv Brown (VB), Elizabeth Newbould Young (ENY),

2 Minutes of last meeting & matters arising

All agreed the minutes of last meeting.

CF was now being supported by KM in regard ongoing darting project.

3 Dartmoor Commoners Council – submitted report

Main issue to report is the pony sale at Chagford with issues of trying to keep the sale running for the benefit of all pony keepers who wish to sell.

NC then reported that via DEFRA CF was given the needed support regarding the sale for all types of ponies. PF mentioned a DaCC report needs to be requested from their office in the future. DaCC had also written to Laura Monkman at DEFRA regarding pony issues.

JS mentioned that Chair of DaCC had met Lord Gardiner recently and that it had been said that pony sale must go via DaCC and not to use DHPA. PF said that the DaCC pony working group were working the sale arrangements up, not the full DaCC. The working group would be reporting back soon on progress and were also working closely with the New Forest pony keepers.

4 Dartmoor Pony Society – submitted report

We are currently trying to be very pro-active in both increasing our membership and promoting the benefits of the Dartmoor Pony as a child's pony. Pizwell Farm is taking part in Open Farm Sunday on June 9th and providing the facilities to have ponies on view. There will be some local's farmer/breeders who can talk to the public

and answer all their questions. We strongly believe we should be delivering a positive statement. Recent sales have been positive

5 Natural England – no submitted report

EC had concerns about the report submitted by Joss Hibbs particularly in regard to the language involved and various accusations.

Natural England had written to all Commoners Associations in regard to numbers of ponies for RPA data. A few years ago pony numbers across 27,000 hectares was 1079, now across 23,000 hectares there are 920 ponies. This now needs to be linked to DaCC data base. Ponies are highly regarded as a major conservation tool in new schemes as are seen as a public good.

SM thanked EC for this work.

6 Dartmoor Pony Heritage Trust – submitted report

We continue to have enquiries for ponies, handle them for our pony keepers and organise sales. Four ponies have recently gone to Germany, for example; and we achieve higher prices, even if they are not pedigree. We also work with the DPS. We have instigated another round of grants for our pony keepers to support them with herd management and welfare and, as requested by them, we will host a 'showcase day' on July 14th.

The conservation grazing project is showing worthwhile results to help convince NE of the value of ponies as conservation grazers. We look forward to the presentation of the results with support from the assessing professor from Plymouth University as the chosen annual Research Project for the Dartmoor Society on November 15th.

Another really positive development for the charity is Equine Assisted Qualification (EAQ) accreditation. We have virtually covered the necessary requirements to become a recognised 'good' centre and with added training and consolidation will work to become an 'outstanding' centre.

We were also fortunate to be a beneficiary of the Devon Left Right Challenge, which took place on May 11th and was organised by Alex Graeme of Unique Devon Tours, partnering with 'We Love England'. The donations were shared with The Donkey Sanctuary.

7 Dartmoor Pony Moorland Scheme – no submitted report

SM mentioned that two newtakes with stallions were operating this year.

8 Dartmoor Hill Pony Association – no submitted report

JS apologised for no report. Work was continuing on getting a pony sale at Chagford in October.

9 Dartmoor Livestock Protection Society – submitted report

Road Traffic Accidents (RTAs)

January to date there have been 48 RTAs including 11 ponies killed and 8 ponies injured.

The first 2019 foal to be involved in a road accident was hit on Saturday night 11th May and died as a result.

A pony was killed by an army vehicle on the service road at Long Plantation.

We use every opportunity to raise awareness of animal deaths on unfenced roads. The top speed recorded by the Sharpitor speed monitor was 114 mph.

General

Mares are foaling now and in most cases all has been well. At our request, a number of very plain mares have been taken off and others are being monitored.

MS updated meeting in regard to general concerns about increasing vehicle speeds and they continue to press Police for more cameras etc whilst KM said the public do not see the incidents and damage.

10 Dartmoor National Park Authority – submitted report

We are still having meetings with Devon County Council and Highways Agency in 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 have been designed.

The Widecombe Primary School poster regarding pony feeding was distributed across the moor over the summer as part of our public awareness campaign and got good media coverage.

11 AOB – things brought to Chairs attention

- a. There was concern that some hill ponies that went to Germany had ended up in a rescue centre? MA pointed out to SM that it was an age old tradition that ponies were transported to Europe & that SM mother was one of the largest exporters in her time, SM accusations were unfounded. MA also commented that once a pony is sold it's no business of anyone to where the pony goes.
- b. Concern regarding recent literature in a Sunday Telegraph article about Defra and Duchy and another in the DPA magazine which contained negative and incorrect comments about ponies. There had also been a positive article in the Farmers Weekly. PAG members were reminded that in the Terms of Reference and in the Action Plan Objective 3 represented organisations are requested to work together about all types of ponies and their role on Dartmoor.
- c. Question regarding is Joss Hibbs work approved by DHPA Committee or is she independent? MA said Joss was working independently and her work is not officially ratified by DHPA Committee although there was an element of support. The work done cannot be amended and will probably not be withdrawn.
- d. Potential press release – there did not appear to be any merit at present in trying to agree a PAG press release.
- e. Joss Hibbs would like to attend a meeting and update on her work – PAG agreed to this and came up with four potential dates at end of June and early July.

12 Date and venue of next meeting

To be arranged asap so Joss can speak if not wait until normal November meeting

