



## Dartmoor Farming in Protected Landscapes

### **Minutes of Meeting of the Local Assessment Panel on Wednesday, 17<sup>th</sup> Aug 2022, 11am-3pm at DNPA Head Office, Parke**

#### **1) Welcome and Apologies**

##### **Attending:**

John Howell, Russell Ashford (Chair), Layland Branfield, Dan Alford, Martin Perryman, Helen Booker, James Sharpe, Peter Harper, Simon Pryor (FiPL Advisor presenting on behalf of FiPL team), David Attwell (presenting Eggworthy Farm application via Teams link and joining for that part of the meeting only).

##### **Apologies:**

Eamon Crowe (Natural England), Will Dracup (DNPA Member), Mark Walker (Dartmoor LAF), Paul Dean (RPA, non-voting member).

#### **2) FiPL Team Update**

The Panel had an informal discussion around the best value FiPL can provide for Dartmoor's farming community. Points raised were uncertainty around future Defra funding, options for rollover of existing agreements, number of different Defra funding offers over £10k and how we can engage with those not benefiting from any agreements currently

#### **3) Applications under £5k – Verbal Update**

JS gave verbal account of applications below threshold. Few applications at this level currently. We do have requests from Challacombe Farm and Greenland, deferred at last meeting, to have access to <£5k applications for time limited project elements, this is an officer level grant decision but JS sought Panel approval as relate to larger applications they made decision on.

AGREED – to allow low level funding for time limited elements pending re-presentation of main applications later this year.

JS gave update on Kirkside where applicant has had approval (team decision) ~£750 additional funding on existing application to pay for ecologist time to strengthen evidence of need (nature outcomes) on second submission (water meadows) deferred at the last meeting, this need for evidence was one of the main reasons for deferral.

*Formal meeting starts*

#### **4) Approval of previous meeting notes**

To be circulated to members with feedback on any required amendments within two weeks of circulation date.

Request from members that notes from meetings are circulated shortly after the meeting, rather than for approval at the following meeting (six weeks later).

AGREED - draft notes are to be circulated within two weeks of meeting. Members to respond with corrections within two weeks of receipt, after which time meeting notes will become accepted version.

#### **Applications over £5k**

##### **Declarations of interest**

NB These were requested at the start of each application item but are summarised here:

Richard Glanville ("RG"), recently appointed DNPA Member for Parish Councils. RG is the landowner of Eggworthy Farm.

Peter Harper ("PH") declared also being DNPA Member but the Panel felt no material interest, so PH to participate as usual.

##### **Butterbrook :**

John Howell ("JH"), - JH has no material or specific interest in the application but knows the farmers well and watercourse shared between applicant and JH land. Details were shared about exact nature and location of the shared watercourse and Panel could see no advantage to JH from this application, JH to participate as normal.

##### **Dartmoor-wide Fire Plan :**

Layland Branfield ("LB") & Russell Ashford ("RA") These two LAP Members also sit on Commoners' Council. Considered no material interest, this is a proposal for collating fire plans across the whole of the NP with multiple stakeholders, Commoners' Council leading on behalf of Fire Partnership. Material benefits are likely to be considered at second phase of this project.

##### **Dartmoor Hill Ponies :**

Since this potentially affects all Commons most members have an interest, but no-one has any material or conflict of interest. Dan Alford I ("DanA") made the Panel aware of the involvement other members of his family have in DHPA. Agreed that all members could participate and vote.

#### **5) Eggworthy Farm, Walkhampton**

##### **Presentation and Provisional Scoring**

Presentation by David Attwell ("David A").

Application for part of the farm, to restore corn ditch, on the edge of Walkhampton Common to restore boundary, also prehistoric monument.

Therefore, outcomes for landscape and cultural heritage, also stock fencing to protect heritage assets.

Woodland trust and Our Upland Commons putting resource in, includes training in heritage skills and volunteering.

The farmer and landowner is concerned about succession and has recently let the farm to a young tenant.

Need for Historic England (HE) consent, Andy Crabb (DNPA/HE Archaeologist) currently liaising with HE on applicants' behalf.

David A presented map and images relating to the project.

### **Questions and Discussion**

Is the boundary along the old railway line?

DavidA stated that the condition of that boundary is ok and not included in this application.

Fencing of corn ditch different, fence inside and top wire? Should there not be fencing outside, as well as inside, rather than installing a top wire?

Can be difficult to top wire effectively. Panel views shared, also erosion risk at base of wall.

Expenditure of £15k on the wall would justify additional pound (£) per metre to protect the asset more effectively. Increase would be a few hundred pounds estimate - 'belt and braces' approach justified on this important heritage feature.

Question why increase in biodiversity claimed :

DavidA's experience is that animals in wall include shrew, lizard, slow worm as well as others, wall is habitat. Boundary also assists habitat management, no doubt wall can be considered valuable habitat addition to refugia/mosaic, possibly not increase in biodiversity

### **Recommendation(s) and vote(s)**

ACTION – DavidA to give feedback to applicant and LB to look at wall once work completed. 20m expected to be restored from the training and volunteering walling course. New tenant will also join course.

Most of wall will be undertaken by contractor

### **Confirmation of decision and conditions**

Vote to approve application, 8 For.

## **6) Delamore Home Farm, Cornwood**

### **Presentation and provisional Scoring**

Presentation by Simon Pryor ("SP")

Application from a young local couple, who have just taken on the tenancy of the Home Farm of Delamore Estate. Showed images of hedgerow in varying conditions, derelict gateways, remnants of old parkland and rush pasture. Map-based plan for land management including herbal leys, rush pasture and low input grassland.

Question about entry to CS mid-tier, applicant interested in this but only has 5-year tenancy and would like to improve condition of land now while waiting for cs to open. A FiPL grant now would give them annual payments from the beginning of the tenancy and enable them to do all the capital improvements to get the farm into a 'good place' to secure a good deal under ELM. And to demonstrate their commitment to the landowner. Costings based on CS rates. Mix of capital items and revenue payments. Will want a second FiPL application for yard and buildings and possibly expanding herbal ley. SP gave account of his expanded approach to scoring, incorporating minor changes introduced by Defra, using different presentation than previously. Framework for this scoring system circulated to the panel.

### **Questions and Discussion**

Good scheme

Tenant/landowner arrangement, esp. Length of tenancy. Where do tenant rights stand in this, landlord gaining a lot of improvement to the site for a short-term agreement. Where is

the guarantee of sustained benefit? If landlord changed to a tenant with less positive attitude to management, benefits would reduce.

Fencing still there and sustaining benefits (conserving hedgerow) regardless of tenant, FiPL capital items must be maintained for minimum 5yrs.

What about landlord contributing? Grant will not cover full cost of the work at CS rates. Applicant needs to show good tenancy in order to establish good future relations

Concern over funding things that could be supported through CS and if this was CS funding landlord would also need to sign agreement.

SP thinks good family relationship between tenant and landowner, could go back to applicant and ask for some commitment to maintain benefits. Landowner is Delamore Estate. Under CS herbal ley would require soil testing.

Support and accept that FiPL is appropriate as if done under CS funding would not be available until 2024. But there is a lot of fencing and hedgerow – could some of it be funded under the Hedgerow and Boundary Capital scheme? Can Panel approve on condition landlord sign agreement and add soil testing?

Question about use and condition of Cornwood Common, which has been over-grazed, and would have been useful to have information on the condition of the common. But agreed that the state of the common is an issue that the Panel shouldn't get involved in because firstly it could set a precedent, and secondly it would be very difficult to determine whether the applicant's livestock were responsible for any change in condition of the common. Noted that there may be an unintended error in application relating to 'over wintering'.

### **Recommendations and Vote**

FiPL quick and application appropriate, should be supported, accept the point about going for CS asap, but fencing and gates important now.

Panel also need to consider role for FiPL in supporting community at this time and encouraging other applications, support for young farmers specific aim in National Park Partnership Plan.

Could add condition to look at CS mid-tier for next year.

'Yes' ticked in receiving money from other sources, SP thinks error. Need to check JF confirmed we send a due diligence check to RPA regarding other funding anyway.

Comment re rabbit fencing but confirmed this is just for woodland, which adjoins but not part of the farm tenancy.

### **Confirmation of Decision and Conditions**

Vote: approve subject to landowner co-signing agreement and committing to maintain for at least five years. 7 For 1 Against

FiPL Team to check and resolve the apparent error in the application.

## **7) Butterbrook House Farm, Harford**

### **Presentation and provisional scoring**

SP gave verbal presentation of project.

Applicant rears pedigree sheep and Hereford Cattle; he is Chair of Harford Common Association, and the sheep spend most of their lives on the Common.

### **Questions and Discussion**

Recommendation is to approve but Panel to consider the fact that the applicant asked for 80% of costs of materials and labour for some of the work on the leat and water supply.

Question about details of water storage, there are three tanks, first two are for sediment removal and third houses pump, needs 3m head.

Could be considered to have benefit to neighbour below and beyond through improvements to leat, suggest better score for collaboration but depending on arrangement for upkeep of

leat. Is there potential for neighbours to contribute to the costs? Although common arrangement is that landowners are responsible for sections of leat on their own land. Clarification provided that leat runs into closed pipe further down and then into a ditch which supplies number of other sources including a trough outside church. Consider there is no restriction to off take leat in the area.

Ownership of intake - three tanks all on applicant's land, but the actual take off from the leat is just outside their boundary. Rises on the common but runs into applicant's land within a few hundred meters. Q over access for maintenance and security of access to source. May need confirmation from neighbouring landowner that project is agreed, although doesn't require any work on neighbours' land.

Q over condition of the wood pasture as there is a lot of gorse, scrub and trees cover.

Bracken is vigorous and dominating. .

Difference between wood pasture and scrub pasture. Depends on outcomes sought, request is for CS based revenue payment. Applicant wants to reduce bracken significantly, asking for management rate not restoration rate of CS grants, there are already different age class trees including natural regen (thorn, rowan, oak and sycamore). Hawthorn regeneration is vigorous in this area,

Applicant flexible regarding location of scrape, concern that if too many trees nearby it wouldn't get snipe but would be good dragonflies, amphibians and host of other wildlife, scrape receives water from the system so likely to stay wet (although seasonal ponds have high wildlife value), water running well now even in dry season. Scrape will receive water continuously, maybe look at profile of scrape to provide variation of depth and permanence (seasonal drying reduces colonisation by fish which improves habitat for inverts and amphibian breeding). Scrape integral part of water system, and ensures overflow from water pump returns to the leat and/or Butterbrook. Possible benefit to curlew project, issue would be tree cover. Discussion over design of watering system for number of animals. Consensus would work well.

If CS rates then needs to be minimum CS specification. For both scrape and troughs. Recognised that in theory much of this could be funded under CS, but the fact that this will not be 'live' until 2024 means FiPL support is justified now in order to prevent habitats declining.

Pump could be funded at 50%? But this is a permanent installation of fixed equipment and not the sort of mobile machinery considered previously to be funded at max 50%.

This kind of leat, hydraulic pump and water supply system could be a good model to demonstrate the potential benefits on other farms on Dartmoor, especially in drier seasons.

### **Recommendation(s) and vote(s)**

Applicant has good track record in other practical work, good demo project. Support as even if it could be funded through CS, it would not provide funding until 2024. Could it be funded through upstream thinking? Butterbrook sub catchment of the Erme, but this part of the catchment is not a high priority for water quality, so funding unlikely to be available.

### **Confirmation of Decision and Conditions**

Vote - subject to conditions 8 For

To follow up and confirm:

Scrape location and outcomes

Possibility of a contribution from Neighbours and eligibility for funding from Upstream

Thinking partnership?

## **8) Commoners Council - Fire Plan**

## **Presentation and Provisional Scoring**

JS gave verbal presentation (and has helped the CC draft this application)

## **Questions and Discussion**

Capacity for stakeholder consultation thought to be inadequate, think more like 20days work rather than 5.

Approve in principle, subject to more detailed proposal.

Also consider SWW and FC as partners in this project (and may contribute financially)

Needs to be consistent to RPA requirements for this work.

Need to list all stakeholders, the number could be high. If project not engaged sufficient consultees in the beginning, likely to lead to problems later.

In October local association CC meeting.

£2700 approved to check requirements and map what we have, revise and expand rest of proposed exercise and come back with more detailed proposal.

Need to include the newtakes

How often does it need to be updated?

Include access points, crossings etc, JS confirmed list of attributes required to be mapped has been drafted.

Sustainability will be critical in the second phase, how will information remain updated?

Fully support this initiative and shouldn't cause dual funding issues across Agri-Environmental scheme as Commons who have their own vegetation management plans.

Question raised whether costs are adequate? And whether it will achieve the outcomes needed.

## **Confirmation of Decision and Conditions**

Vote - 8 For

Proposal to vote on £2700 approved now, on condition revised proposal ready for September meeting.

## **9) Dartmoor Pony Heritage Association – Micro-chipping of Ponies**

### **Presentation and Provisional Scoring**

SP presented project

Request £61,970 grant for a two-year project cost of £61,970

### **Questions and Discussion**

This is a very different application to the normal: covering huge scale, collaboration across 50+ grazers, relates specifically to ponies. Plus, an unusual use of FiPL funding, and Dartmoor ponies are unique to Dartmoor. Elements of the proposal touch on the statutory and regulatory roles of other organisations and livestock management. We have therefore sought confirmation from Defra that the application is eligible for FiPL funding (not overlapping with these regulatory requirements which would make it ineligible). We have also undertaken work to ensure that the project represents additionality (to current provision of record keeping) and will deliver FiPL outcomes at a level that would achieve adequate scores and satisfy the other criteria value for money, ability to deliver, sustainability)..

At the time of the Panel meeting we are still awaiting confirmation from Defra that the application is eligible. The views of the Panel were sought to help the applicant and Dartmoor FiPL team progress the project as fully as possible in the meantime. Any decision to Support would have to be 'conditional' on Defra's approval.

No other Protected Landscapes have FiPL projects or applications relating to ponies on common land.

There are a number of stakeholders related to this proposal, the application is from one applicant DHPA and there is no partnership agreement with other stakeholders. The applicant seeks 100% funding intervention, in order to accept this rate we would need to establish no commercial gain. Ponies on Dartmoor are subject to high public interest and appreciation, the role of ponies as good conservation grazing animals is widely accepted. Ponies are not generally kept for profit, and most are never sold or leave the Commons, but a few are sold and may attract specific funding from ELM in the future. Many Commons Associations receive public funding for managing habitat through specified grazing regimes that include ponies, tho' it is usually for the Common Association to determine numbers.

Explained the proposal runs a careful line between additional benefits (which could be eligible under FiPL if they meet outcomes of the programme) and existing requirement to comply with regulations, (ponies and horses sold off the Commons must be chipped, but not if they remain on the Moor). The Commoners Council are required to, and do, keep records of stock on the moor, including the ponies. The applicant proposes their project is additional to the existing process and register, but will help pony owners to fulfil their legal duty to register ponies. The points relating to regulatory compliance and statutory duties are being considered by Defra who will advise us on eligibility of the application.

#### *Summary of Panel discussion*

Every pony owner needs to be chipped otherwise the full benefits of this project will not be realised (being ability to manage right ponies in the right place through identification and indisputable evidence of ownership).

In future anything registered as a grazing unit (for receipt of public funding) must be tagged, so there may be a future financial benefit for pony owners through ELM.

Panel members expressed concern about some of the costs included in the proposal, such as insurance. Needs confirmation that FiPL funds are used for additional benefit, not to support organisation's existing compliance needs.

Discussion over the practicality of reading a chip in the field, operator using reader would need to be very close to pony for this to work, so is a chip better than brand? Will a chip be sufficient in the future, i.e. is this proposal future proof?

Must be available to all pony owners, is DHPA a membership org? On what basis would this be offered to other pony owners and maintained in the future?

The application mentions on page 8 that this *"will also be invaluable to support personnel such as the Dartmoor Livestock Protection officer when dealing with fallen stock or sick/injured ponies"*.

Could the Database be held by Commons Council as they have statutory duty to maintain a 'register' of livestock on the Commons.

A lot of the proposal is based on evidence of historic needs, letters of support are old and more generic, rather than being specifically for this project.

DHPA not representative of all pony keepers and benefits can only be achieved if all pony keepers participate.

Commoners Council best placed to lead this work, has DHPA contacted CC to collaborate? Has DHPA sought collaboration with those managing grazing on the Commons and other pony groups? Project would be more credible if Commoners Council led (but issues relating to statutory and regulatory overlap would still stand).

Chipping will be undertaken at traditional drifts

SP clarified that chipping will be offered to all ponies that will remain on the Common, free of charge, irrespective of whether or not they are members of DHPA. Expected 100 or so foals each year to be chipped and returned to the Commons as replacements. The only ponies that will be excluded are those that owners want to sell and remove from the Common – and they will have to pay for chipping themselves. DHPA did not consider it necessary or appropriate to do as a joint application with other pony groups, as they have existing chipping processes. Have trialed on two commons (with a different but comparable project) and got 100% take up.

Value of ponies has increased recently, how do we take account of financial benefit for owners, especially if ponies sold off the Moor? Clarified that young ponies sold off the moor will not be eligible for chipping.

DPHT have had financial support via DNPA in the past (Sustainable Development Fund), whereas DHPA has not.

Ponies will be photographed and chipped.

Question over how chipping achieves FiPL outcomes, no dispute over value of ponies as valuable conservation grazing animals, but how does chipping directly relate to conservation grazing outcomes on the ground? This seems to be presented as a secondary outcome with the primary approach being livestock record keeping and management (which are not FiPL outcomes).

Should not be funded at 100%, seek contribution from pony keepers as they may benefit if ponies are recognised in the future as eligible for specific payments like cattle.

Differing views on charging for chipping, some members feeling this would be better and others questioning how well this project (and subsequent annual chipping) sits with the charitable status of the Association.

It would be better if chipping ponies was made compulsory in order to guarantee a high level of participation.

The Panel support need to work for ponies on the Moor but have concerns over significant detail within this proposal.

Need to see evidence of recent engagement with and commitment from all pony stakeholders to chipping.

Good to be addressing the major and longstanding issue of the growing number of 'stray' and unmarked ponies on Commons with no known owners; this has become a multi generation issue, which urgently needs to be addressed. But the Commons listed for the first tranche are not the Commons where unmarked ponies are the biggest problem. A trial does need to include common(s) where there are sufficient 'problems' to show whether or not chipping does help Common Association deal with strays.

Should FiPL support as a one off, then owners responsible? But if it is not compulsory how do we ensure benefit is maintained?

SP DHPA have committed to maintain chipping into the future and have a funding plan to sustain this.

Would national equine database accept the micro-chip data?

### **Recommendation(s) and Vote(s)**

Supportive of the idea but needs to be more comprehensive and robust. Needs to address risk to success.

There was unanimous 'support in principle' for chipping, but too many reservations and questions to approve it now.

Several expressions of support for for a phase one trial.

If deferred, and further consultation and pilot addresses all concerns, the Panel could consider a revised application for a trial, or a project for the 2023 drifts.

Recommendation that DHPA discuss application and seek support from other pony organisations and from the Commoners' Council.

### **Confirmation of Decision and Conditions**

An informal vote to gauge Panel support for the project:

'Approve' – 2 votes For

'Defer' - 6 votes for, 1 abstained.

## 10) Any other business

### *Higher Wapsworthy*

An Application has been received for renovation of a small farm building at Higher Wapsworthy, for a total of £62,386. Points raised in description and discussion included:

- Funding the renovation of buildings is not expected to be a major use of FiPL funding on Dartmoor; they need to be the exception not the norm
- Whilst this application could benefit bats and owls, this outcome is not strong enough nor wide enough to justify FiPL funding.
- We are not convinced that the very high specification of the roost and nesting sites is necessary or justified for these species
- This cost is enormously high for the benefit to these species, and the application will fail our Value for Money test
- The future use of the building is unclear; we need to be convinced that the benefit will be 'Sustainable'; the use of the building does not relate to FiPL outcomes
- It might be possible for FiPL to contribute a small amount to creating the habitats proposed, but this would need a revised and more focused application and stronger case to be made

The Panel agreed that JS gets back to the applicant with this response, which is consistent with the steer given to other applicants seeking funding for building renovation.

### *Environmental NGO Representative on the Panel*

HB advised the Panel she would be stepping down as environmental NGO representative. The eNGOs are in the process of agreeing replacement, most likely candidate is from RSPB and has good ecological knowledge. Panel thanked to Helen for her valuable contribution and advice over the past year.

Panel had short discussion about importance of continuity and amount of learning developed over the past year in this evolving funding scheme. JS assured Panel that a thorough induction would be provided to the new member.

## 11) Date and time of next meeting

**Wednesday, 28<sup>th</sup> September 11am – 3pm**  
**Main Meeting Room at DNPA Offices, Parke, Bovey Tracy**