

# Dartmoor Farming in Protected Landscapes

## Local Assessment Panel

Thursday 6<sup>th</sup> October 2022, 14:00, Parke and via MS Teams

**Attending:** Russell Ashford (Chair), Dan Alford, Sarah Blythe, Will Dracup, Becky Hughes, Martin Perryman, Peter Harper, Phillip French, James Sharpe

**Apologies:** John Howell, Layland Branfield, Eamon Crowe, Paul Dean, Mark Walker

### Applications over £5k

New Barn Mill, Blachford Estate

*Presented by Simon Pryor*

This proposal had previously been introduced to the Panel in Aug, when members present had indicated they would be keen to consider it.

The Application was presented by Simon Pryor who had advised the Applicant. Other DNPA staff had offered advice, and the Historic Buildings Officer had done significant research into the history of the mill (which surprisingly had not been on the Historic Environment Record).

#### **Summary of Application:**

The work now includes five related projects:

- 1) Improve the Public Footpath – which had eroded and is poorly drained - and repairing the stone bank, plus installation of an interpretation sign about the water mill.
- 2) Restore the mill pond, repair damaged leat supplying the mill and install drains across the yard to rejoin the stream
- 3) Repair the gateway into the yard and remove the fallen high-level pipework to the mill
- 4) Remove, repair, and reinstate the cast iron water wheel (although it will not be in a working order)
- 5) Repair the lower edge of the roof, including wall plate, rafter ends, fascia, slipped slates and install guttering.

The total cost is £38,900 and the applicant has asked for 60% funding.

#### **Conflicts of interest:**

No member declared any material interest, connection, involvement, or prior knowledge of this proposal.

#### **Discussion**

Aspects discussed by the Panel included:

- Desire to see this rare example of an unrestored water mill being conserved and given recognition and heritage protection
- Eventual use of the building, concerns over future ‘development’ and the need for ‘protection’ of the investment of FiPL funds
- The desire to see the mill working again, and potential for generating renewable energy
- Eligibility for CS Capital Grants that can pay for work on traditional farm buildings that are weatherproof and will remain in agricultural use
- Concern over whether the work could do more damage than good for bats, owls and other wildlife using it, and the need for a bat survey and advice on mitigation measures.
- Question as to whether EA permission is needed to restore the mill pond, and care needed to avoid diversion of the water causing more trouble.
- Interpreting the mill for walkers was welcomed but differing views on whether an interpretation panel on site is appropriate
- Whether this flood damage was a ‘one off’ from a freak flood event in 2021, and whether preventative measures are needed up stream
- Concern over the long-term use, and whether FiPL funding is just being used as a ‘stop gap’.
- There was also discussion of what level of support is appropriate: 40, 50 or 60%?

**Conditions:**

The Panel agreed the following conditions which must be addressed to the satisfaction of the FiPL Team before an Agreement can be signed:

- a) The Applicant is legally required to maintain the building in a weatherproof state for 5 years from the date the grant has been paid
- b) Any necessary permission from EA re the drainage work is secured
- c) A bat survey is carried out by an appropriate expert and any mitigation measures recommended are followed
- d) Advice from DNPA Rangers and Rights of Way team over the design, location and content of any interpretation is sought and followed
- e) Advice is taken from one of the Natural Flood Management team to check the proposed work is appropriate and to recommend any other measures further upstream to reduce the risk of future flooding.

**Decision:**

The Panel agreed unanimously to support the application in line with the above conditions, but awarding 50% funding, which is a grant of £19,450.

***The FiPL Team recommend the following Scoring using the FiPL Criteria.***

**Provisional Scoring Outcomes:**

Criteria	Aspects	Score
Climate	Resilience to flood events	8
Nature	Preserved habitats in derelict building	6
People	A feature visible from footpath with interpretation	6
Place	Rare example of unrenovated Dartmoor water mill	8

Dartmoor Partnership Plan	Contributes to several themes	8
Collaboration	N/A	6
<b>Overall for outcomes</b>		<b>14</b>

#### Provisional Scoring & Recommendation:

Criteria	Aspects	Score
Outcomes	<i>Continued from above table</i>	14
Ability to deliver	Roles clear, estate oversight, known contractors	8
Sustainability & legacy	Protection from further damage	6
Value for money	Costs reasonable, only the crucial work done	6
<b>Total score</b>		<b>34</b>

- **Recommendation: 'Approve'**
- **Discussion: Percentage contribution, 'precedence'?**

#### Dartmoor Hill Pony Association

*Presented by James Sharpe*

This was previously discussed in August, but it was declined.

#### Conflicts of interest:

Recognised that many members of the Panel are involved in Commons that may or may not have ponies grazing on them, so could be indirectly and consequentially affected if it goes ahead. Several members of the Panel sit on D Com's Co and could vote on any motion relating to this. Dan Alford declared that he farms in partnership with his mother who is on the Committee of DHPA, and they have always kept ponies on the Commons in the pilot. It was agreed that all members of the Panel, including Dan, could participate in discussion and vote.

#### Discussion points:

Lengthy discussion across a wide range of issues, with differing views across the Panel. Topics covered included:

- A desire to have a partnership approach to this proposal, both with D Com's Co and with the other pony organisations
- Treading the fine line through the legal obligations:
  - helping pony owners to comply with their legal obligations but not paying them to do so
  - wanting to help D Com's Co to improve comprehensiveness of their Register, but FiPL's inability to pay an organisation to carry out its legal duty
  - D Com's Co having a statutory obligation to 'have oversight' of animal welfare of livestock on Dartmoor Commons.
- The difficulties of having two 'databases' of ponies, one held by DHPA and one by the D Com's Co. And the desire to (eventually) have just one.

- DHPA’s ability (given GDPR) and willingness to share the data they collect, especially when this has been funded with public money
- Whether the level of uptake will be sufficient, and whether this service will be freely available to all pony keepers or only those who effectively join DHPA.
- Everyone agreed dealing with strays and unmarked ponies is a substantial, long-standing, and challenging problem. But these pilot Commons are not ones where there is a significant problem from strays.
- Conflicting information about whether all 5 of the Commons in the pilot have confirmed that they are keen to be part of this pilot.
- Discussion of whether these Commons are representative, and sufficiently isolated to be a valid trial? Should a different set of Commons be identified for this pilot?
- A desire to see a trial of the marking of chipped ponies with indelible paint, or other measures
- Whether New Forest ponies have considered micro-chipping and / or have they tested mechanisms for identifying and dealing with unowned or stray ponies.
- If FiPL funds this pilot, will we feel obliged to fund the 2<sup>nd</sup> phase?
- Timing is urgent as if it is not approved in the next couple of weeks, it will not be possible to do the pilot this autumn, and it will then be difficult to offer micro-chipping across all the other Commons before the FiPL funding runs out in March 2024.
- Despite the greater detail supplies, there is still some concerns over the administration costs.
- There was concern that it has not been planned with the rigour needed for ‘Test and Trials’. At the least there should be independent oversight and evaluation of the pilot
- Disappointment around circulation of the application, discussion as to whether it needs to be circulated wider to D Com’s Co, local associations, pony keepers. Concern that this impacts people wider than members of the panel, who have not had a chance to comment.
- Whether 100% is appropriate level of funding, for a charity with membership.

**Conditions:**

- a) The database is shared with D Com’s Co.
- b) The D Com’s Co must have full access to the database.
- c) £4.5k of the grant amount is to be ringfenced for independent assessment of measuring the project outcomes
- d) Associations of the pony keepers are all in agreement with the project
- e) Marking microchipped ponies in the winter with coloured paint must be trialled.
- f) The project must be run past the council first, and once they’ve given their approval, it will be in the public domain

**Decisions:**

There were 5 votes in Favour and 2 members Abstained, so this proposal was Approved.

***The FiPL Team recommend the following Scoring using the FiPL Criteria.***

**Provisional Scoring Outcomes:**

Criteria	Aspects	Score
Climate	Conservation grazing secures moorland Carbon, lower methane emissions than cattle	8

Nature	Reverses decline in moorland habitat, controls gorse and possibly Molinia	8
People	Healthy ponies are fundamental to many visitors' enjoyment of Dartmoor	10
Place	Ponies are a key component of this cultural landscape and very important to local people	10
Dartmoor Partnership Plan	Contributes to almost all themes	10
Collaboration	A collective approach that has potential to benefit all commons, but is not currently supported by all	6
<b>Overall for outcomes</b>		<b>17</b>

#### Provisional Scoring & Recommendation:

Criteria	Aspects	Score
Outcomes	<i>Continued from above table</i>	17
Ability to deliver	Pilot has demonstrated the ability to deliver	8
Sustainability & legacy	This is expected to be self-sustaining once critical mass is reached, and change the status of ponies	8
Value for money	Cost per pony is competitive, though overheads are quite high	6
<b>Total score</b>		<b>39</b>

- **Recommendation: 'Approve'**
- **Discussion: Many aspects to be agreed**
- **Conditions: TBC**

Request to proceed, Kirkside 2: previously deferred (July 2022)

*Briefly presented by Russell Ashford in James Sharpe's absence*

#### Conflicts of interest:

No member has any material interest, connection, involvement, or prior knowledge of this proposal.

#### Discussion points:

- VAT needs to be taken out of their grant request; therefore, the amount will be 20% less than the amount they state. But they're still asking from 100%.

- Unanimous agreement that the project improves prospects for future schemes on the land.
- Concern for marsh fritillary colony in that area, as this is an endangered species, therefore a suggestion of 75% of funding is offered.
- Query about whether EA permission is required for this project, to see if any permits are needed in the area.
- Discussion about what percentage of funds should be offered, before settling on 60%:
  - 50% should be adequate for their specific project
  - 75% due to marsh fritillary colony
  - 80% because agricultural management is included in the project

**Conditions:**

- To seek EA permission first because they are around a watercourse and permits might be required.

**Decision:**

The Panel agreed unanimously to support the application, but awarding 60% funding

- 7 votes in favour