

Dartmoor Farming in Protected Landscapes

Local Assessment Panel

Wednesday 8th May 2024, Parke

Attending: Russell Ashford, Will Dracup, Layland Branfield, Laurie Phippen, Sarah Blyth, Alison Clish-Green, John Howell, Christine Malseed, Dan Alford, James Sharpe

Dartmoor staff attending:

Simon Pryor, Rachel Cooper, Bea Dunscombe, Kaitlin Perryman

Apologies:

Peter Harper

Applications

Healthy Livestock Healthy Commons Project

Presented by David Attwell (on behalf of Harford and Ugborough Commoners Association)

Summary of application

To build on two pilot livestock health projects to increase the resilience of livestock on the common to environmental challenges, building on the use of vitamin B12 injection and ascertain if there is any impact on tick borne diseases by recording tick findings. This project will also help common graziers understand the impact of popular acaricides on adult dung beetle populations to inform a Commons Health Management Plan.

Declarations of interest:

- *John Howell - Deputy Chair of Harford and Ugborough Commoners Association*
- *Layland Branfield - Trustee for the Foundation for Common Land*

Discussion points:

- The Panel expressed significant interest in this project, in particular the scientific cost analysis between the two injections.
- Clarity was requested regarding Veterinary involvement when blood taking, it was confirmed that there will certainly be a Vet involved for sheep, and potentially for cattle. The costings provided with the application include Vet time for both sheep and cattle.
- The Panel suggested that the applicant also considers copper levels in livestock, in addition to B12. It was confirmed that Nuvetina will do full mineral blood analysis.
- There was a question about whether soil samples will be carried out as well. It was confirmed that soil samples will not be included in this project, as soil health across the common isn't something that can feasibly be changed through this project. Therefore, the focus will be on livestock.
- The Panel questioned whether the applicant could explore if there are any Veterinary students who might be interested in partaking in this project for learning purposes. The Panel were keen to pass on this knowledge if possible. This was not set as a condition, but as a suggestion.

- A query regarding the applicant's eligibility for the Farming Equipment and Technology Fund (FETF). It was confirmed that the FETF is not available to group applications, and this project (including equipment) would be shared across the two commons involved.
- Panel members questioned how data will be shared post-project. It was confirmed that the data will remain with the Commons Association as it will belong to the two commons involved – but the aim is for the Association to share this wider.
- It was suggested that the applicant should explore breed comparisons, as farmers on the common own different breeds of livestock. This was not set as a condition, but as a suggestion for the applicant to look into.

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

Decision:

To approve this project in full.

For: 9

Against: 0

Abstained: 1

DHPA Drift Sale

Presented by Simon Pryor

Summary of application:

A project to develop Dartmoor's traditional annual pony drift sale, by purchasing appropriate cattle-handling equipment in order to pen and handle semi-wild Dartmoor Hill Ponies.

Declarations of interest:

- *Dan Alford – Pony keeper and his family are a part of the Dartmoor Hill Pony Association.*
- *Christine – Pony keeper. However, it was agreed that Christine had no commercial or direct interest so it was decided that this would not need to be declared as a conflict of interest.*

Discussion points:

- There was concern over losing the tradition of the Chagford Market sale, and the impact that this project could have on this event. However, it was agreed that this project will provide a much more safe and secure drift sale event going forward.

- The Panel had significant concern about the transportation and storage of the 120 hurdles that are being requested in the application. Storage needs to be appropriate and secure, and transportation needs to be safe and would involve a trailer. Therefore, the Panel requested more information regarding the applicant's plans regarding this.
- The Panel also suggested that the hurdles could be employed in forming collecting pens and handling / loading facilities for pony drifting across Dartmoor's commons. Often, there are only limited or no facilities and these hurdles would make a significant difference. The hurdles could be split and stored between the four quarters of Dartmoor, this would allow shared use across the commons for pony drifting outside of the Drift sale.
- There was emphasis regarding value for money with this project, and whether there is wider benefit to Dartmoor. It was agreed that this will have significant public benefits, in addition to those involved in pony drifting.
- Concern about health and safety for the people, as well as health and welfare concerns for ponies where dilapidated equipment is currently being used.
- The roll matting being requested was questioned, and what the legacy of these will be. It was confirmed that the matting would be used every year for the Pony Drift sale at the Grange. The applicant will maintain these for 5 years beyond their Agreement, which is a project requirement.
- The Panel requested more clarity around liability if there was an accident at a Pony Drift sale event at the Grange. It was agreed that the FiPL team should look into this ahead of an Agreement being signed.

Decision:

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

- Hurdles must also be available for all pony drifting across the moors, to ensure better value for money.
- Hurdles must be only used for Ponies, and not for other livestock.
- The applicant must provide evidence (a method statement) of a plan for how and where the hurdles and matting will be stored when they're not being used. As well as how they will be transported to pony sale events – this includes hurdle pins. This method statement should include the practicalities and logistics of appropriate and safe transportation, handling policy, safe loading policy, stillages and weights. This should be shared with the Panel by email for their review.
- The applicant must confirm who would be liable if there was an accident at a Pony Drift sale event at the Grange.

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	28	7.2

Decision:

For: 9

Against: 0

Abstained: 1

Narracombe 3

Presented by Bea Dunscombe

Summary of application:

A project to allow an applicant to continue delivering outdoor education sessions to local children. Allowing them to come to their woodland and connect with nature, be involved in looking after the natural environment and learn about the importance of the habitat on Dartmoor.

This project is an <£10k project, but the FiPL team are required to present an applicant's third application to our Local Assessment Panel regardless of the funding request.

Declarations of interest:

None.

Discussion points:

- The Panel emphasised that formal Site Visit Evaluation forms would need to be carried out for each of these events. It was confirmed that these would be obtained when the applicant claims for their completed ED1 sessions.
- The Panel queried the applicant's wider business activities in addition to this application, and whether this project would have any impact on their existing business.
- The Panel asked if we should request additional details regarding their long-term plans, so that we have evidence of legacy. It was confirmed that the applicant is currently exploring a CS application, but is not in a position to apply just yet because their new land-holding size is not finalised.
- The intervention rate was discussed, should this be funded at 100%. It was reasoned that FiPL must fund CS-rated activities at 100%.
- The Panel felt positively about this project, and there was agreement that there is a demand for forest schools in the local area.

Scoring:

The scoring recommended 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:

To approve this project in full.

For: 9

Against: 0

Abstained: 1

Meavy Barton

Presented by Rachel Cooper

Summary of application:

The creation of an on-farm, in-shed classroom to engage primary to higher education students in the process of rearing forage fed beef from hill suckled calves to finish. This will link to the applicant's Butcher's shop a 3-minute drive away, where students will be able to end their field to fork day (linked to the application below).

Declarations of interest:

None.

Discussion points:

- The Panel queried the exact usage time of the education area – does the applicant have exact numbers of visit days, including numbers of students that will attend. There were concerns regarding value for money – the Panel requested a sustainable plan.
- Who would be conducting the educational elements of the project, and how can we be assured they are competent educators? It was confirmed that the applicant will be undertaking the teaching, with support and advice from the Duchy College.
- It was emphasised that a Structural Engineer would need to be consulted in order to adhere to building regulations for the classroom. If a building will have public use there are specific building regulations that need to be met, and this will significantly impact the applicant's costings.
- The Panel requested clarification regarding finishing cattle numbers, and further information about their summer & winter grazing regime.
- Concern about the precedent being set with this application – will this encourage more applications for cattle fattening sheds?
- The Panel were supportive of the concept of this application, we just need to be certain that their costings are accurate and realistic. Therefore, a more robust and clear business plan is required.

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
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Decision:

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

- The applicant must provide an accurate quote for the teaching facility element of the building works, demonstrating the breakdown of costs including structural engineer input and building regulations.
- The applicant must provide a formal business plan showing more detail and projections for the education visits.
- The above information could be presented to the Panel at our July 17th meeting. If the applicant has this information before the July meeting, the application can be re-considered in a Teams meeting with the Panel ahead of then.

For: 10

Against: 0

Abstained: 0

Hearn's Dartmoor Meats

Presented by Rachel Cooper

Summary of application:

Hearns Dartmoor Group Butchers Shop Renovation and Classroom Installation (linked to the application above).

Declarations of interest:

None.

Discussion points:

- The Panel endorsed the logic of the project, but queried whether FiPL should be funding commercial building renovations. It was reasoned that this support is reflected in the intervention rates that have been used. The applicant has used a lower intervention rate (50%) for the commercial elements of this project. FiPL can fund this work, but there is an intervention scale that must be used appropriately.
- Planning Permission was questioned – has the applicant submitted an application? It was confirmed that a Planning application has been submitted already.
- The panel questioned the creation of jobs through this project. It was clarified that the role being created would be a full-time role for an apprentice.
- The panel discussed whether we should only fund the educational aspects. It was reasoned that these elements cannot be carried out without the renovation work. Therefore, the renovation work has a far lower intervention rate compared to the educational work.
- It was suggested that we support the renovation work at 50%, recognising that there is a commercial element to this work.
- The Panel discussed 2nd hand items, and the FiPL team confirmed that we are not allowed to fund 2nd hand items. If the applicant can't afford the commercial items at a 50% intervention rate, could they purchase them themselves second hand without FiPL support?

- The Panel requested a written statement from the applicant saying that they will only supply 100% Dartmoor meat.

Scoring:

The scoring recommended 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%	6	1.2
Sustainability / legacy of projects - 20%	8	1.6
Value for Money - 20%	8	1.6
Total	28	6.8

Decision:

The approve subject to meeting the below two conditions:

- The building infrastructure works should be funded at a 60% intervention rate, but the butchery equipment should be funded at 50%.
- The applicant should provide a written statement to say that they will only supply 100% Dartmoor meat.

For: 10

Against: 0

Abstained: 0

Haytor, Bag Tor and Rippon Tor Erosion Works

Presented by Rachel Cooper

Summary of application:

A project to repair 1,880m of footpath erosion across Haytor Down, Bagtor Down and Rippon Tor Newtake, including around Haytor rocks. Repair 735m of drystone wall around the Rippon Tor and Bag Tor newtakes. 2,540m of Clipex Fencing against the common from Bagtor Newtake and Rippon Tor Newtake.

Declarations of interest:

- *James Sharpe – Dartmoor National Park Authority staff member*
- *Will Dracup – Dartmoor National Park Authority member*

Discussion points:

- The panel emphasised that if only one side of the wall is being fenced, we need to make sure that the other side of the wall isn't damaged by livestock too.
- We need to be careful with setting a precedent with this project. If this is approved, we should be cautious of other potential applicants who might want their common fenced.

- There was a strong emphasis on the requirement for netting, as well as barbed wire, for the Clipex fencing: two strands of barbed wire alone will not stop sheep. We need to ensure that the fencing will last, and will have legacy.
- The Panel were concerned that this application should go through the hedgerows and boundaries CS scheme. It was reasoned that this is a holistic project concerning these three parcels of land, including one common. There are also a number of stakeholders involved and therefore FiPL would like to have it as one project, if possible.
- It was agreed that there is an issue with stock on newtakes, and this work should be supported. If the applicant has not got anywhere with funding elsewhere, then FiPL should support this.
- If sheep are coming from the other direction, then this fencing project will not work. Can we set a condition that if this does happen, the person who is responsible for that side of the land must put up a fence on that side, perhaps supported by CSS?
- The Panel endorsed the erosion management part of the application, this would be good work that would have public benefit.
- It was flagged that these paths might also create excellent fire breaks so we'd need to be a bit methodological with this work.
- The Panel discussed that if commons associations are starting to take responsibility for erosion works, then common owners and commoners are going to be seen as responsible for restoring the damage caused by recreational access, which is a statutory duty of the DNPA as regulator of the access provisions of the Dartmoor Commons Act 1985. It's therefore a very complicated situation – but is it an appropriate use of FiPL money?
- It was agreed that the drainage part of the application is acceptable. However, the soil is more compacted in these areas, there is more run-off, and it is more concentrated. There was concern that by simply filling in the ruts and turfing over the surface, this project wouldn't address the cause of the problem, and it would only be a short-term fix with the same problem emerging if people continue walking on the same route.
- The Panel questioned whether we could create specific growan-surfaced pathways so that the public have a very resilient route? But this would presumably require planning consent because of the impact on the landscape?
- The Panel queried whether it was the National Park's obligation to repair recreational damage on the Moors? It was flagged that the condition of SSSI sites (like Haytor) is a legal responsibility of the owners of the land and not to the National Park, therefore it should be their responsibility to repair erosion; but as noted above, under the DCA 1985 the repair of recreational damage is the duty of the DNPA as regulator. This would presumably trump SSSI regulations on access land.
- Could this application come from the Dartmoor National Park Authority as a regulator and not as a landowner, with letters of association from the Haytor Commoners Association and from the National Park as a joint application? And it should be clarified as to how the Haytor Commoners Association will be compensated for administering the work.
- Notwithstanding the important principles above, the Panel recognised the importance of controlling soil erosion and noted that FiPL is an appropriate source of funding in the absence of other governmental finance for this statutory obligation. It needs to be done, but through the right process.

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

Decision for the boundary work:

To approve subject to meeting the below four conditions:

- Clipex fencing should include netting as well as two strands of barbed wire.
- The Haytor Commoners Association should lead this project, and a collaboration agreement must be signed by all landowners involved.
- The newtake owners are responsible for maintaining the fence once it has been erected, and if there are private sheep in the newtake then they need to fence the newtake side of the wall.
- This project does not alleviate the landowners' responsibility for maintaining common boundaries on the moor

For: 7

Against: 1

Abstained: 2

Decision for the Erosion work:

To approve subject to meeting the below two conditions:

- The application should come from the National Park Authority as regulator and not as a landowner, but in association with the commoners.
- More details required about the path work repairs being carried out, rather than assuming the applicant knows what they're doing, to ensure that this achieves a permanent fix.

For: 7

Against: 1

Abstained: 2

Date of next LAP meeting: Wednesday 17th July, Parke