

Dartmoor Farming in Protected Landscapes

Local Assessment Panel

Wednesday 28th August 2024, Parke

Attending: Russell Ashford, Peter Harper, Sarah Blyth, Alison Clish-Green, John Howell, James Sharpe, Christine Malseed, Will Dracup (*did not attend for the first two applications, but attended from the third application for the remaining duration*), Shirley Mudge (*attended as Dan Alford's substitute*), Ann Willcocks (*attended as Layland Branfield's substitute*), David Hazlehurst (*attended as Katie Wynter's substitute*).

Dartmoor staff attending: Simon Pryor, Rachel Cooper, Bea Dunscombe, Kaitlin Perryman

Apologies: Layland Branfield (*Ann Willcocks attended as substitute*), Dan Alford (*Shirley Mudge attended as substitute*), Katie Wynter (*David Hazlehurst attended as substitute*).

Applications

Lydford Common No Fence

Presented by Rachel Cooper

Summary of application

Trial using the No Fence Grazing Technology to target the grazing of cattle. This approach will be used to both increase grazing in dense Molinia areas and reduce grazing in dwarf shrub areas. The collars will also be used to keep cattle away from busy areas that have high visitor numbers to reduce soil erosion and public contact.

Declarations of interest:

None.

Discussion points:

- The Panel suggested that FiPL should encourage the applicant to join the Knowledge Exchange Group that has been set up for farmers who are using No Fence grazing technology.
- The Panel were concerned about forcing cattle onto this part of the Moor when there is a live firing going on. The Panel suggested that there should be a dialogue with the Ministry of Defence regarding this project. The FiPL team confirmed that the applicant mentions live firing days in their application, they are very experienced in grazing cattle on this part of the Moor and are aware of live firing times etc.
- Question regarding whether there is a conflict with grazing Molinia and grazing Vigors Eyebright. Do both like intense grazing pressure? We don't want to impact one and not the

other. It was explained that the cattle will open up the area by eating Molinia, and then trample the surrounding ground. This won't impact the Eyebright, and it therefore wasn't thought that there would be any grazing conflict.

- Panel discussed the location of the Vigors Eyebright and the Molinia. They won't necessarily be found in the same place - Eyebright should be found down towards Lydford, whereas Molinia will be up on the Moor. This project may encourage Eyebright further up the hill - but it won't thrive on the Moor. It was confirmed that cattle would be used to pulse graze the lowland near the Eyebright (e.g. when calving), and then they'll be pushed up towards the Molinia afterwards.
- Panel showed significant concern about forcing cattle to graze Molinia in Autumn/Winter. It was flagged that this is late in the season for Molinia management, and Cattle should not solely be grazing Molinia at this time of year. It was therefore suggested that the applicant must monitor the condition of the cattle throughout the project.

Scoring

The scoring 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%	6	1.2
Value for Money - 20%	8	1.6
Total	30	7.6

Decision:

To approve this project subject to meeting the below two conditions. The team are unable to formally issue an Agreement as there are no longer funds available. The application will be put onto our reserve list once conditions have been met, in case funds become available in the coming months.

Conditions:

1. Cattle condition must be monitored throughout the project.
2. Collars must be used in conjunction with other methods of Molinia management.

For: 10

Against: 0

Abstained: 0

(Will Dracup was not present to vote on this application)

Frenchbeer No Fence

Presented by Rachel Cooper

Summary of application:

No-Fence collars for cattle grazing at Langridge Newtake. These will be used to target archaeological remains to increase their visibility in the landscape, increase accessibility and improve their overall condition. Specifically, to target Molinia which is obscuring the site.

Declarations of interest:

- Christine Malseed – The applicant for this project is Christine’s son, and the project will be carried out on their family farm. It was decided that Christine would not be able to vote on this application, and would have to leave the room when the vote takes place.

Discussion points:

- Panel questioned whether this application includes batteries and the additional costs, because the quote didn’t include these. FiPL team confirmed that they would check this – the applicant already has No Fence collars, so it might be that the additional items don’t need to be duplicated.
- Similarly to the last application, there was concern about forcing cattle to graze Molinia in Autumn/Winter. It was suggested that the applicant must monitor the condition of the cattle throughout the project.
- Panel questioned whether controlled burning would achieve the same solution.
- FiPL team confirmed that the applicant is already part of the Knowledge Exchange Group, which is why this element hasn’t been included in the application.
- Panel requested monitoring that includes alternative ways of managing Molinia, to inform grazing management on the Moor. This should be in the form of a report and would encourage a more holistic approach.
- Panel asked whether the DNPA Archaeologist has provided a monitoring protocol regarding fixed point photography. It was suggested that FiPL should get Historic England’s input regarding intensifying grazing on this proposed site, as this is a Scheduled Ancient Monument site. However, it was confirmed that the DNPA Archaeologist involved in this project is a Historic England representative, and therefore this isn’t required.
- It was confirmed that this site is a newtake. Therefore, there aren’t any other graziers, so in this case it is solely up to the applicant to manage the site. They need to start targeting Molinia areas using their cattle because no one else's stock is up there grazing.

Scoring

The scoring 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%	6	1.2
Total	26	6.8

Decision:

To approve this project subject to meeting the below two conditions. The team are unable to formally issue an Agreement as there are no longer funds available. The application will be put onto our reserve list once conditions have been met, in case funds become available in the coming months.

Conditions:

1. Cattle condition must be monitored throughout the project.
2. Collars must be used in conjunction with other methods of Molinia management.

For: 9

Against: 0

Abstained: 0

(Christine Malseed did not vote on this application)

(Will Dracup was not present to vote on this application)

Teign Valley Deer Initiative Project

Presented by Bea Dunscombe

Summary of application

To help the Teign Valley Facilitation Fund group identify, quantify and raise awareness of the impact that deer numbers are having on the ecology of the Teign Valley landscape, by carrying out Deer Impact Assessments and Deer Management Plans for 15 of their members.

Declarations of interest:

- Peter Harper – Peter is a direct beneficiary for this project. It was decided that Peter would not be able to vote on this application, and would have to leave the room when the vote takes place.

Discussion points:

- Panel asked why the other Teign Valley Facilitation Fund members weren't included in the application – did they already have Deer Impact Assessments and Deer Management Plans? It was confirmed that they either have these in place already, have smaller landholdings, or didn't want to be included in this specific project.
- Panel were concerned that this project, in its current form, does not provide a solution to the deer problem. The issue being that most of the evidence provided in a Deer Impact Assessment is anecdotal rather than objective, we need have the official reports/surveys which provide tangible objective data.
- It was flagged that there is no mention of TB in their application, yet we know that TB has been confirmed in deer in this area. Could the risk and impact of TB in the deer population be included within the Assessment and Management Plans?
- Panel agreed that this application would be stronger if the project involved training for the members involved, so that they can share knowledge and continue their own monitoring/survey work in the future.
- Would the funds be put to better use if we funded one of the members, and then they can be responsible for training and passing on knowledge to the others?
- Panel emphasised that Deer Impact Assessments aren't simple, and things can be missed (by professional Ecologists). Therefore, it is essential that the Ecologists carry out these assessments in the first instance, and volunteers can be involved in an engagement and education capacity.
- Panel requested that the project's aims and processes should be shared so that a wider audience, such as other land managers experiencing similar problems, can learn from this. This could be via the Deer Working Group.
- the public can learn from this. This can be via the Deer Working Group.
- Panel also would like the group to communicate with the Forestry Commission, The Woodland Trust and the Duchy of Cornwall, so that they're all aware of the project proposal and aims.
- Panel felt strongly that they would like to see an addition to this application showing a commitment to upskilling and training members involved. This must include training days, where Ecologists transfer their knowledge onto the landowners/managers so that they are equipped to carry out Deer Impact Assessments in the future.

Scoring

The scoring 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 subject to meeting the below three conditions:

Conditions:

1. There must be a commitment to upskilling and training members involved in this project. This must include 2 training days, where Ecologists transfer their knowledge onto the landowners so that they are equipped to carry out Deer Impact Assessments in the future. FiPL will fund these two training days up to a cost of £3,000 (approx. £1,500 per day). The 1st day must be for all individual beneficiaries of this project, all of whom must attend the training day in order to claim funds for this activity through the programme. The 2nd day must include as many of the remaining 44 group members as possible. If there is not enough up-take from the remaining group members to fill the training day, people from outside the TVFF could be invited (e.g. advertised through the Dartmoor Hill Farm Project/The Woodland Trust etc).
2. Lessons learnt from this project should be accessible, and must therefore be shared by the Deer Working Group so that others can learn about the results of this project.
3. The applicant must actively communicate with the Forestry Commission, The Woodland Trust and the Duchy of Cornwall, so that they're all aware of the project proposal and aims.

For: 10

Against: 0

Abstained: 0

(Peter Harper did not vote on this application)

Hill & Coombe Milk Vending Machine

Presented by Rachel Cooper

Summary of application

The installation of a milk vending machine and mobile dairy processing facility with new equipment for pasteurisation, processing and cold storage for milk, yogurt and cheese.

Declarations of interest:

None.

Discussion points:

- The Panel asked if the applicant will be selling their existing land to start this business. It was confirmed that they plan to continue their dairy business on their existing land - this project will be an extension to their business.
- There was unanimous concern about the timeframe of FiPL regarding their Planning application. It was confirmed that the applicant has submitted an Agricultural Prior Notification, which has a 4-week waiting list, rather than 12 weeks (for a full Planning application).
- The Panel highlighted that the vending machine will be installed down a farm track on a farm. Is this convenient and accessible enough for the public? How do we know that customers will consistently travel to this site for their product. Can we guarantee footfall?

The FiPL team confirmed that the applicant would like the vending machine to be on the farm, which will provide additional benefits in terms of public education. They also highlighted that the applicant has thought of alternative contingency options in case there isn't the expected footfall.

- Panel questioned how many litres the vending machine can hold? There was concern that if they don't sell enough, then a lot of good milk products will be wasted.
- Panel asked if the applicant could test out the viability of this business on their existing farm first, and then move it over to the new site to be upscaled if it's successful.
- It was confirmed that the applicant has an excellent track record, their business plan is solid, they've secured their customer base already (75% of their customers are in this new area) - they're moving their business closer to the consumer.
- Panel asked if they are supplying customers for 12 months of the year. Do they have enough milk to supply this upscaled proposal? It was confirmed that all of their milk is currently spoken for.
- Panel questioned what happens after their 5-year tenancy on the farm? It was confirmed that they hope to stay longer, but the vending machine building will be a shipping container and will therefore be moveable.
- What about the regulations for the biomass boiler. There needs to be a watertight plan in place for this. We need to ensure they are being compliant and that their project meets the correct specifications and regulations.
- The risk of TB in their cattle was flagged - what happens if the applicant moves to this farm and then they're hit with TB?
- Panel deliberated about whether the applicant could fund the vending machine themselves and find a second-hand item at a lower cost. This would be a better financial option for them.
- The Panel endorsed this proposal and the work that's gone into the application. They were keen to support them but were concerned about the risk involved. Will this plan genuinely uplift and add additionality to their farm business? Can we go back and robustly question the applicant and make sure they're 100% sure they want to commit to this business expansion.

Scoring

The scoring 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%	6	1.2
Total	30	7.6

Decision:

To approve this project subject to meeting the below two conditions. The team are unable to formally issue an Agreement as there are no longer funds available. The application will be put

onto our reserve list once conditions have been met, in case funds become available in the coming months.

Conditions:

1. The FiPL team must make sure that all appropriate regulations are being met in terms of environmental health. For example, the septic tank and the biomass boiler.
2. The FiPL team must question the applicant and relay the Panel's concerns regarding affordability & value for money, making sure they are committed to this investment.

For: 9

Against: 0

Abstained: 2

Spike Milton Timber Services

Presented by Simon Pryor

Summary of application

The purchase of Wood Mizer mobile sawmilling equipment, which will be used to convert trees grown on Dartmoor into timber to be used on Dartmoor. The felled timber can be processed on-site, converted into high quality sawn timber, and most will be used in natural flood management work or other on-farm construction projects across Dartmoor.

Declarations of interest:

Will Dracup – Will is the Director of Widecombe Fair, where Spike carries out lumberjack demonstrations. It was agreed that Will 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:

- If it's anticipated that this equipment will last for 20 years, do we have enough justification to support the purchase of these items, when the applicant is a commercial contractor for big businesses e.g. Woodland Trust & South West Water. How do we know that the market is sustainable - should we invest in equipment when this might not be a long-term venture? It was confirmed that there is plenty of demand, he is a local contractor and is always very busy.
- The Panel flagged that this investment would provide a great opportunity for small woodland owners, because wood can be processed on site.
- Panel asked if the FiPL team should consult applicants who have had similar items approved in the past and see if this is a recommended machine.
- Panel asked how the applicant advertises himself. They don't have a website, could they advertise in DHFP newsletter/Widecombe Parish newsletter? It was confirmed that they have a good 25-year track record, and assurances of ongoing demand. It would therefore not be consistent with other projects if we ask him for information to prove financial assurance. We have not set this precedent before.

- Panel endorsed the applicant for supporting an apprentice and passing on knowledge/skill sharing. Also endorsed the detail in the quotes and their strong rationale for choosing these items specifically.

Scoring

The scoring 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%	6	1.2
Total	30	7.6

Decision:

To approve this project subject to meeting the below one condition. The team are unable to formally issue an Agreement as there are no longer funds available. The application will be put onto our reserve list once the condition has been met, in case funds become available in the coming months.

1. FiPL team must ensure the applicant is going to continue carrying out ongoing training through apprenticeships in the future, this would help to ensure the long-term viability of the project.

For: 11

Against: 0

Abstained: 0

(Alison Clish-Green left the meeting early, and therefore didn't vote on the last two applications).

Challacombe 4

Presented by Bea Dunscombe

Summary of application

To provide better grazing management on an area of rhos pasture by installing a fence and gateways, improving access for livestock and people.

Carrying out Natural Flood Management works by rewetting two additional areas and creating further wetland habitat.

The installation of two bridlegates along an existing bridleway route.

Declarations of interest:

- Peter Harper - The applicant is member of the Dartmoor National Park Authority, however it was agreed that Peter had no commercial or direct interest so it was decided that this would not need to be declared as a conflict of interest.

- Members of the Panel flagged that they know the applicant for this project because they farm 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.

Discussion points:

- The Panel discussed the availability of the applicant’s fencing option through Countryside Stewardship. The FiPL team confirmed that the applicant is not able to get funds for FG2 fencing through CS because this is not an existing fence line.
- The Panel questioned whether the fencing should be based on a bespoke quote + labour, rather than the rate, if it does not meet the criteria of FG2. In which case, they could then set an intervention rate for this activity.
- The Panel discussed the number of gates at length, and it was agreed that they would like to see that the applicant has contributed financially to some of the gateways included in the application. It was agreed that the FiPL team should only fund gateways that have the most footfall in this area.
- The Panel flagged that the land in the application is not registered as CROW Access Land currently on OS. FiPL team to confirm this with the Access and Recreation team first.
- The Panel felt that this project didn’t warrant the difficult sites supplement, there isn’t enough justification for this.
- There was concern regarding the causeway improvements, and whether this is improving a project already funded through FiPL previously. If this is the case, this doesn’t provide us with assurance for value for money or legacy. The causeway must be made level to ensure its effectiveness in the future.
- The Panel felt strongly that wooden field gates along a Clipex fenceline would look strange in the landscape and would defeat the point of using Clipex in terms of visibility.
- It was agreed that we could fund a maximum of three gateways, but these must be where there is the most footfall (one for livestock, one for the public, and the water gate).

Scoring

The scoring by the FiPL team was confirmed:

	Score	Score after weighting
Project outcomes (Climate, Nature, People and Place) – 40%	10	3.2
Ability to deliver - 20%	8	1.6
Sustainability / legacy of projects - 20%	8	1.6
Value for Money - 20%	6	1.2
Total	32	7.6

Decision:

To approve this project subject to meeting the below nine conditions. The team are unable to formally issue an Agreement as there are no longer funds available. The application will be put onto our reserve list once conditions have been met, in case funds become available in the coming months.

1. FiPL would only fund a maximum of three gateways (one for livestock, one for the public, and the water gate). This is because 6 gates was deemed excessive in a 571 m stretch of fence. The siting of the public gateway being funded must be decided based on footfall.
2. The public gateway being funded must be decided based on footfall.
3. FiPL team must consult the DNPA Access team in terms of what bridle gateways they'd suggest - are the suggested Centrewire gates appropriate in this instance.
4. FiPL team must check what Access and Archaeology teams recommend regarding the installation of gateways along Clipex fencing – would they advise wooden gateways or metal gateways for Clipex fencing.
5. FiPL cannot fund 'difficult sites supplement' for this project, as there isn't enough justification for this.
6. FiPL team must check that this is CROW Access Land with the Duchy, and if it is then the official map needs to be updated by the Access team.
7. The causeway should be levelled correctly to future-proof it, preferably using a level survey. I.e. will a higher causeway be high enough to ensure enough legacy.
8. FiPL team must confirm that Scheduled Ancient Monument site has been obtained for the proposed works, and evidence of this must be saved on file.
9. The Panel would like to see a contribution from the applicant. Therefore, given the limited budget remaining, we can only fund the digger and dumper hire at 80%.

For: 10

Against: 0

Abstained: 0

(Alison Clish-Green was not present to vote on this application)

Taw River Dairy

Presented by Rachel Cooper

Summary of application

The creation of an off-grid retail outlet and educational space for regenerative farmers on or local to Dartmoor National Park. Funding is sought to support the erection of a timber framed building, renewable energy system and bore hole as well as fixtures and fittings to showcase sustainable Dartmoor farmers.

Declarations of interest:

- Shirley Mudge – Shirley has employed the applicant on their farm in the past, but it was agreed that she had no commercial or direct interest so it was decided that this would not need to be declared as a conflict of interest.
- Christine Malseed – Christine has employed the applicant on their farm in the past, but it was agreed that she 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:

- The Panel felt uncomfortable with the site being outside of the National Park. The FiPL team emphasised that DEFRA’s guidance does allow applications from outside the Park boundary in exceptional circumstances. However, there was unanimous concern regarding the viability of this project and whether it would genuinely support Dartmoor.
- The Panel felt strongly that this project would not likely be approved if it was inside the National Park boundary, due to the planning consent required. It was therefore agreed that approving this application would provide an unequal opportunity compared to those living within the Park.
- The Panel queried the borehole because of the precedent we’ve set with them previously. It was confirmed that this borehole would be solely for agricultural purposes, and not for domestic use. However, they felt strongly that we’d need to ensure we’re being consistent.
- It was suggested that the applicant could find an existing farm within the boundary that they could partner with instead – bringing their proposal inside Dartmoor.
- The Panel questioned how much Dartmoor businesses will be making by selling produce at the applicant’s existing honesty farm shop? We’d need more evidence that the applicant is supporting Dartmoor farmers, and that they’re benefitting those businesses. For example, solid business agreements with suppliers and not letters of support. This would also demonstrate stronger supplier commitment.

Scoring

The scoring 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:

To decline.

The Panel would be more sensitive to this project if it was based on Dartmoor, and if it had formal partnerships in place already benefitting the Dartmoor economy. We’d also need more evidence of a long-term commitment, and evidence that it is strongly supporting Dartmoor farmers. The Panel otherwise felt uncomfortable with progressing this application.

For: 0

Against: 8

Abstained: 2

(Alison Clish-Green was not present to vote on this application)

Piles Copse Ecological Survey

Presented by James Sharpe

Summary of application

An ecological survey and analysis as a necessary precursor to modifying the grazing regime and substantially expanding the wooded/treed area on this upland oakwood SSSI. The woodland itself carries high landscape and ecological value, being one of only three comparable remnant upland oak woods on Dartmoor. The site is designated for its epiphyte and bryophyte communities that require specific environmental conditions and are not widely understood, hence the need for very specialised survey and analysis. The site is also exceptional in having a set of exclosures established across several decades, providing a rich opportunity for understanding grazing impact/natural regeneration over a range of timescales and intensities. Analysis of this latter feature will inform future beneficial management of this and other similar woodlands.

Declarations of interest:

- John Howell – John is the named applicant for this application, and therefore is a direct beneficiary for the project. It was decided that John would not be able to vote on this application, and would have to leave the room when the debate and vote takes place.

Discussion points:

- The Panel queried the wider context of this project - can we compare this to any other upland oak woodland outside of Dartmoor? For example, the Lake District or Wales?
- The Panel felt the application certainly had merit, but questioned why the fencing is not included? It was confirmed that the survey and reporting time might take longer than the time remaining for the FiPL programme, and the fencing must wait until the survey work has been completed. Therefore, fencing has not been included in this proposal due to time frame.
- Panel questioned whether this should be funded through the Conservation Enhancement Scheme – which is for SSSI sites that fall outside of standard specification and criteria. It was thought that this project would tick the right boxes to be eligible and might be subject to an application for the next stages of the work, should this not be available through ELM.
- It was confirmed that only once data has been obtained, will they know the appropriate way forward. It was emphasised that they need to know if the complete exclusion of livestock on this site must be put in place – like with Wistman’s Wood. This project will supply Natural England with the evidence required to make this informed decision.
- The Panel queried the limited amount of the applicant’s own labour included in the application (as well as contributing soil science expertise the applicant will project manage the work), the applicant is personally invested in the project and place and already contributes significant time to caring for Piles Copse/Higher Piles and is happy to continue this on a partial voluntary basis.
- Clarification was requested over the mileage amount in their Annex A – the applicant need to revisit this and check its accuracy.

Scoring

The scoring 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%	6	1.2
Total		7.6

Decision:

To approve this project subject to meeting the below one condition. The team are unable to formally issue an Agreement as there are no longer funds available. The application will be put onto our reserve list once the condition has been met, in case funds become available in the coming months.

1. The applicant must revisit the milage that has been included in the application and check this is accurate and correct.

For: 8

Against: 0

Abstained: 1

AOB:

- Panel requested feedback/a report on Nofence technology management on cattle at the end of FiPL, seeing as we've funded quite a few of these projects now.
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Date of next meeting: October 9th TBC – if no Panel then FiPL should organise a site visit to go and see an approved project.