

Haresdown and Knowstone Moors Management Association

Report prepared for the Annual Parish Meeting 18.05.23

The Haresdown and Knowstone Moors Management Association (the Association) was constituted at an inaugural meeting held on 16th February 1993. A constitution was approved at the meeting, and committee members were elected. To obtain funds from government schemes, it was deemed necessary to have an Association. You will find that many commons and moors across the UK have an Association of some form whom manage its activities, expenditure and income.

During the last 12 months the Association has held three committee meetings to which commoners with rights to the moors were invited. These ancient rights are linked to certain households in the parish and allow those households to exercise particular rights on the commonland; namely to take turbary (e.g. peat) or to graze stock. Being part of a Stewardship scheme means that these rights are curtailed so the commoners are recompensed for their inability to exercise their rights through whichever scheme the Association has joined.

Mr. John Stanbury was re-elected as Chairman of the Association at the AGM held in December 2022. The Association includes representatives from Knowstone Parish Council and the Devon Wildlife Trust both of whom own part of the moors. In terms of the KPC, this ownership arose after the link road was created in the late eighties. James Siggs was re-elected as treasurer and has been working with Mitchells Accountants to manage all financial matters for the Association.

On-going maintenance of the moors continues, all of which is necessary to meet the requirements of the Countryside Stewardship scheme into which the moors are entered, and which is run by the Rural Payments Agency and Natural England. The gorse and bracken have been cut back on agreed sites and in February a controlled burn took place. The Association has a fire plan which details which areas of the moors can be burned annually. The police and fire service were made aware of the controlled burn but unfortunately this did not stop concerned drivers on the link road making numerous calls to report the fires meaning that the fire service had to respond. Next year the Association are looking to increase road signage in an attempt to reduce the number of calls which the fire service receive.

Rotten wooden posts will continue to be replaced by Devon Wildlife Trust who have also assisted with the removal of fly tipping wherever possible and fencing. Currently the Association is concerned about quad bikes using the moors as a playground. As Haresdown and Knowstone Inner and Outer moors are Sites of Scientific Interest (SSSI's) no vehicles should be on the moors unless to check stock or to cut the gorse. It is never an easy issue to resolve as trespass is deemed a civil matter by the police but the Association is grateful for all prompt reporting of such activities.

It is a key requirement of the Countryside Stewardship scheme that cattle are grazed on the moors from May to late September and sometimes into October if the weather conditions permit. The Association would remind pedestrians and vehicle drivers to take care when passing the cattle on the road or walking on the moors. The cattle owner will endeavour that the cattle stay on the moor but they are free to roam and can do so up to all the cattle grids. Issues have been encountered with the gates alongside the cattle grids being left open. It is important that they are shut to prevent cattle straying and therefore if you notice any being left open then please do close them. It is also important to note that the Association cannot fence the moor and it is

the responsibility of the landowner adjacent to the moors to fence their land to prevent cattle from wandering in.

Dog fouling remains an issue, especially as it can cause neosporosis (primarily abortions) in grazing cattle. It is important that all those using the moors with dogs pick up after them. Also care should be taken not to disturb ground nesting birds at this time of year. Dog walkers are asked to follow the guidance set out by Devon Wildlife Trust on the notice boards on the moors.

Following consideration of the various, new environmental schemes, the Association has decided to extend participation in the Countryside Stewardship scheme until 2028. Assessment of the alternative schemes continues and options such as benefiting from the carbon held on the moors will be part of these considerations.

Finally we hope that you continue to enjoy the moors and the difference they make to our parish landscape.

Thank you.

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