

Haresdown and Knowstone Moors Management Association

Report prepared for the Annual Parish Meeting 13.05.25

The Haresdown and Knowstone Moors Management 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 is a requirement to have an Association.

During the last 12 months the Association has held four 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 rights on the commonland; namely to take turbary (e.g. peat) and / or to graze stock. Being part of a Stewardship scheme means that these rights are curtailed so currently 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 2024. James Siggs stood down from the role of Treasurer and resigned from the committee. Wendy Vigus remained as Secretary of the Association and in addition has taken on the role of Treasurer. Mr Richard Vos joined the committee. The Association includes representatives from Knowstone Parish Council and the Devon Wildlife Trust both of whom own part of the moors (KPC owns Haresdown and DWT owns Inner and Outer Knowstone Moors) and there is also a private landowner of a smaller section of the moors. In terms of the KPC, this ownership arose after the link road was created in the late eighties and no previous ownership could be proved.

On-going maintenance of the moors continues, all of which is necessary to meet the requirements of the Environmental Stewardship scheme into which the moors are entered (a scheme which is run by the Rural Payments Agency and Natural England). The gorse and bracken have been cut back on agreed sites. Diseased ash trees have been removed. A controlled burn took place in February. Despite the Fire Plan being followed and the Fire Brigade being made aware of the burn, numerous calls to the Fire Service from drivers on the link road meant that a fire engine from South Molton attended the event but stated that they were happy with everything. Rotten wooden posts will be replaced by Devon Wildlife Trust later this summer.

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. Also, horse riding for leisure purposes is prohibited on the moors as part of the Stewardship agreement. We'd also ask that dogs are kept under control to avoid the disturbance of ground nesting birds. Dog fouling remains an issue, especially as it can cause neosporosis (primarily abortions) in grazing cattle. The Two Moors way footpath which crosses the moors is currently a permissive footpath but is to become a legal footpath under the control of Devon County Council. This means that the hardware and the path surface will become their responsibility.

It is a key requirement of the Higher Level 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 even those outside the perimeter of the moor. 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 or out.

The Moors are entered into Stewardship scheme until 2028 but in the meantime is also looking at alternative environmental schemes, including Higher Tier Countryside Stewardship and the Sustainable Farming Incentive. Natural England will be assessing the condition of the moors at some point this year. If you have any thoughts on the moors then please let us know so we can incorporate this into future planning.

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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