

## *Haresdown and Knowstone Moors Management Association*

### Report prepared for the Annual Parish Meeting 12.05.26

During the last 12 months the Moors Management Association has held three committee meetings to which commoners with rights to the moors were invited. The three land owners of the moors, Devon Wildlife Trust, Knowstone Parish Council and Mr T Paxton were also present or represented at these meetings.

Mr. John Stanbury was re-elected as Chairman of the Association at the AGM held in December 2025, I was elected as treasurer in addition to my secretarial role. Mitchells Accountants were reappointed to produce the end of year accounts.

On-going maintenance of the moors continues, all of which is necessary to meet the requirements of the Environmental Higher Level Stewardship scheme into which the moors are entered (a scheme which is run by the Rural Payments Agency and Natural England). The gorse has been cut back on agreed sites. However, due to the dreadful wet weather, the controlled burn did not take place this year. Rotten and missing wooden posts (Dragon's Teeth) will continue to be replaced by Devon Wildlife Trust to prevent vehicular access.

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. Dog fouling remains an issue, especially as it can cause abortions in grazing cattle and currently it is important that dogs are kept on leads to prevent disturbance of ground nesting birds. Fly tipping is a rising problem and it is the responsibility of the landowner to clear what has been dumped. The Devon Wildlife Trust often comes to the rescue. Please let us know if you spot any issues.

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 cattle are free to roam and can do so up to all the cattle grids even those outside the perimeter of the moor. They can also wander into the stone chipping layby which increasingly people appear to be using as a dumping ground. This is not ideal for the nosey cattle. 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 the Stewardship scheme until 2028 and will more than likely join the Countryside Stewardship Higher Tier scheme once the current scheme ends. This year we aim to create a new Management Plan for the moors which will provide advice on grazing, swaling, bracken / gorse control and how to manage the environment for priority species such as the Marsh Fritillary butterfly which has its home on our moors. If you have any thoughts on the future of the moors then please let us know.

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

Thank you.

Wendy Vigus (Secretary) - 01398 341159

John Stanbury (Chairman) - 01398 341546