Dartmoor Farming in Protected Landscapes

Local Assessment Panel

Wednesday 26th November 2025 - Parke

Attending: Will Dracup, Alison Clish-Green, Shirley Mudge, James Wright, Ann Willcocks (attending as the designated representative for the DaCC), Katie Wynter, Sarah Blyth, Mark Williams, Christine Malseed (*CM was not present for the first hour & half of the meeting but joined for the end of the first application and voting onwards)*

Dartmoor staff attending: Bea Dunscombe, Kaitlin Perryman

Apologies: Dan Alford, John Howell, Russell Ashford

Introductions: Michael Owen - Chair of the Dartmoor Access Forum DAF). Michael sat in for the meeting to understand how they run as he is the designated substitute representative for the DAF. It was confirmed that he could not take part in the discussions nor vote on any applications.

Finance Update:

- FiPL team gave an update as to the programme's current grant allocation and total number of projects approved this year to date. The team discussed the expected allocation by the end of the week if all the projects ready to present were approved, including the two from this meeting.
- Members and the FiPL team discussed the need for a pipeline of applications that have been approved and which may sit on a 'reserve list' if/when the full grant has been allocated, and in the case of underspend, can be given the 'green light' to deliver quickly.
- Panel asked if there was the option to bid for further round of funding this financial year as there as been in previous years. FiPL team relayed confirmation from DEFRA that this will not be possible this year and therefore confirmed the need to ensure high level of vigilance on over and underspend to utilise the full grant.

Applications

Establishing Moss Farm CSA

(Presented by Bea Dunscombe)

Summary of application:

This project looks to establish 'Moss Farm' as a local market garden through the installation of initial growing infrastructure. The application focuses on the essential first phase of a longer-term plan. This will enable the establishment of the site as a formal growing space and educational facility.

Declarations of interest:

No declarations of interest.

Discussion points:

- Members raised that the application mentions public access as a key element and benefit of the project but confirmed that this does not directly relate to formal public access such as walking routes and open access. Members discussed the benefits of volunteers and other groups being invited to a site such as this and therefore their enjoyment and connection to Dartmoor as a result.
- Have they considered the need for a toilet if they are going to have school visits and volunteers on site? Will they need to obtain DNPA Planning Consent for this, and should this be included in their Planning Application? FiPL team to relay this to the applicant and advise them to seek an amendment to their Planning Application.
- The Panel asked for more information on how the share plots mentioned in the application work and operate as part of the business plan and asked directly where the share plots will be situated on the site.
- Members questioned what impact the DEFRA FiPL team's 'approval' for the borehole means for the Panels ability to consider and vote on this element. FiPL Team confirmed this only related to the item's eligibility and suitability for the programme.
- It was raised as to whether the car park area was going to be big enough? How many cars do they expect at any given time, specifically on their volunteer days? Is there sufficient space for a large mini-bus to turn around on the site?
- Members asked if the quantity of stone cited in the application would be a sufficient amount to level the area and create enough of a hard standing. Concerns were raised about the stone washing away if it was not deep or compacted enough.
- The Panel discussed the impact this project may have on the local roads and if they are wide or robust enough to cope with any additional traffic as a result of the sites development. Members and FiPL team discussed the nearby routes, roads and tourist destinations which impact on the volume of traffic in the area.
- Panel questioned how many volunteers they expect to have on the site? Was it 10 or up to 45, as both numbers are mentioned in the application.
- How old are the other CSA's or similar projects on Dartmoor and how well established are they? FiPL team advised.
- What is the need for both deer & rabbit fencing? FiPL team discussed the essential need for crop protection on the site.
- Member raised whether they need more formal rabbit control on the site if rabbits are an issue. FiPL team confirmed seeing rabbits on a visit to the site and therefore confirmed the need for sufficient control and intervention to ensure crops are protected.
- Further planning permission concerns were mentioned again over no mention of a toilet or hand-washing facilities on site as this would need to be addressed in the future, so why not add it in now.
- Members flagged significant concerns over the timeframe for the project given a planning decision is yet to be determined as this process can take up to six months. They mentioned the additional delay that the Christmas period would add to this. Members raised hesitations

around ring fencing the grant money when the applicants may not hear back or be successful within the remaining FiPL programme time frame at this late and highly competitive time.

- Panel member flagged an issue with potable water and discussed if this is appropriate for FiPL funding, relating to concerns over the value for money and impact and whether this was necessary.
- Questions relating to the costs of the borehole were discussed as some of the costs seam low and others too high. Panel discussed their own experiences with boreholes as a frame of reference.
- Do we know if the neighbours approve or know about the plans for the site? FIPL team confirmed the applicants' good relationships with neighbours and that the applicant has had preliminary discussions with DNPA Planning over the site, who have therefore advised on the location of certain aspects to ensure it aligns with DNPA policy.
- Questions over the location of the water tanks and the costs relating to levelling an area for this. FIPL team to gain more clarity on this from the applicant.
- The Panel had various questions around the labour cost for the erection of the polytunnel and questioned the rate and number of days.
- Has the applicant completed an EIP? FIPL team confirmed they have completed and submitted this as part of their Planning Application (even though it was later realised this was not necessary).
- Panel requested a refinement of the costings and to see comparative quotes for various elements of the project and for the FIPL team to ensure no elements were being double funded.
- Has the applicant considered the need for a turning circle area for cars/groups/lorries with deliveries?
- Panel confirm their support for the projects concept and named it as 'ticking all the FiPL boxes'. However, members felt it is a lot of money to ringfence at this late stage where confidence in deliverability is low.
- Panel again stressed the importance of FiPL officers to confirm with the applicant that are supportive and like the idea of the project, however their concerns directly relate to assurance of deliverability.

The Panel took a short break for refreshments, after which discussions resumed.

- Members discussed what additional information they wanted to see in relation to the project to give assurance on deliverability, value for money from the costings and the impact it may have on traffic in the area.
- The Panel voted on a motion to remove the cost relating to making the water from the bore hole potable:
  For: 5
  Against: 0
  Abstained: 3
  This element, item 14, is to be removed from the application.
- A proposal was raised by the Chair and voted on by the rest of the Members– see below.

Scoring

The scoring by the FiPL team was confirmed:

	Score	Score after weighting
Project outcomes (Climate, Nature, People and Place) – 40%	10	4
Ability to deliver - 20%	8	1.6
Sustainability / legacy of projects - 20%	8	1.6
Value for Money - 20%	8	1.6
Total	34	8.8

Decision:

The Panel voted to defer this project until the next panel meeting in January 2026 to allow the applicant time to revise their application and supply insight to the following areas:

1. To offer an update on the progress of the Planning Application.
2. To refine and confirm costings as well as supply comparative quotes for the various labour works, such items 3,4 & 16.
3. To confirm of the impact the project may have on local traffic, such as information on the number of nearby passing places.
4. To create a Gantt Chart on the project's deliverability before the end of March 2026.
5. The Panel supported the 'Biodiversity Enhancements' element of the project to be approved as a smaller project/ under £10k in the meantime.
6. To re-present the project without costs for potable water.

For: 8
Against: 0
Abstained: 0

Dr Blackalls Drive & Access Improvements

(Presented by Bea Dunscombe)

Summary of application:

This project aims to upgrade sections of two very popular walking routes on Spitchwick Common; The Two Moors Way and the Dartmoor Way - High Moor Link. Works include surface improvements, drainage management, scrub clearance and bridleway signage installation.

Declarations of interest:

- Ann Wilcocks is the Secretary of Spitchwick Commoners Association's HLS Agreement but as she would have no financial or personal gain from the project so was decided that she could be part of the discussion and voting.

- Will Dracup on behalf of the Shallowford Farm Trust frequently utilises the area for field trips with school children on their visits, but as he has no grazing rights on the common it was decided he could be a part of the discussion and voting.

Discussion points:

- Panel members questioned what the National Parks' responsibility is to sign on PRoW? FiPL team confirmed DNPA must sign PRoW from highways.
- Panel discussed more widely why the whole of the Two Moors Way is not a PRoW and how the route is a patch work of Common land, Crow Access Land, PRoW's and promoted routes.
- Concerns were raised as to whether Growan will be sufficient to fill in the eroded sections of the track as some areas are significantly hollowed. Members recommended additional courser material such as hardcore base to be added prior to surface dressing with growan. Panel members were happy to grant further funding of additional materials needed to secure and make good the eroded sections.
- Where has the DNPA money match funding come from? FiPL team confirmed this funding comes from the 'Donate for Dartmoor' fund.
- Panel requested that a member of the FiPL team must inspect the works on the ground before releasing payment. If there is the opportunity for Panel members to also see the works on the ground as they are completed, then the Panel would be supportive of a wider site visit.
- Members discussed the number of fingerposts included in the bid and whether additional signage was needed. Members also questioned what exactly would be on the signs and where they would be located. The Panel delegated the decision for the location of the fingerposts and wording on the signage to the FiPL team, with input from the sector Ranger. It was confirmed that FiPL could cover any additional cost.
- Members asked where the Growan was coming from? Which store on Dartmoor? FiPL Team confirmed from the Duchy of Cornwall's stores in Princetown.
- Are there any mechanisms to stopping water from flowing onto the road at the bottom of the track? FIPL team to question to gain insight if this has been considered or if there is a solution.
- A request for SSSI consent to be sent to the Spitchwick Commoner HLS Secretary for their records.
- Panel member confirmed their will need to be a methodology for the works included as part of the SSSI consent submission as well as confirmation of any additional hardcore base material to be included. FiPL team confirmed no works would take place until the SSSI consent had been gained.
- Can the works to restore the board walk include the addition of a handrail on left/inside section of the boardwalk for increased accessibility? Members confirmed the cost of this addition can be covered by FIPL funds.

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%	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 the application subject to meeting the below 6 conditions:

1. The Panel stipulated that two additional 'Two Moors Way' fingerposts should be installed at the beginning and end of the Dr Blackalls route. The Panel delegated the decision for the exact location and wording used for these two fingerposts to the FiPL team, with input from the sector Ranger. FiPL can cover this additional cost.
2. In the deepest sections of eroded path along Dr. Blackalls Drive, a suitable sub-base must be compacted into the ground before capping with growan. The contractor must provide quoted evidence for the additional suitable sub-base chosen. FiPL can cover the cost of this, subject to evidence of quotes prior to order.
3. A handrail must be installed on the inside of the boardwalk, whilst the outside edge will have handrail protection through the installation of the funded post and rail fencing. FiPL can cover this additional cost.
4. The post and rail fencing must have three rails for public safety and not include barbed wire.
5. A FiPL Officer must sign-off the completed works before payment. The Panel stipulated that an invitation should be extended to Panel members, so that they can also see the completed works in person.
6. No works can be carried out until SSSI consent has been approved.

For: **9**

Against: 0

Abstained: 0

AOB:

Date of next meeting: Wednesday 21st January 2026, Parke.