

COMMONS COUNCIL



ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING and CONFERENCE

Friday 3rd March 2017, 1:30 -4.00 pm at Newton Rigg

Post Brexit what is the future for upland commons?

Robin Milton, Chairman NFU Hill and Uplands Farming Group

What are Commons Councils and should we have one?

Jeremy Holtom, Secretary Brendon Commons Council
There will be presentations and Q & A sessions

DO COME AND JOIN US

Looking Forward,

Well we are now into 2017 and the start of a new challenge to find out what plans are going to be put in place for coming out of Europe. The Federation has been busy with other organisations trying to stress that Defra's talked about 25-year Food and Farming plan and Environment Plan are both practical and workable for the people on the ground. This sounds simple but often the

powers that be forget this fact. Equally these plans must be as simple to run as possible with minimum administration costs. We want to see that the majority of whatever funding is available does get to grass root level and helps keep Communities, Commoners and Farms viable so that they can continue to look after our special landscape. A landscape that has been created and moulded by centuries of being a working living landscape.

As many of you will know the Federation is restarting the process to set up a Commons Council and you can read more about it in this newsletter. It is time that commoners take back control over the agricultural management of common land. A Commons Council can help us do this. If we don't get it off the ground now we are unlikely to get another chance for at least a generation.

Could I ask that you all make an effort to give some time over the next months, possibly years, to represent your common, valley and community? We need fresh faces to join the small number of very good people out there fighting your corner. We need strength in numbers to better influence our futures. Local farmers have so much knowledge to give and in general know how best to fix local issues and it is important they get heard. If you could just go the odd afternoon or evening meeting about issues that are going to affect your future, have your say and get heard it would make a massive difference for all of us. We cannot sit on the side-lines and expect others to talk for us.

Come and join us at our AGM. I hope that the weather keeps kind for you all,

Joe Relph (Chairman)

Update: The work of the committee—your voice on the fell and in national and local meetings

At times like this it is hard to convey the sheer volume of work that we have been undertaking on your behalf. We are making sure that immediate concerns are dealt with alongside looking to the future. The next section gives you a flavour of what we have been doing.

BPS 2015/2017

We know the timeliness of BPS payments is essential to the cash flow of your farm business. We have been working at a national level with colleagues from the Foundation for Common Land, the NFU and the Central Association of Agricultural Valuers (CAAV) to urge the RPA to get payments out to commoners. First we all had to get the RPA to acknowledge that there was a serious problem. This took many meetings and letters to Ministers, MPs and the government EFRA select committee.

Since December Paul Caldwell, Operations Director RPA has had regular meetings with FCL, NFU and CAAV to resolve BPS 2015 payments on commons and make sure BPS 2016 is paid earlier this time. Our role has been to pass up information about commoners who are still waiting to be paid, report mapping issues, local anomalies and mistakes in general.

At the time of writing, the situation is massively better than last year and around 70% of commoners have received at least some BPS 2016 money. But there still are a significant number of commoners who have yet to receive payments for 2015 and 2016. RPA say they will reassess the situation at the end of January. Hopefully we will be down to a smaller number of individual cases that can be resolved at the local level. Please get in contact if you have issues about BPS 2015 and 2016 payments.

National Trust (NT) - Thorneythwaite

Last August we voiced our dismay about the NT breaking up a hill farm in Borrowdale. We requested a meeting with senior staff to discuss this issue. Since then we have attended two meetings with senior NT staff and local farmer representatives with hard talking at these meetings. We have made it clear that in recent years landlord/tenant relationships have deteriorated, rather than improved. The majority of NT tenants and their families are feeling increasingly disconnected from their landlord and NT's action at Thorneythwaite has not helped, rather it raised new concerns and alarm among their tenants.

Its early days, but they do appear to be listening. NT tenants recently received

a letter, the gist being the NT aims for better relations with their tenants. And Helen Ghosh, Director General of the NT said that hill farmers can “count on our commitment and support” at the Uplands Alliance meeting about the future of the uplands after Brexit in January. NT also plans to recruit a Hill Farming Project Manager to work with tenants and staff alike. All good stuff, but actions speak louder than words and we will be keeping an eye on what goes on.

Lake District National Park Authority (LDNPA)

We attended a gathering of farmers hosted by James Rebanks to meet the evaluators of the World Heritage Nomination. It was a good evening and they were very taken with how farmers manage the commons and fells. LDNPA expects to hear in July 2017 if they are successful. We hope so.

On a less positive note we heard in early December that the LDNPA were considering leasing the major part of Glenridding common to the John Muir Trust (JMT), a conservation charity that explicitly supports rewilding. A proposal to lease the common was on the Agenda for the December meeting of the Members of the Authority. This potentially was bad news for commoners and we had to do something about it.

First we talked to the Glenridding commoners to get their views – they were worried as they were not sure what this would mean for them. We then raised our concerns with the Chairman, Vice Chair and Members with a farming background. We wrote to all the Members asking them to find out more about the JMT and scrutinise the proposal. We also wrote to local MPs to inform them of the situation and asked our friends to do the same.

Our hasty lobbying campaign worked. We were told that after a robust debate the Members agreed to defer the decision to lease the common to the JMT, pending a 3-month consultation exercise. From February to Mid-April the local community and others with an interest in the common will be invited to meetings to hear about JMT's proposed management plans, discuss and comment on what they've heard and seen. We will have a role in the design of the consultation and will also take part.

We hope all the commoners who consider themselves affected by this proposal will have their say. Equally many of you will have views on what the LDNPA should, and shouldn't be doing with the common land they own, and will want to take part. The best way to find out how to do this is to check LDNPA's website from time to time.

Commons Council

Why is the Federation supporting a commons council?

Brexit is a game changer for agriculture. The government of the United Kingdom will have to develop its own policy towards farming and rural land use to replace the Common Agricultural Policy. We know that there will be less public funds for farming. The NFU is working hard to get Defra to commit to food and farming. But we also know that influential conservation organisations are lobbying hard for farm payments to be directed towards the delivery of environmental improvement and other public goods. Traditional hill farming when done well, does both. It is an entirely appropriate use of marginal land and delivers food, livestock, biodiversity, ecosystems services, landscape, public access and cultural heritage.

Regrettably there are plenty of people/organisations out there who don't know this. They have been sold a story of "sheep-wrecked" hills and have strong opinions about what should happen on the hills. Many see the post-Brexit negotiations as their opportunity to impose their views on the hills. So we have to be better organised and have our say, otherwise we'll be left out. In addition, we need a strong legally recognised structure that can support and defend us—a Commons Council does this.

What is a Commons Council?

Commons Councils are statutory organisations - this means they're recognised by law, and can make legally binding rules relating to agricultural activities, the management of vegetation and the exercise of rights of common (but only on the common land covered by the Council.) This is one of the key benefits of a Commons Council – if anyone wants to change the land management they have to take account of the rules. Also it can help to sort-

10 reasons for supporting a Commons Council

- Enables commoners to take **CONTROL** of their interests
- Provides a **STRONGER VOICE** to influence post CAP schemes
- Can help **UNITE** commoners
- A recognised **LEGAL ENTITY** this gives us more **CLOUT**
- **DEMOCRATIC** structure - one person can't hold the rest to ransom
- **EFFECTIVE MANAGEMENT** to protect commoning
- A way to overcome disputes and **RESOLVE** AGE-OLD ISSUES on commons
- A means to address **DISEASE CONTROL**, stock husbandry and welfare
- Defra/ Natural England and will have to **CONSULT** the Commons Council
- Get involved in the **DESIGN** and **DELIVER SCHEMES** that work for commons based on farmers' knowledge

out issues of non-compliance, for example if a rights holder shows disregard to their local association's rules, the association can't do much as they don't have any real powers to enforce things. But if the association is a member of the Council they can ask the Council to intervene and enforce the rules on their behalf.

Commons Council are democratically run by Council Members who are elected by commoners. As their main function is the active management of common land there has to be a majority of active grazier representatives. Also there are seats on the Council for landowners and others who have a legal interest in the common.

What does a Commons Council do?

Makes rules to:

- Manage agricultural activities and vegetation and regulate the use of common rights

The rules are devised by the Council Members, not imposed by outsiders. They are based on long standing codes of good practice, so are practical and work locally. If needed, and only as a last resort, the Council can enforce

breaches of the rules through a county court order. In extreme cases a breach may be prosecuted in the magistrates' court.

It also:

- Prepares and maintains a live register – useful for BPS claims
- Establishes and maintains boundaries
- Can remove unlawful boundaries and other encroachments
- Can remove animals unlawfully permitted to graze

In addition a Council can also: enter into agreements; prepare and adopt management plans; raise money; acquire or dispose of land; and employ staff.

What can't a Council do?

A Council can't be imposed on a common. A common will only join the council when there is substantial support from the commoners (especially active graziers), owners and others with legal interests.

A Council cannot make rules that fall outside of its functions. For example it cannot make rules about public access. It cannot over-ride the normal need for landowners' consent for certain activities.

A Council cannot dictate to local commoners' associations. The associations run the day-to-day management of their commons and the Council will only intervene if asked by a majority of the association's members. Commoner's association will not loose control.

How will the Council work with the Federation

We know that not all associations will want to join the Council. To keep costs low, avoid duplication and provide services to all local commoners' associations in Cumbria and Northumberland, the Federation and the Commons Council will run side-by-side using the same part-time, self-employed administrator.

There will be two types of membership:

- **Ordinary membership of FCC:** advocacy, influencing, representation and informing for, and on behalf of active graziers and hill farmers; also hold to account local and regional authorities, utility companies and conservation bodies with an interest in common land
- **Dual membership: FCC and Commons Council:** as above + live registers, dispute resolution and rule enforcement.

Costs

We believe that everyone involved should pay their fair share, but the cost must not be prohibitive or the Council won't work. The exact costs per commoner will depend on the number of commons that participate (the more commons involved the less each common will pay).

Currently BPS and agro-environment payments add up to around £80/ha. We calculate that commoners' associations will pay their Federation Membership plus around 15p/ha Commons Council fee - this is a small proportion of the support payment to common land and could bring huge benefits to commoners in an uncertain world. Landowners will be expected to make a contribution as well.

Next steps

We need to know if your commoners' association is interested before we take this any further. Therefore we encourage all commoners to get involved, take ownership of the Commons Council and protect commoning into the future.

Please can you:

- Put Commons Councils on the agenda of your AGM
- Check that your fellow commoners have read this article so they are better informed when they go to your AGM
- See our Facebook page for more information <https://www.facebook.com/Cumbriacommonscouncil/> post questions, your thoughts, suggestions for everybody to read
- Talk to Federation Committee members

- At your AGM find out if a majority are interested – show of hands
- Encourage other commoners' associations to join
- Attend the Federation's AGM – Brendon (on Exmoor) Commons Council will tell us how they are getting on
- Let us know

If there is sufficient support we will seek an Establishment Order from the Secretary of State. This may be our only chance to get a Commons Council established, so please take this seriously.

We need you to make this happen as we don't want to waste anybody's time.

A portrait of Mungrisdale Common —CL 293

John Rowland

Mungrisdale Common, CL 293, comprises of the open fell ground lying between the road from the A66 to Mungrisdale village in the East to the river Caldew in the West. From the road only the eastern fringes are seen, namely Souther Fell, the Tongue and Bowscale fell, the rest of the land is hidden behind these fells and the huge bulk of Saddleback, probably better known nationally as Blencathra, to the South. The common totals 1818ha, the Eastern side consists of fairly steep fellsides while the hidden ground to the West slopes down to the young river Caldew.

Most of the ground is white fell with a significant area of heather on the South side of Bowscale fell and more heather in the more inaccessible areas of Bannerdale crags. Up to six grouse are sometimes seen on the largest patch of heather but are unlikely to raise any shooters interest. Bowscale fell is also host to one of the highest altitude sessile oak woods in the country.

Large areas of bracken cover the lower slopes along with several large areas of gorse and some juniper bushes on the Tongue. Parts of the lower ground is very wet and there are areas of peat higher up, some of which is boggy and can tempt sheep to a sticky end in very dry weather.

The under lying rock is slate which is clearly visible in some of the steeper

areas and was quarried in Bannerdale at one time. Lead and graphite were also mined up to the 1850s All the common apart from Souther fell is part of the Skiddaw range SSSI which includes the Caldbeck, Uldale, Skiddaw Forrest and Bassenthwaite fells.

The most visible part of the common, Souther Fell, is famous, in certain circles, for reports of a phantom army marching across it on midsummer's eve for several years in a row around the time of Bonnie Prince Charlie's Jacobite rebellion in 1745. I have yet to see it.

The commoners' association also includes the adjoining commons of Bowscale and Saddleback giving a total of 3340ha. There are 10 graziers in total, 5 of them on Mungrisdale common. Due to the topography of the land, graziers tend to gather individually or in pairs, a communal gather would not work with everybody gathering in a different direction, but we do gather around the same time which makes for a cleaner job.

The association usually meets once a year with few problems and special meetings are called if necessary for such things as the recent mapping fiasco.

The three commons have different owners, which has not caused a problem but could complicate environmental agreement applications and the recent attempted sale of Blencathra did raise concerns as to who would buy it, but is now off the market.

The commons were entered into an ESA scheme in the 1990s when stocking rates were reduced. During FMD, 2 flocks were taken out and not replaced, another was taken off the common, a fourth was sold with rights and removed in the late 1990s. These reductions enabled the remaining graziers to enter a HLS scheme in 2007 aimed at heather regeneration. One condition of the scheme was the fencing and planting with trees and shrubs along some gills which was agreed to by members with reservations. An area of scrub and the sessile oak wood were also to be fenced to aid regeneration along with a reduction in stocking to 0.7 ewes/hectare. Half the sheep have to be removed in winter with some graziers volunteering to remove all sheep between tugging and lambing. The scheme is running reasonable smoothly, but there is ongoing damage to fencing and young trees from wind, snow and floods. I feel

that the decreased stocking has encouraged bracken to spread even faster and in some areas there are not enough sheep to keep paths through the bracken open. The fencing of the oak trees which runs along the upper part of the fellside has definitely restricted sheep movement as the fence cuts across several existing sheep trods.

This all, along with the removal of 4 stocks of sheep has had a detrimental effect on hefting with sheep moving into empty areas making shepherding and gathering more complicated, compounded by less people on the ground to do the job over the same area. The scheme was restarted with the introduction of UELS, so fortunately it still has several years to run.

The future for the common is, I feel, uncertain, what will Brexit bring, will there be support, what environmental schemes will there be and what will they demand of us? The fencing around the woods has 15-year planning consent, what problems will be created if they are removed? The condition of existing heather is poor, much is overgrown and inaccessible to sheep or dogs but Natural England will not give permission to burn due to the possibility of erosion on steep slopes. Will the fells be taken over by bracken and scrub and will more stocks be removed making it harder for those who remain? Storm Desmond washed out tracks and created some huge landslips, not caused by compaction from sheep, as stated by one prominent campaigner, but by water moving under the surface and sliding large sods, 3 feet thick, some going several hundred metres down the slope. Its rain that causes flooding not sheep!

Whatever happens commons and commoners are going to need a strong lobbying voice and the Federation has proved itself to be just that, being recognised and invited to consultations by the powers that be. Common grazing has a long history and I think commoners are resilient enough and stubborn enough to persevere and continue this great tradition.

Future of Agri – Environment Schemes

Steve Lund, Border and Eden Team Leader, Natural England

On the 3 October 2016 the Chancellor confirmed that the government will guarantee funding for structural and investment fund projects, including agri-environment schemes, signed after the Autumn Statement (2016) and which will continue after we have left the EU. He was clear that businesses, farmers and other organisations must be able to apply for EU funding while the UK remains a member of the EU. He also stated that the current level of agricultural funding under CAP Pillar I will be upheld until 2020 as part of the transition to new domestic arrangements. So, we have some clarity and commitment to new agri – environment schemes until March 2019, and a commitment to continue to fund existing schemes after that date.

So, what does this mean?

- Countryside Stewardship agreements applied for in 2016 and due to start 1 January 2017, are now guaranteed.
- Where expenditure will arise after we have left the EU, the projects will need to meet new conditions relating to value for money and domestic strategic priorities.

Defra is working with the Treasury to establish precisely what these new conditions mean in relation to Countryside Stewardship and other schemes. Natural England will confirm arrangements for entering into new agri-environment agreements after 2017 in due course - likely to be early in 2017.

How does this affect new schemes on commons ?

As we all know, due to the complexities on commons, it usually takes around 2 years to develop an application and submit it. Even though we don't have certainty at this stage of future schemes rounds in 2018 and beyond, to avoid lost time, we are happy to work with you and discuss your ambitions.

Commons schemes will last for 10 years. For an application to be competitive, we will be looking for schemes which will deliver real biodiversity gain, contribute to wider landscape benefits and, where appropriate, deliver measures for flood mitigation downstream.

If you have started to develop plans already, it may be possible to get a fully agreed application together for submission next year, using the working assumption that the scheme will go ahead, but proceeding at risk, for a January 2018 start date. However, we must remember that a fencing application to the Planning Inspectorate can take 5 months to determine in addition to the time needed to carry out the necessary pre application consultations. If you are contemplating any woodland planting, in addition to scrub planting, you will need to discuss your plans at an early stage with the Forestry Commission as you are likely to need an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) on the common.

Commoners' Associations may also be able to receive Countryside Stewardship funding for feasibility studies that provide the information required to prepare an agreement or a commons fencing application. These are stand-alone capital agreements that can pay up to 100% of the costs of the studies. Natural England advisers can provide more detail.

We are keen to stress the importance of having everyone on board with any potential agreement, and the necessary agreements in place between and among commoners, and others, in order for a successful application to be made and to ensure it has the best possible chance of delivering the intended outcomes over the scheme's life.

Over the lifetime of HLS, Federation of Cumbria Commoners' members have benefitted financially by £33,800,000 in revenue payments to deliver moorland restoration, habitat diversity in the form of scrub planting and bracken control and habitat for upland waders. Schemes have supported the introduction and maintenance of cattle on commons, funded traditional and capital works on the common, benefitting both the commoners, local businesses carrying out the work, and local residents by enhancing the environment. All these works have delivered wider and more valuable public goods – something the Federation can be proud of.

We look forward to working with you on developing your ideas on how your associations can contribute to a sustainable future in the Cumbrian fells.

The frustrations of dealing with the Rural Payments Agency since the introduction of new technology.

Charles Raine —YoungsRPS gives a land agents' view

In a press statement put out at the end of last year, the Rural Payments Agency (RPA) claimed that 68 per cent of farmers in England had received their 2016 Basic Payment Scheme (BPS) money. Announced as if good news, with total disregard for the fact that more than a quarter of farmers owed subsidy payments had yet to receive a penny, and for some this still is the case.

For me this sums up the attitude of the RPA. In my role within YoungsRPS I deal with them on a daily basis over subsidy and grant payments and submissions. The new computerised system brought in to supposedly cut red tape and make life easier for farmers is a shambles. Introduced to speed up the application and payment process and improve accuracy, instead we constantly find mistakes and have to request amendments to details and to payments.

The system remains clumsy and behind the curve. Mapping errors made by the RPA are commonplace, putting huge emphasis on farmers to double check every detail each and every year. The whole process is difficult and frustrating, with frequent losses of information, which can take hours to input.

When the European Court ruled that changes to the mechanism by which subsidy payments are calculated on common land meant some farmers could claim significant back payment as well as extra entitlement, this was obviously good news. As you will know most have yet to receive either.

One important aspect of the new system was to allow entitlements to be transferred electronically. This has yet to happen, and as a result many 2015 transfers had still not been processed by the end of May 2016.

Defra has never given any real explanation for the shortfalls of the system they chose. All we can do is work with it, so my advice would be:

- Be as clear and accurate as possible when presenting information to the RPA;

- Double check everything you receive, even payments made after appeal as these often remain inaccurate;
- Check your Commons Register to make sure rights are correctly recorded;
- Don't be afraid to question anything.

With the end of Higher Level Stewardship in sight, the introduction of any replacement is a daunting prospect based on current performance, the new higher tier scheme with its complicated application process and endless red tape being a case in point.

Update on the Implementation of the Commons Act 2006 by Cumbria County Council

Svetlana Bainbridge – Commons Registration Officer

The last twelve months have been busy and eventful here at the Commons Registration Service as we continue our work under the new legislation. We have received 92 applications in the last year making it 169 in total since the implementation of the 2006 Act. In addition to the challenges presented by the large number of applications, we have also undergone significant changes within the team, Alyssia Ashurst having left her post as the Commons Registration Officer at the end of April. Since then, Svetlana Bainbridge has been appointed as Alyssia's replacement and two new Commons Officers, Liz Fitton and Jason Weatherill, have been recruited to assist with the large volume of applications. We have also seen a scheme of delegation put into place which has allowed the Commons Registration Officer to determine certain types of applications without the need to refer them to Senior Managers or a Committee. This has dramatically improved the processing time of the simple non-contentious applications with 95 applications having been determined since the scheme of delegation was introduced in April as opposed to only 3 in 2015.

The implementation of the Commons Act 2006 has presented challenges not only for the officers of the Council but also for the applicants and their solicitors. However, we are pleased to say that the quality of the applications

which we receive has greatly improved since the first year, which means everybody is getting more proficient with the new multiple application forms' system and the large variety of applications that can be made under the new legislation. This might, to some degree, be due to DEFRA having introduced new "plain English" guidance on their website which is much more user-friendly than the previous version. The guidance is available at <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/common-land-guidance-for-commons-registration-authorities-and-applicants>

We would like to remind the commoners and landowners that the deadline for applying to register qualifying historic events free of charge is 14th December 2017 (the end of the transitional application period). The registration authority then has until 14th December 2018 (the end of the transitional period) to process all such applications. Historic events are events which occurred between 2nd January 1970 and 14th December 2014 and were registerable under the Commons Registration Act 1965 but, for one or another reason, were not registered prior to the implementation of the 2006 Act. There are 7 such qualifying events: creation of a right of common, variation of a right of common, severance of a right of common, surrender or extinguishment of a right of common, statutory disposition, apportionment (only where it is accompanied by a primary application to register one of the above qualifying events) and transfer of a right held in gross.

The possible effects of failing to apply before the deadline include:

1. A fee being payable for any application.
2. A qualifying event becoming unregistrable if it would be unfair to register it by reason of any reliance placed on the registers since the deadline.
3. Rights of common being extinguished or rights previously surrendered or extinguished being revived where a qualifying event has not been registered by the end of the transitional period.

For any further advice or guidance please contact us at: commons.registration@cumbria.gov.uk

Table to show applications received to 5th January 2017

Form	Provision under which the application was made	Purpose of application	Year 1	Year 2	Year3	Totals	%
CA3	Section 8	Apportionment of rights	11	3	0	14	8.28
CA4	Section 10	Attachment of a right of common	1	0	0	1	0.59
CA5	Section 11	Re-allocation of attached rights	1	0	0	1	0.59
CA6	Section 12	Transfer of rights in gross	8	22	0	30	17.75
CA9	Section 15(1) & 15(8)	New TVG	1	1	0	2	1.18
CA10	Section 19	Correction	17	9	0	26	15.38
CA13	Schedule 2	Non registration or mistaken registration	7	1	0	8	4.73
CA14	Schedule 3	Historic Applications	12	13	1	26	15.38
CA15	Regulation 43	Declaration of a right	19	42	0	61	36.09
			77	91	1	169	

Update on the work of the Foundation for Common Land, Julia Aglionby, Executive Director

The Foundation for Common Land as a charity is now 4 years old! We have had an active 2016 and our work can be divided into three areas:

- Working with government and other parties on current issues
- Informing stakeholders, the public and commoners about common land
- Future Proofing the Management of Common Land

We are a registered Charity therefore our work is focused on protecting and enhancing the public benefits from common land.

Working with government and other parties on current issues: BPS and Stewardship

Commoning produces wonderful landscapes but depends on financial support from the government as entry to our Countryside is free and there as yet is no way of capturing the public benefits provided through the sale of livestock. This means a large part of our work this year has been ensuring that the BPS payments to commoners have been paid. This matter is still unresolved but the voice we've made has opened doors and we now have direct access to the Rural Payments Agency (RPA) Chief Executive via his senior managers. We continue to highlight the failures in mapping of common land and the total lack of transparency to enable commoners to assess if their payments have been correctly made.

With regard Countryside Stewardship only a few commons have had their previous agreements expire so we have not been able to test the system thoroughly but early indications are that it will be more bureaucratic and process driven than previously. This is challenging for commoners and Natural England and sadly could have knock on implications for the management of common land. The uncertainty around Brexit also means commons expiring in the next couple of years will have some difficult choices to make.

We have a positive working relationship with Defra's shrinking but active Commons and Uplands team and appreciate their collaborative and open approach. We are now initiating active dialogue in Wales with the aim over the next two years to develop a Wales Common Land Network.

Informing stakeholders, the public and commoners about common land: Training and Research

We run courses for Conservation Professionals and other stakeholders on Hill Farming and Commoning. We have been working on these in Scotland and Wales as well as one in Dartmoor for Defra staff.

This year we have produced two much welcomed reports; Hill Sheep

Nutrition by Andrew Humphries and The State of Commoning in Wales report by Sion Brackenbury and Gwyn Jones.

Our website remains a great resource on Common Land across Britain. We have the facility for people to ask questions which we can then direct to the most appropriate person. Our twitter feed @4CommonLand also appears on our website. We also are regularly asked to speak at public and private events across the country and enjoy being able to fly the flag for commons.

Future Proofing the Management of Common Land: Our Common Cause

In early 2016 we submitted our application for Our Common Cause: Our Upland Commons to the Heritage Lottery Fund. The case study areas are in Dartmoor, Shropshire, Yorkshire Dales, North York Moors and the Lake District. The aim of the project is to protect and enhance the cultural and natural heritage of common land through joined up learning, improve management skills and undertaking practical works. Sadly the bid was not successful in May but we had really positive feedback from HLF encouraging us to resubmit. We resubmitted in December 2016 and expect a decision in March 2017.

Looking forward has now become a matter of urgency due to the referendum vote to leave the EU. Given the critical nature of public support for commoning we are keen to be at the centre of discussions on how the future of government support for farmed land will be framed and delivered. We have been undertaking this work through the Uplands Alliance and under this banner FCL convened an Uplands Alliance event in September last at Defra and the event at Newton Rigg in January 2017. People from across the upland interests came together to explore the future using four scenarios. The reports are now available via our website.

Our core funding derives from the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation who renewed their funding for a further 4 years and to whom we are most grateful. Please do contact us if we can help you; either info@foundationforcommonland.org.uk or via 0845 644 0631

Federation of Cumbria Commoners Committee			
Chairman	Joe Relfh	Non-regional	01768 483337
Vice Chair	Jim Campbell	Non-regional	01931 713412
Committee			
John Atkinson		Lakes South West	01229 885663
Ernest Coulthard		Kirkby Stephen	01768 371926
Harry Hutchinson		Howgills	01539 620635
Carl Walters		Lakes North Central	01931 713248
Duncan Ellwood		Lakes West	01946 841344
John Rowland		Lakes North	01768 779246
Dave Smith (Treasurer)		Eastern Fells	017683 61333
Mark Jenkinson		Crosby	
Pauline Blair		Non-regional	01946 861630
William Steele		Non-regional	01786 341436
Tom Lorrains		Lakes South Central	
Ian Gorst		Lancashire co-opted	01524 770509
Charles Raine		Northumberland co-opted	01434 609000
Robert Benson		Owner Rep co-opted	017684 86807
John Turner		Owner Rep co-opted	01931 712671
Julia Aglionby		Co-opted	07702 100111
Andrew Humphries		Co-opted	01228 564140

Administrator (part time)

Viv Lewis, 5 Burnbanks, Bampton, Penrith, Cumbria CA10 2RW. Tel: 01931 713335; mob 07748185049

viv@cumbriacommoners.org.uk

www.cumbriacommoners.org.uk