

Federation of Cumbria Commoners

Affiliated with Lancashire & Northumberland

Newsletter Spring/Summer 2013



Photo: Kath Birkinshaw

Looking Forward

Fellow Commoners,

By the time you read this I hope you have all come through what has been a very difficult spring for many. It seems the season of meetings has begun again and we at the Federation continue to put the commoner's viewpoint. As ever nothing stays the same for long. In particular, I refer to the upcoming changes to environmental schemes and to the fundamental classification of land used as a basis for subsidy, both subjects on which we will try to keep you informed.

The Federation is nearly 10 years old which is a timely opportunity to reflect on what the Federation is all about. We have over 600 members. In Cumbria we represent 34 local commoners' associations and around 472 members with grazing rights, covering 61,500 ha of common land (all upland moors) which is nearly 60% of total

common land in Cumbria. We have affiliated members in Northumberland from 2 commoners' associations and 32 members with grazing rights covering 9,310 ha of common land which is over 95% of all common land in Northumberland. In Lancashire, 3 commoners' associations are affiliated to the Federation with 19 members, covering 2,500 ha of common land. We also have 68 individual associate members, most are from Cumbria but some come from Durham, Yorkshire and Lancashire

We are self-financing through our membership fee of £15/year. We also get occasional grants to deliver specific projects e.g. commons council consultation.

Our overall aim is to maintain and improve the viability of hill farming on common land. A lot of our work is informing and influencing Natural England, Defra, the Lake District National Park and other conservation bodies that hill farmers have managed moorland and upland commons over hundreds of years and are critical and central to future sustainable management of this land. We produce food, our flocks form the backbone of the national sheep industry, we created treasured landscapes and rich biodiversity. Securing a bright future for all these valuable national assets depends on our farms continuing to be viable businesses in these isolated settings. We believe that our message is getting across and government and conservation bodies do recognise the importance of hill farming. The question is do they recognise it enough? We still have more work to do here.

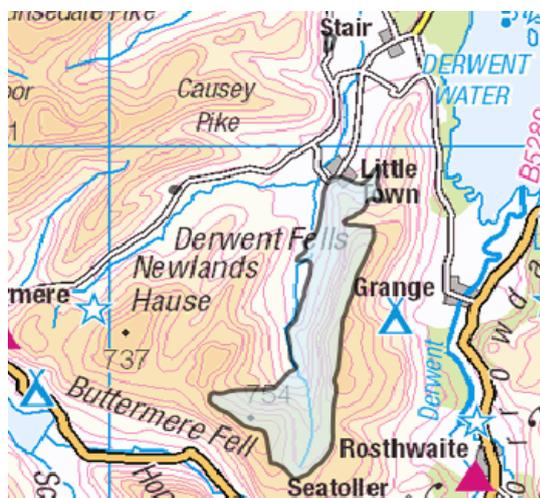
Dave Smith (Chairman)

Profile of Derwent Fell, above Keswick, Cumbria

This article has been written by Tom Lorains and Veronica Waller

The Derwent Fells are to the west of Derwent Water on either side of the Newlands valley and cover an area of 3,227 ha. The fells rise to 637 metres at Causey Pike and 737m at Hindscarth and the area is characterised by rugged mountain scenery with high craggy peaks and steep sided valleys. The common is contiguous with the Buttermere and Brackenthwaite commons to the west and Langstrath/Coombe commons to the south. The common is made up of a mosaic of upland heather moorland, acid grassland, heathland, and blanket peat bogs with bracken and gorse.

The common is owned by the National Trust. Currently there are 11 active graziers and three non graziers. The common entered a Higher Level Stewardship Scheme agreement which started in October 2010. It is managed by a Stewardship Group with its own officers and constitution.



A key part of the agreement is the restoration of moorland and prescriptions include restrictions on stocking numbers and exclusion of almost all livestock at certain times of the year, particularly from 16th November to 1st January. There are payments made for additional shepherding to two of the graziers. Keskadale Wood and Coledale Beck Wood have been fenced to exclude livestock. There is a bracken control management plan.

The commoners enforce the following rules of grazing:

- All sheep must be part of flocks comprised of regular numbers of even ages and all must be properly hefted.
- Flocks must comprise hardy native breeds appropriate to the area
- All sheep to be properly marked to show ownership
- No tups to be turned out and no bulls or entire horses/ponies to be let out on to the common.
- On suspicion of sheep scab to inform the Chairman or Secretary and to arrange appropriate treatment
- No feed bags or litter to be left on the common
- No ring feeders to be allowed on the Common
- No supplementary feeding to take place except in accordance with the management plan.
- All graziers must take part in communal gathers of the fell when required.

A particular issue for the graziers is the encroachment of bracken and gorse and the increasing incidence of ticks.

News from the Committee

FULL HOUSE AT OUR AGM

Our AGM held in late February at Newton Rigg attracted over 70 people to discuss a varied agenda.

We always try to put together an agenda that will be of interest to as many of our members as possible. This time we included a practical workshop session looking at the Internal Management Agreement (IMA) which is an essential tool for delivering Higher Level Stewardship/ Upland Entry Level schemes on common land and ways of handling disputes and reducing risk. The legal session was led by Tim Cartmell who covered the essentials of creating a robust IMA, not only what needs to be included but also what should not be part of the Agreement. Julia Aglionby, Director of the National Centre for the Uplands and Chairman of the Foundation for Common Land then discussed the ongoing management of IMAs and ways to reduce the risk of breaching these agreements and resolving disputes.

After a refreshment break, Margaret Read, the recently appointed Head of Commons and Access Implementation in Defra, talked about the government's commitment to a sustainable future for common land and answered a number of questions from those at the meeting. A key point to emerge from her presentation was that Cumbria would be one of the first areas for the roll out of Part 1 of the Commons Act 2006. "Cumbria has a greater number of commons than any other county in the country," she said. "The implementation of the Act has been delayed by funding issues but we recognise that local authorities need support to take the actions necessary and Cumbria has everything else in place to make the necessary changes for a secure future for commons."

Margaret Read also informed the audience on the consultation on CAP reform proposal to replace Less Favoured Areas with Areas of Natural Constraint to determine for eligibility for EU financial support.

Updates

CUMBRIA COMMONS COUNCIL

Many of you will know that the work to establish a commons Council for Cumbria has been a long road with slow progress at times. Since the last newsletter we successfully applied to Natural England for further funding. This has given us fresh momentum for taking things to the next stage and we are planning to submit our case to Parliament before the end of the year if there is sufficient support.

You have told us that the cost of participation in a Council is a sticking point for some commoners' associations. We believe that everyone involved should pay their fair share, but the cost must not be prohibitive or it won't work. Local commoners' associations and landowners will be expected to make a contribution. Also we are asking Defra to contribute to the initial running costs of the Council until it is up and running and has proved its worth. We have suggested they consider making a provision in the new environmental land management schemes for a supplement to commons councils similar to UX1 in UELS. They have said that they will consider our proposition.

We still need to hammer out the details of the financing proposal for the Commons Council and we would like your input. Therefore we are planning to hold a meeting in July for the Chairmen of the local commoners' associations who have expressed an interest in becoming part of the council. Expect your invitation soon.

For more information on the Council see the leaflet enclosed with this newsletter.

IMPLEMENTATION OF PART 1, COMMONS ACT 2006

Since our AGM Margaret Read's team have put several options to the Defra Ministers for a decision. These include starting the roll out in Cumbria and working down the list local registration authorities. A decision will be announced at the end of June after the government spending review.

AREAS FACING NATURAL CONSTRAINTS

The EU negotiations are at the stage of Trilogue (i.e. negotiations between the Presidency, European Parliament and European Commission) to reach agreement on a final compromise position. In terms of ANC the European Parliament's position is to delay ANC, and possibly its removal from the current CAP proposals. The Commission are opposed to a delay. So there is no certainty on the outcome of the negotiations at this stage. Defra is unable to decide whether to use ANC in England but says they will be making decisions on options for the future of uplands support in the coming months.

High Nature Value Farming

Although you probably won't identify yourselves as High Nature Value (HNV) farmers, commoners in Cumbria, Northumberland and Lancashire and elsewhere will fall under the HNV category. HNV farming is mainly associated with extensive sheep and beef farming in the upland and marginal areas of Britain, many of which are designated as nationally important landscapes. Maintaining viable farming businesses in these areas is challenging, but the survival of many species and habitats depend

on extensive livestock grazing.

The Federation of Cumbria Commoners has joined a coalition of 18 organisations including the Scottish Crofters Federation; South West Uplands Federation; National Centre for the Uplands; Foundation for Common Land; National Parks England; The National Association for AONBs, RSPB; Buglife; Plantlife; European Forum on Nature Conservation and Pastoralism (EFNCP); Butterfly Conservation, The Wildlife Trusts, Ulster Wildlife Trust, Scottish Wildlife Trust, The National Trust for Scotland, The National Trust for England, Wales and Northern Ireland and Archaeology Scotland.

The coalition has written to Owen Paterson MP, Secretary of State for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs warning him of the impending crisis facing farming communities, wildlife, landscape and communities in High Nature Value (HNV) farming areas. The letter asks the Minister to do more to ensure that HNV farming is a viable economic option for future generations, keeping people on the land to maintain a vibrant rural community and protect our special wildlife and landscapes.

The RSPB are keen to collate farming stories to ensure that the HNV farming voice is heard loud and clear by policymakers. If you have a HNV story for RSPB then please contact: Deborah Deveney, (RSPB Campaign Leader – High Nature Value Farming). e-mail: Deborah.Deveney@RSPB.org.uk

Hill Farming training for conservation professionals

Federation members have been working with the Foundation for Common Land and the Cumbria Farmer Network to deliver this successful pilot project. Six hill farmers and commoners (Alan Alderson, Harry Hutchinson, Stephen Lord, Tom Lorains, David Noble and Joe Relph) have invited more than 40 staff (some very senior) from Natural England, Lake District National Park, National Trust, Cumbria Wildlife Trust, Friends of the Lake District onto their farms. One of the aims of the training is to create a relaxed atmosphere and encourage dialogue between the farmers and policy makers/ conservation professionals, so that the participants gain some insights into the real lives of hill farmers and vice versa.

The training consists of:

Day 1: An introduction to Hill Farming Systems that covers: the hill farm, the sheep farming year, breeds of sheep, the stratified sheep system, hefting, suckler cows, grass and forage, agri-environment schemes and hill farm types

Day 2: Common Land management and includes: the importance of common land to sheep production on hill farms enterprise, agricultural activity on common land, legal rights and responsibilities and the governance of common land, agri-environment schemes and internal management agreements, grazing calendars and off-wintering, , traditions, cultural heritage and cooperative working

Day 3: Hill Farm Business Economics and includes: an introduction to farm business accounts, variation between different types of hill farms and their income streams, variations in profitability over the years, disease, how agri-environment scheme prescriptions affect the farm businesses and choices available to hill farmers in how to run their businesses, what makes a viable farm business

The participants chose which training days they wish to attend and many went on all three days. The hill farmers introduced the topics in the farm kitchen or somewhere suitable out of the weather. Then everybody went outside and walked round the farm and up the fell. They undertook some practical tasks with livestock (dosing and drenching, foot trimming, condition scoring) and other farm tasks such as repairing a drystone wall gaps. All participants received Course Handouts and Technical Course Notes specially prepared for the training course.

The feedback has been very positive with participants really enjoying the practical nature of the training. The farmers' input has been very much appreciated. In the words of one participant, but echoed by many "The farmer trainers are an enormous asset – their open, honest and 'non-preaching' style of presentation is great."

Some other quotes;

"The whole issue of sheep breeding was a real eye opener and the price farmers are willing to pay for tups and even ewes to ensure they produce the best sheep."

"It also highlighted the importance of being more open about our aims and the evidence or assumptions behind them; giving more consideration to negative side effects of agri-environment schemes."

The training days have exceeded expectations. They have brought together hill farmers and conservation officers - people who usually only meet in a more "charged" setting over a new scheme or project. The training is allowing hill farmers tell their story and for the conservationists to see the management of the hills from a completely new perspective and realise how complicated it is and how committed farmers are to hill farming and the environment. In turn the farmers are gaining an appreciation of the challenges facing conservation professionals.

Hill Sheep Nutrition : a missing element in Stewardship scheme development monitoring and evaluation?

Commons are pre-eminent in agri-environmental management in the English hills and uplands as a provider of public goods and as the foundation of national sheep production. The interaction between sheep, people and the natural environment has at its heart the grazing process which influences biodiversity, animal performance and landscape.

Whilst agreements quite properly take into account the perceived interaction between grazing and vegetation in particular; would it also be appropriate in the spirit of such agreements and as a means of acknowledging that changes in vegetation imply changes in diet and sheep performance?

Contemporary agreements have emphasised stock reductions with perhaps an unspoken presumption that such actions improve sheep performance. This may or may not be the case. For example substituting heather for grass may be a positive action. Conversely since heather is generally a sub-maintenance diet. Many farmers recognise that the 'blacker the hill the lower the milk yield of the ewes' especially after a hard winter. A proverb that has pervaded hill farming summarises the situation.

'Where there's bracken there's gold, where there's gorse there's silver and where there's heather there's poverty'.

That may be an over- simplification but it contains the essence of long years of experience. Reducing the dietary value of hill grazings especially at critical times demands compensatory nutrition from precious inbye land or through purchased fodder and concentrates. The late Will Rawling a Cumbrian commoner expressed the view that *'our industry is low output so we must make sure it is low input'.*

Common grazings must provide a significant part of the annual nutritional requirement of hill ewes including building reserves of body fat for mobilisation in winter and spring.

However hill sheep nutrition does not lend itself to precise recommendations due to the greater influence of variables compared to other branches of livestock husbandry. Each site is different and each year is different. The semi-natural conditions of a high fell compromise the application of nutritional standards. Herein is a vital principle that hill sheep nutrition is partly science and partly art. It is the second of these that relies on the experience and skill of the farmer.

Hardiness also plays its part in modifying nutritional needs and is also influenced by husbandry. Dentition, fleece type, body shape and the capacity to mobilise fat reserves are important considerations in breeding and selection. Science and practice must interact more flexibly than in lowland situations. Do we, or government institutions and agencies have robust evidence on the impact of changes in stocking rate and grazing calendars on sheep performance, feeding requirements, costs and outputs of weaned lambs?

The nutrition of fell ewes comes from three sources:-grazing, conserved forage and purchased supplements. The first of these is clearly the least costly and should be understood and acknowledged in agri-environmental scheme design.

Perhaps the more recent discussions on Less Favoured Areas (soon to be Areas of Natural Constraint) should emphasise the concept of '*High Nature Value farming*,' in which the grazing of semi-natural land and landscapes is particularly valuable for biodiversity. This land faces particular economic and practical challenges for its continued use, maintenance and improvement for all stakeholders.

A key step in progress may be a shared understanding of hill sheep nutrition alongside other outcomes to which stewardship aspires. The principle of mutuality between stakeholders has not developed sufficiently over the last generation. Cumbria is 'a county shaped by sheep' in which the landscape also shapes the sheep through the nature and quality of grazing.

Andrew Humphries

'Stamp Out Scab' – Training and awareness campaign

The incidence of sheep scab has increased steadily since deregulation of compulsory dipping in 1992 and in some areas scab is now an endemic problem. The most recent estimates suggest that more than 10% of flocks experience one outbreak of scab a year and the situation seems to be getting worse. This is costing the industry millions every year.

A programme of training events has been organised across England to raise awareness and improve understanding of the control options – dipping in organophosphate or use of injectable endectocides, and the importance of flock security to improve disease control.

This is not only a farmers' problem – those transporting, shearing, scanning, inspecting and selling sheep and those advising and selling medicines all have a roll to play.



The training is designed to provide consistent guidance to the whole industry and we need all sectors to take their share of responsibility.

The main issues are:

Diagnosis – farmers need an accurate diagnosis from a vet so that the appropriate treatment can be given. All too often itchy sheep are treated for lice when the problem is scab and vice versa – leading to sometimes unnecessary treatment.

Treatment – we only have two options for treating scab: dipping in organophosphate or using an injectable endectocide. However, not all endectocides have the same protective effect – some have no persistency and others have up to 60 days. This is critical, since sheep that are treated with a product that has no persistent activity need to be moved to a new field (that has not had scab infested sheep for the last 18 days) immediately after treatment, otherwise they will become re-infested very quickly.

Flock security – improved flock security will go a long way to keeping scab out of any flock. It is important to:

- Secure fences and gates
- Double fenced farm boundaries
- Co-operation with other graziers on common land to gather and treat all sheep at the same time

- Quarantine of new sheep or those returning from tack. All sheep arriving on farm should be considered to have scab and be treated with the correct product on arrival. All new/returning sheep should be kept away from the rest of flock for at least 3 weeks.
- Scab mites can survive off the sheep for 18 days in tags of wool, on rubbing posts, on trailers or people (shearers, scanners, other contractors etc) so good hygiene will help to stop transmission.

One of the most challenging aspects of scab control relates to the over-use of the injectable endectocides (the macrocyclic lactones – e.g. Dectomax, Cydectin and Ivermectin products which worm animals at the same time as treating scab) and further development of anthelmintic resistance.

ADAS consultants and veterinary surgeons will be delivering the training on behalf of Eblex (AHDB). The project, funded by RDPE, will be delivered throughout 2013 and until March 2014. Events will be happening across England so please join us and learn more about how you can help ‘Stamp out Scab’.

For more information please telephone ADAS on 01432 820444 or
Email: stampoutscab@adas.co.uk

Herdwick meat has gained PDO status

Congratulations to the Herdwick Sheep Breeders’ Association for gaining ‘Protected Designation of Origin’ (PDO) status. They have worked long and hard to achieve just recognition for their produce and this should provide a real boost to the commercial viability of the breed.

Protected Designation of Origin (PDO) status reflects a desire from consumers for quality food. Recent food scares and scandals have highlighted the importance of knowing where food comes from and how it has been produced. The PDO status provides assurance that the Herdwick meat is a quality product, genuinely produced by Cumbrian shepherds to high standards of animal welfare.

Isn't technology amazing

Here's a nice story: in mid May I received an e-mail from a walker—Liam Ryan who was out walking the Pennines near Milburn.

He said:

"I'm contacting you as I'm hoping that you will be able to forward this to the appropriate person. I was walking today on the path between Moor House and the Pennine Way along Trout Beck in the Milburn Forest/ Dun Fell area near Appleby and came across a dead sheep with a live lamb nearby. The mother didn't appear to have been dead for long, and the lamb was still fairly perky. The smit marks on both animals were a blue dot and a stripe across the right flank, and they could be found at OS grid ref NY 726 320. Had there been a farm nearby I would have contacted them directly, but the location of these animals was very remote and I've no idea who they belong to. The weather was pretty harsh with snow lying and I doubt the lamb will survive too long without help, so any assistance you could provide in identifying the farmer would be appreciated."

I got in touch with Dave Smith, our Chairman who then contacted the farmer Gary Hope who found the lamb alive.

Gary e-mailed us all saying: *"Re dead ewe and lamb on the back of Knock/ Milburn fell: I am writing to all involved to say thanks , I put the co-ordinates into my phone and set off on my Quad and my phone took me right to them, both animals collected and lamb put in pet lamb pen, isn't technology amazing, thanks again"*

Viv Lewis

Environmental Stewardship Scheme processing and key dates for remainder of the RDPE

The current RDPE ends on 31st December 2013. Below is a summary of information regarding scheme processing and key dates up to the end of the year.

The latest possible start date for all ES agreements is 1st December 2013, however.

- All UELS applications need to be submitted by 1st September
- HLS agreements will need to be submitted by the date agreed with the local adviser – please see the Information Note for further details

Defra are developing the next Rural Development Programme, which will provide funding from 2016 to 2020. They say that funding for the next Rural Development Programme will be tight. In the context of a smaller budget and competing priorities, Defra plan to target the money to where it will have most impact and the new scheme design will reflect this. Currently they are reviewing Environmental Stewardship to enhance the effectiveness and quality of new scheme design. Considerations include the potential for landscape scale approaches; a greater focus on outcomes; collaborative approaches and increased farmer self-monitoring.

The new programme is expected to start from January 2015 onwards (with new agri-environment agreements likely to start on 1 January 2016).

News from the National Centre for the Uplands

Our work at the National Centre for the Uplands is now underway and focused on the three areas of education, best practice and consensus building.

Our activities in the last three months have included;

- Running the first Fresh Start Uplands Academy; 17 students are enrolled and half way through their course which develops the skills to take on and run an effective farming business.
- Developing an Uplands Agriculture and Land Management Foundation Degree – a two year course focused on the uplands including livestock production systems, grassland and moorland management as well as how to balance this with the demand for other outputs such as water, biodiversity, sporting and recreation. Applicants welcomed, part time or full time.
- Developing a national partnership across stakeholders in the nine English upland areas, Defra have seconded a member of staff to us two days a week to help with this. Natural England is looking to do the same.
- Launching a national project on Better Outcomes on Upland Commons – Prince Charles launched the project in Sedbergh on March 29th. This will look at 5 case studies across England and seek out what works and how tension between different groups can be reduced.
- Developing the plans for Low Becks – after many years of no capital spend

Newton Rigg College are investing £175,000 in the farm steading. A significant number of the tired “modern” buildings will be demolished and replaced with a new sheep shed and handling facilities.

- Working with the Farmer Network on developing Knowledge Bank to enable farmers to share information with each other and with students about best practice on farms.

Report on Farming and Forestry in the Lake District

A report on profitable farming and farm forestry in the Lake District commissioned by the Lake District National Park and undertaken by the Centre for Rural Economy at Newcastle University has just been released. This report shows that trends are towards fewer and larger hill farms, with an associated increase in number of the smallest (non-commercial) holdings. Livestock populations have declined, with 30% fewer sheep than in 2000. Woodland area on farms has remained relatively constant, at about 3% of the total. These trends reflect both the catastrophe of the FMD cull in 2001, and also the changes in policy, which previously encouraged livestock numbers to one which now emphasizes environmental management, as well as reflecting an improvement in livestock prices since 2000. While the majority of farmers are confident of their ability to continue farming in the future, only a minority are confident about the succession to their family businesses. The future of Single Farm Payments and input and output prices are considered as the most important challenges facing their futures.

The hard financial data suggests that farm drawings on average are £8,000 per annum; less than half the income that an agricultural worker would expect. This average does hide a large range though there is no discernible pattern to the variation from the sample farms.

The full report will be available to read on our website.

Managing Land for carbon

The Lake District National Park has produced a new booklet "Managing Land for Carbon".

This booklet aims to help farmers be as carbon efficient as possible within the boundaries of their own farming system. It summarises information on carbon in a range of habitats, and suggests management practices to favour and those to avoid. For each habitat, it provides a table to complete that helps farmers estimate how much carbon is stored in the soil and vegetation on their farm. By managing land for carbon across the whole farm, farmers can determine options that best suit their farming system and provide the most carbon benefits. While some areas of the farm will be used more intensively, farmers can still improve their carbon footprint by managing some areas really well for carbon and making small alterations across the farm wherever they are possible. Some alterations can increase productivity too.

You can download it from our website.

Date for your Diary

SUSTAINING THE COMMONS CONFERENCE—NEWCASTLE UNIVERSITY
Friday, 5 July 2013 - 10:00am to 4:30pm Venue: G21/22 Devonshire Building, Newcastle University

The challenges facing common land, to capturing its relevance to modern society and the economy, are many and various. The conference will address two themes. It will, firstly, conclude the Building Commons Knowledge research project by addressing new models for commons governance. Ensuring that we “sustain” the commons will require “sustainable” governance.

- Governance that will endure for the long term, that will provide for the inclusive and effective governance of common land for the public benefit and for that of stakeholders
- Governance that will reconcile public access and recreation on the one hand with economic resource use (for example agriculture) on the other- and with nature conservation and with other environmental demands now made on the modern commons.

The second theme will consider how we can best recognise, protect and celebrate the cultural heritage of the modern commons.

Contacts: Professor C Rodgers c.rodgers@ncl.ac.uk ; Ben Cowell ben.cowell@nationaltrust.org.uk; or Dr Ann Sinclair ann.sinclair@ncl.ac.uk for further details.

Federation of Cumbria Commoners Committee 2013			
Chairman	Dave Smith	Eastern Fells	017683 61333
Vice Chair	Pauline Blair	Non-regional	01946 861630
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
Joe Relph		Lakes South Central	01768 777675
Vacant		Lakes South	
Vacant		Crosby	
William Steele		Non-regional	01786 341436
John Jackson		Non-regional	017683 72296
Ian Gorst		Lancashire co-opted	01524 770509
Charles Raine		Northumberland co-opted	01434 609000
Robert Benson		Owner Rep co-opted	01931 712577
John Turner (Treasurer)		Owner Rep co-opted	01931 712671
Julia Aglionby		Co-opted	01697 470016
Andrew Humphries		Co-opted	01228 564140

Administrator (part-time): Viv Lewis,

5 Burnbanks, Bampton, Penrith, Cumbria, CA10 2RW.

Tel: 01931 713 335

e-mail: viv@cumbriacommoners.org.uk

Website: www.cumbriacommoners.org.uk