

Our Ref: CJR/Commons

Your Ref:

Date:

3rd December 2010

Dear

Do you want to be part of a Commons Council for Cumbria?

Natural England are funding Julia Aglionby of H & H Bowe and Viv Lewis of the Federation of Cumbria Commoners to prepare a submission for the establishment of a commons council in Cumbria. This can only be done where there is substantial support among commoners (especially those exercising rights), owners, and others with legal interests.

Our first step is to find out whether there are commons associations who wish to take part in the establishment process. Therefore, we are writing to the Chairmen of all local commons associations to ask if your common would like to be part of a first wave of commons to join a commons council.

What is a Commons Council?

Commons Councils are statutory organisations established under the Commons Act 2006 to enable the better agricultural management of commons. As a legal entity they can take action against those that compromise agreements or the rights of commoners. They cannot be imposed they can only be established where there is substantial support amongst commoners.

Why might a Commons Council be useful to my common?

A number of potential benefits have been identified, these include:

- A mechanism to overcome disputes and resolve long standing obstacles associated with land management
- Enables majority voting making it easier to reach agreement as the power of veto is removed
- Protects and supports active commoning and sustainable use of commons land
- As a statutory body it must be consulted about proposals that affect the commons
- It could maintain a live register NB this is required by the UELS Commons supplement
- Addresses disease control and stock welfare through clearance of sheep for a given period
- Facilitates the process of applying for agri-environment schemes and ensuring compliance with the scheme
- Can lease, license and transfer rights of common
- Provides a stronger voice for commoners

Costs of a Commons Council

The cost of running a commons council is often stated as its main disadvantage. We understand the need to keep costs to a minimum and will look at ways to achieve this. We believe that key to keeping the costs down will be to ensure that the Council does not duplicate or interfere with the good work of local commons associations and the Federation of Cumbria Commoners.

Timetable

The process of establishing a council will require a time commitment from you and the members of your local commons association. You will need to attend two meetings in January and February next year. At these meeting we will confirm your commitment to take part and discuss how the commons council will operate in terms of membership, representation of different interest, voting arrangements and financing. You will be deciding the detail of how it should work.

Are you interested?

Before we start the work we need to gauge if there is sufficient interest to carry on. We would be very grateful if you could fill out the slip at the end of this letter as soon as possible and send it back to us in the SAE provided.

If you have any questions, please feel free to ring us up for a chat - either Julia on 016974 70016 or Viv on 01931 713335.

We look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,

Julia Aglionby and Viv Lewis

I am interested in finding out more and taking part in establishing a commons council

Yes

No

Name of Common

Your Name

Address

Post Code

Phone: Landline

Mobile

E-mail

Your position in your commons association

Please remember you are not formally committing yourself to anything at this stage