

**Minutes of the Committee Meeting of the Federation of Cumbria Commoners at 7.00 pm  
on Tuesday 13<sup>th</sup> September 2016, Threlkeld Village Hall**

Present: Joe Relph, Duncan Ellwood, Carl Walters, John Rowland, Ernest Coulthard, William Steele, Jim Campbell, John Turner, Dave Smith, Ian Gorst, Viv Lewis (Administrator), David Dixon

Apologies: Andrew Humphries, Mark Jenkinson, Julia Aglionby, Harry Hutchinson, Pauline Blair, Charles Raine

1. **Previous Minutes:** the minutes were agreed.

2. **Matters arising**

- a. **Research on commoning:** Note from Andrew Humphries, Charles Scott, University of Newcastle has been making some progress on obtaining figures; still pressing Simon Lunnis, RPA for information on all farms making claims on common land.
- b. **Constitution:** no progress since last meeting. **Action:** Viv to take forward
- c. **Hefting project proposal:** no update received, but we understand that Mervyn Edwards is progressing slowly.
- d. **Flood mitigation:** article published in Summer newsletter pointing issues to consider around planting trees on common land
- e. **Warcop:** Cumbria County Council is still seeking legal opinion on MODs applications. They say they will update us on the progress.

3. **Chairman's report**

Attended National Common Land Stakeholder Group meeting in Kendal in early July and the visit the next day Ulpha common. It was useful to meet Defra, Natural England and RPA staff and talk through some of the issues on common land.

4. **Finance and Admin**

- a. **LNDP farming officer:** an appointment was not made due to a lack of candidates with sufficient local knowledge and experience. Viv and Jenny Willis have been awarded a small contract to: develop a new structure to replace the current Farming and Forestry Task Force of the LDNPP; to include possible new members for this group and a job description for a person to support this work. The funding will go through FCC.
- b. **White Moss Common;** the planning inspector turned down the application from Lowther Estates for: a proposed building as an extension to the existing toilet block; proposed low walls adjacent to the car park entrance, and proposed re-siting of bus stops. FCL was one of the objectors, although we did not attend the enquiry
- c. **BPS 2015 update:** Viv attended (by phone) Defra's Direct Payments Consultative group meeting held the previous day. Simon Lunnis RPA was expected to attend and provide and update on BPS 15 payments on commons, but did not. Therefore no up-to-date information was available. It was agreed that FCC would seek to work closely with NFU and CLA to put more pressure on RPA. **Action:** Viv to take forward.
- d. **FOI: SSSI and consent to graze:** NE have offered to provide us the details of the relevant grazing consents 18 months ahead of any associated HLS expiry date. We do appreciate the offer but are concerned that this work will get missed/ be forgotten with all the changes coming forward relating to Brexit. We think it would be preferable to have the information completed within an agreed timescale of 6 months. **Action:** Viv to contact Ewan Nugent about this.
- e. **Cash in the bank** £32,606.11. Viv has recently chased late payers

## 5. Commons council

Work to establishing a Commons Council for Cumbria is inching forwards. The case for establishing a Council has become more timely and relevant as a result of the Brexit vote. CAP support for agriculture will end and we need a stronger voice in the discussions on the design of future agricultural support. The opinions of a formal Commons Council are more likely to have more weight and give us a stronger voice in informing policy. Viv and Joe met Claire Horton, Defra's new commons adviser at the NCLSG meeting. Claire is keen to support us within the framework established by Defra. **Action:** Viv and Joe to develop a plan on how to take this forwards, to be circulated to all

## 6. National Trust – purchase of land at Thorneythwaite, Borrowdale

FCC sent a letter to Mike Innerdale, NT, voicing our disappointment with their actions. It is unclear whether they are prepared to actively champion fell farming and its associated cultural heritage. Their action suggest that they may want to manage the decline of fell farming, and replace it with a wilder landscape. We, along with other farming organisations, have requested a meeting with senior NT staff. This is to be held on 23<sup>rd</sup> September. It was suggested that we request Victoria Lancaster, National Trust's new land agent for Borrowdale and other valley is invited to this meeting.

**Action:** Joe and Viv will be attending the meeting with the NT, along with other farming reps, on 23<sup>rd</sup> September and will report back.

## 7. Post- Brexit and future support to hill farming/common land

Three members of the committee will be attending the Upland Alliance "Looking Forward: Supporting the Uplands" event at Defra on 22<sup>nd</sup> September. We discussed issues that we believe are important to convey to those attending:

- Our members deliver agri-environment scheme's, these are a significant income stream and support enhanced environmental outcomes
- Need to keep sheep on the commons, the sheep keep the farmers farming and farmers keep the rural communities going
- Support money should be better targeted and paid on active farming, support to young famers and on jobs/ labour units.

NFU are planning to set up a Working Group for the NW on Brexit and the Uplands and FCC are invited to the first meeting on 28<sup>th</sup> September. **Action:** Viv to attend.

## 8. AOB – WHS evaluators will be in Cumbria during the week beginning 3rd October. **Action:** Viv to attend a dinner on 6<sup>th</sup> October.

**Date of next meeting:** Tuesday 29<sup>th</sup> November 2016, 7.00 pm at Threlked Village Hall