

EXMOOR PONY SOCIETY

Minutes of the Committee Meeting held on Friday, 28th June at the Moorland Hall, Wheddon Cross

Present:

MR D Brewer, Mr G Bryant, Mr T Hickman, Mr N Hill, Dr S Baker, Mrs G Langdon, Miss J McLaren, Mrs J Payne, Mrs C Phillips, Mr R Taylor and Mr D Wallace.

Mrs S Mansell (Treasurer) and Mrs S McGeever (Secretary) were also in attendance.

Mr Brewer opened the meeting at 11am and welcomed all Trustees and especially Mrs Payne who was attending her first meeting. He asked all Trustees to adhere to the agenda and not spend time revising the Trustees notes for example.

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence had been received from Mrs F Dickson, Mrs V Lamb and Mrs A Nicholls (President).

2. Declaration of Interest/Declaration of Loyalty/Confirmation of Confidentiality

Mr Brewer reminded all Trustees of their duty to respect the confidentiality of the meeting and only disseminate information where it had been agreed to do so.

Miss McLaren noted that once again there had been a breach of confidentiality with information being leaked to the membership before it was announced by the Society. The meeting room should be a safe space and could every Trustee be mindful of their duties and respect the confidentiality expected of them as Trustees.

3. Any Other Business

Mr Hickman wished to raise the matter of Life Presidents and Mr Taylor wished to raise the matter of the branding of moorland foals.

4. Approval of the Minutes of the Meetings of 3rd June 2019

Dr Baker requested two changes to the minutes under Item 6. Annual General Meeting b):

Para 3

After the AGM Mr Bryant had looked at the ~~photo~~ voting procedures

Para 5

Mr Bryant proposed and Mrs Dickson seconded the motion that Mr Bryant's recommendations be adopted and the vote was ~~unanimous~~ unanimously in favour.

Dr Baker proposed and Mr Hill seconded the proposal that the minutes of the meeting be approved and this was agreed with 1 abstention (not present at meeting). Mr Brewer duly signed the minutes.

5. Matters Arising

Mr Bryant wished it minuted that with respect to his recommendation regarding voting at the AGM when a tie took place that the Chair of the meeting would announce the tie in their opening remarks and that the voting paper circulated to members would include the information provided on the original ballot form for the candidates involved.

Miss McLaren requested that the review of the action log be placed on the agenda and Dr Baker requested that the action log be sent a week in advance of the meeting.

The meeting then continued with the remaining agenda items from the meeting of 28th June 2019.

6. Reports

Secretary's report

Mrs McGeever advised:

Companies House/Charity Commission – filings were up to date including the accounts on Companies House.

DEFRA – the Society continued to monitor all new legislation and PIO requirements and amendments were being sent out to be included in the Minimum Operating Procedures and a self-certifying questionnaire regarding compliance with Zootechnical legislation had been completed and returned within the given two week period.

Central Equine Database – the Society continued to upload updates the database to reflect changes to the database.

Promotion - The Society receives requests for talks (organised), information for stands at shows (sent), attendance at shows and events (passed to Friends), requests for articles (passed to Sue Burger) and requests from TV companies. With regard to the latter, Antiques Road Trip have taken information from our website and are in receipt of historical photographs (Dr Sue Baker).

Insurance – historically the EPS insurance has always covered Friends liabilities and stock – in 2018 there was very little stock and it was in several locations and so had not been included in the insurance policy. Mrs Mansell advised that she was currently undertaking a stock take and ascertaining the whereabouts of stock. Miss McLaren felt that the Friend’s Treasurer should have that information to hand. Mr Bryant thought that the amount of stock could vary and asked the Secretary to ascertain the maximum amount of stock that could be held without altering the premium. It was noted that there would be a certain amount of depreciation.

826 ESA Meeting – The Secretary had attended the 826 ESA Meeting at the BHS Offices. The meeting deals with passports issues and is attended by a large number of PIOs and included a presentation on bio-security in light of the reason flu outbreak and a presentation by the CED on their new ‘stable facility’ to allow owners to update their horses details.

It was important the PIOs keep their information up-to-date and in this regard to the EPS, the carrying out of the census in 2018 revealed a significant number of errors that were subsequently corrected. The Society is in a position to say that we have endeavoured to ensure the database is correct.

Finance Report

Mrs Mansell advised that she had no further comments on the report that she had put in place for the finance up to end March 2019 as it was now the end of June and new figures would be available for the next meeting.

Mr Brewer advised that I was taking a lot longer to invest the money then they had initially thought and this was due to concerns over money laundering and nowadays copies of the last wills and testaments needed to be provided.

Mr Bryant advised that he was now more or less at the point of moving onto the next stage and opening a second bank account. He requested that it be minuted that the Trustees authorised the Treasurer to set up the second bank account.

Miss McLaren proposed and Mrs Payne seconded the proposal that a mandate be given to Sandra Mansell (Treasurer) and Geoff Bryant (Trustee) to set up the second bank account and that mandate was unanimously approved by the Trustees.

Show Secretary

In the absence of Mrs Dickson no show report was given.

Breed Show

Mrs Phillips advised that the EPS’s own insurance covered the running of the Breed Show at Exford Show.

Passes would be ordered when the number was known and Mr Taylor would be present the day before to help set up the rings. There would be no Young Judges Competition. Signage would be in place to show the routes to the different rings.

Mrs Payne asked the reason behind the fact that no competition was being run in 2019 and Mr Hickman advised that it was due to lack of interest.

Mrs Phillips felt that the show was becoming dangerously low on children and Mrs Payne agreed but felt that there were only two classes for them to do and if you wished to have children present they needed more to do and suggested a WHP ring or Handy Pony. Mrs Phillips advised that Exford Show ran their own children's classes. Mr Brewer felt that a WHP ring would showcase an area where the ponies were enjoying particular success and whilst it would entail an extra ring, stewards etc, it was something that should be given serious consideration for 2020. Mrs Phillips indicated that Dunster's WHP class normally attracted about three entries but both Mrs Payne and Mr Brewer felt that it would be worth trialling WHP classes.

Miss McLaren asked if a Breed Show team should be set up and Mrs Phillips advised that everything was in place for 2019.

Mrs McGeever asked if it would be helpful to publicise the Exford Show's children classes on the EPS website and facebook page as if they knew there were other classes they could enter, it might encourage them to support the Breed Show and Mrs Payne felt that this would be a positive move.

Mr Bryant advised that he had been coming for 15 years and felt it was not the most welcoming of experiences based on the location of the rings and the tents and asked if it would be possible to open up the marquees and have them facing the main show as opposed to the pony rings which tended to create a barrier. He felt that there was nothing about the breed and that people would engage more if there was a pony in a pen.

Mrs McGeever advised that the Festival had organised for a pony to be in a pen and information in the Friends unit on the breeder. It had been difficult to get anyone to bring a pony that was not competing. The concept of a 'supporter' of Exmoor ponies had been raised to try and increase income for those who just wished to feel that they were supporting a rare breed. It might be possible to organise for Dr Baker's heritage boards and the herd boards to be brought to the show.

Mr Bryant felt it was important to have information about the breed on show and Dr Baker advised that the Friends unit always used to face away from the ring and Mr Hickman advised that MMT would not bring a pony.

Mrs Payne felt that there were grounds for setting up a Breed Show committee and Miss McLaren concurred whilst Mr Taylor suggested an extra tent to house information on the ponies.

Dr Baker felt that this was a subject for the strategy meeting and Mr Bryant agreed.

Online show entries

Mr Bryant then moved on to online show entries. He advised that Dr Baker, Mrs Payne, Mrs McGeever and himself had attended a meeting at Grassroots. It had been a very good meeting and covered

- a) the online entry system
- b) how the grassroots system worked and the elements available within the current package and those available for additional sums
- c) how grassroots prints out the information for the studbook.

Mr Bryant felt it had ticked all the boxes and he was pleased that the centenary studbook could be produced to a similar layout as that used for the 2000 Edition.

He advised that they had learnt about the background of Grassroots and all its functions and felt that there were a number of functions that would be of use in the future.

The online entry system was available at no extra cost and show secretaries and owners could log on remotely through ped-e-web and, provided that the show and class input was put in correctly, it would bring up a list of an owner's ponies and the classes they could enter and they would have to tick a box to confirm the pony's entry into the class.

Show Secretaries and owners would not be able to see the details of every pony entered until after the closing date for entries. At that point, the Secretary (Sue McGeever) could output the schedule as a word file and send it to the show secretary. The system meant that provided the information on the database was correct then the information in the show schedule and the results would be correct. The results can be entered post the show and the information appear on the individual pony record.

Dr Baker felt it would be well worth trialling the system over the winter and it might also be possible to input the Breed Show information.

Mr Bryant asked if use of the Grassroots online show entry system could be progressed and this was proposed by Mr Bryant, seconded by Miss McLaren and the vote was unanimously in favour.

Centenary studbook

Mr Brewer then asked about the centenary studbook and Mr Bryant advised that the next step based on the number of pages generated from Grassroots would be to cost the studbook and both Dr Baker and himself were looking into the costs based on both on a company and self-publishing.

Mr Bryant advised that the last studbook ran up to 31/12/1999 so the next edition would run from 1/1/2000 and could either include foals up until 1/1/2020 or 1/1/2021 or 1/1/2022 to include foals born in the centenary year and he asked Trustees to consider their preference.

Project Report

Genome Project – Mrs Mansell reported that the samples had now gone to Novogen in Hong Kong as there were challenges in extracting the DNA required from the samples. Dr Sarah Blott was unclear as to what that meant for the project.

Mrs Mansell was very concerned as to whether anything could be obtained from the project. Each time the sample went to a new lab, the more difficult it was to obtain good extracts.

Miss McLaren asked if this would have an impact on the PhD the society were funding and Mrs Mansell advised it would not. It might be that the Society had to fall back on the work done by Gus Cothran in America many years ago.

Mr Brewer advised that the PhD was going ahead but that there were a few areas that need clarification on some procedural items.

Mrs Davy's project on Exmoors had an estimated cost in excess of £90,000 and fell in line with the Society's remit to encourage research and information with regard to the breed. He felt that there would be some DNA work but that this would be separate.

Dr Baker advised that she was happy to speak to Mrs Payne and Mr Bryant about the project given that neither were Trustees when the decision was taken. She advised that Mrs Davy had graduated.

Dr Baker said that the project was just starting and it would be 2/3 months before there was anything to report and Mr Brewer confirmed that the agreement did involve regular reports to the Society.

Sweet Itch

Mr Bryant reported that he had now heard from both Mr Michael Dewhurst and Mrs Ruth Thomas.

It was understood that Mr Dewhurst felt that the Sweet Itch project should now be off the agenda although further study is possible. He felt it had been superseded by the genome project which appeared to have ground to a halt.

Mr Brewer thanked Mr Bryant for bringing the Trustees up to date.

Review of honorariums

It was agreed that this item would be left until the next meeting when the June figures would be available. Mrs Mansell felt that the Society was on course for a worse loss than the previous year and advised Miss McLaren that she did not yet have a projection for the end of June figures and she was concerned that whilst the HBLB grant had been received this year, she did not believe the grant would be forthcoming next year.

Mr Brewer confirmed that there was nothing to stop the Trustees moving this agenda item to the next meeting.

Mr Hill proposed that the review take place at the September meeting and this was seconded by Dr Baker and agreed with one abstention (Miss McLaren).

7. Area Representatives and Events

Miss McLaren advised that she had circulated a list of events and some areas were busy and some areas not so busy but events did happen across the country.

She had ascertained that Wales was currently holding 2 banners and there were eleven areas. The Eastern Area had their own banners which meant that the following areas required banners.

Devon & Cornwall

Exmoor

Scotland

Northern and

Midland

with an additional two to be held at the office and used as and when necessary by the less active areas.

The cost of banners would be £1789.20 and the Society would be able to use the graphics provided by Mrs Payne. Mrs Payne advised that the previous banners cost £90 each and Mr Taylor advised that they had had to be re-glued.

It was important that the banners were robust and full framed.

Miss McLaren proposed that 8 banners be purchased and this was seconded by Mr Hickman and unanimously agreed.

With regard to Area Representatives, Mr Brewer asked if the Trustees wished to use a different system to appoint Area Reps and Miss McLaren felt that this should be part of the strategy meeting.

It was felt that a new approach was needed and Dr Baker felt that nominations should come from the area and then there should be a vote by Area membership. Mrs Payne felt that the appointment should be for between 3 or 5 years.

Mrs McGeever advised that the ballot form would be same as for the committee – each candidate would be able to submit a synopsis of why they wished to be area rep and what they could offer.

Mrs Langdon felt the appointment should be for 4 years and Dr Baker felt incumbent area reps could be nominated.

It was agreed that an email would go to the individual considered advising that the trustees like the idea of elections and would trial the system following a review of the areas.

8. Appointment of Judges/Judge Training

Breed Show 2020

Miss McLaren proposed Mr Michael Dewhurst as the judge for the in-hand classes and this was seconded by Mr Hickman.

Mr Hickman proposed Mrs Lisa Clarke as the judge for geldings and groups and this was seconded by Dr Baker.

Mrs Payne proposed Mrs Pam Cox as the judge for the ridden classes and this was seconded by Miss McLaren.

Mrs Langdon proposed Mrs Ann Nicholls as the reserve judge and this was seconded by Mrs Phillips.

The vote in favour of the above nominations was unanimous.

Mrs Phillips would write to the judges following this year's Breed Show.

Pony of the Year 2020

Miss McLaren proposed Mrs Sue Burger to judge Pony of the Year and this was seconded by Mr Hickman and unanimously agreed.

Mrs S McGeever would write to Mrs Burger.

Judge Training

Mrs McGeever advised that she had received a number of applications and provided the information to the Trustees.

Mr Hill proposed and Mr Hickman seconded the proposal that all three new candidates go forward to assessment and the vote was unanimously in favour.

Given the location of the candidates, it was agreed to ask the Midland Area Rep – Lauren Brill – to hold the assessment in March.

It was proposed by Mr Hill and seconded by Mr Taylor that the judge assessors would be Mr Brewer, Mrs Western and Mrs Hill and this was unanimously agreed.

9. Yearbook

Mr Bryant presented his papers on the yearbook.

Mr Bryant advised that he would like to refer to the newsletter as the yearbook as it was then not time-sensitive which made it easier to sell advertising.

The Secretary had received an email from the Livestock Conservancy congratulating the Society on the new Yearbook and he asked that this be circulated to the committee.

He was looking to expand the content to include more articles of interest, a report on the gatherings, a focus on a moorland herd and an in-ground herd, historical input etc

He advised that Susannah Muir had had input into the advice for Area Reps and it was agreed this advice would be circulated through Miss McLaren.

The timetable had been put in place to ensure that the Yearbook was ready to be circulated with the AGM paperwork.

The Trustees thanked Mr Bryant for his work.

10. Website/Facebook

Miss McLaren felt that there was an opportunity to change the Society's web hosting services with them coming up for renewal in August. She felt that the website was a source of frustration for members and it was not mobile friendly.

Mrs McGeever advised that the current company had been asked to ensure that optimising was taking place so that both elements of the site worked effectively and displayed on a mobile phone but Miss McLaren advised that it was still overlaying and Mrs McGeever undertook to contact them again.

Mr Bryant asked if the contract covered the two websites – the EPS and Friends – and Mrs McGeever confirmed that it did, the Festival website was stand alone and based on wordpress.

Mr Bryant and Miss McLaren did not think a short term fix would work and believed that new draft specifications needed to be drawn up.

Mr Bryant proposed and Miss McLaren seconded the proposal that Mr Bryant, Miss McLaren, Mrs Payne and Mrs McGeever should form a sub-committee and seek alternative quotations and bring recommendations to the committee.

Mr Bryant felt that based on the current software, it was unlikely that the site could be migrated and most likely it would have to be set up on a different system.

Mrs Mansell undertook to advise the contract date and Mr Bryant felt that they could possibly agree a month by month extension.

The above proposal was agreed with one abstention.

Mrs Payne wished it recorded that she felt Mrs Wharton was doing a great job on the facebook page and the Trustees asked that a message of thanks be sent to Mrs Wharton.

11. Exmoor Pony Festival Trust

Mrs McGeever explained that the Exmoor Moorland Landscape Partnership had decided to run with Derek Sparks's idea of a festival to promote the moorland ponies.

When the EMLP ceased to be, the MMT and EPS decided to work together through a separate group that worked on a voluntary basis to run the festival and this had now continued over a number of years. The Festival was self-funded raising money from events etc. The website was wordpress and Mrs McGeever updated it as and when the opportunity arose.

Dr Baker advised that there were practical reasons for the cooperation between the two organisations as events were covered by MMT's or the EPS's insurance and for this reason the item appeared on the agenda.

12. Centenary Events

Dr Baker advised that she would furnish Mrs Payne with a list of ideas that had come up thus far some of which had been agreed upon and others that were yet to be decided.

Mr Bryant said that the committee was open to new ideas and suggested that the Society write to Royal Windsor.

Mrs McGeever thought that it was worthwhile writing to shows such as Bath & West, Devon County etc to see if they would be prepared to help the Exmoor Pony Society celebrate in 2021.

Mrs Payne suggested expanding the pony race into the league and putting together an art exhibition/display that could be loaned out to farm parks and National Trust properties – Mrs McGeever suggested that Killerton might well be interested given their links to the breed.

A competition could be run to submit art for the exhibition and there could be a fee to enter.

Miss McLaren also felt it was important to include the area reps so that events took place across the country.

It was agreed that a working party of Dr Baker, Mrs Payne and Mrs McGeever would work together on the ideas.

It was also felt that members should be asked to submit designs for a centenary logo. Mrs Payne asked if the logo with the dates underneath would not be better whilst Miss McLaren felt a new logo might present a confused message. Dr Baker said that a submitted design would not have to be used if not good enough but it would be good to involve the members in this way.

The group would report back to the main committee.

13. Any Other Business

HOYS participation

It was acknowledged that if the EPS were to attend HOYS again there would have to be one person in charge of setting up the stand and taking it down.

Miss McLaren offered to man the stand for a week and it was agreed that the organisers should be approached in the hope of getting a special deal or write up in the show catalogue etc since it was a special centenary project.

Mr Bryant asked Mrs McGeever to draft a letter that could be used as a template for requesting coverage at show or articles in magazines.

David Murray - UK Native Pony Study

Dr Baker felt that it was not good science whilst Miss McLaren could not understand the point of the study and so it was agreed that a polite 'no' would be conveyed to Mr Murray.

Jen McLaren – Trustee email

Miss McLaren felt that Trustee confidentiality and the contents of the email had to be brought under the future strategy discussion.

Mr Brewer felt that the original email was difficult to deal with for a number of reasons. Given the nature of the email, he had been advised by the solicitor that such information should not be conveyed by email which is considered an insecure method of communication and allows for ease of forwarding. It would have been better to raise the matter through the Chair in the first instance or with the individuals concerned.

Miss McLaren felt that she had asked for confidentiality from the Trustees and this had not been forthcoming.

Mr Brewer undertook to speak to Miss McLaren after the meeting.

Rob Taylor - branding

Mr Taylor felt that the number branded should relate to the number in herd.

Mr Brewer said that the Society had introduced symbols as a way of enabling herds brand less digits and this was even more important when the number of digits to be branded was reduced to four. The majority of herds had adopted a symbol and branded in line with numbers in herds. A small number of herds did not.

Dr Baker felt that this was an issue that could be intentionally exploited to show the EPS in a negative light and there was no reason why the breeder in question could not adopt a symbol and brand in line with number in herd.

Next meeting

It was agreed that the strategy meeting would take place on Friday, 26th July on Exmoor with a start time of 10am.

Mr Bryant asked the Trustees to send their ideas to him so that he could co-ordinate thoughts and present an updated paper for the meeting. At present he had received feedback from one Trustee. He suggested that all ideas are sent no later than 7-10 days before the meeting.

Mr Brewer closed the meeting at 5pm.