

EXMOOR PONY SOCIETY

Trustee Minutes from the 'Virtual' Committee Meeting held on Tuesday, 21 September 2021

Nigel Hill (NH) Chairman
Geoff Bryant (GB) Vice-Chairperson/Treasurer
David Wallace (DW) Vice-Chairperson/ECHO
Sue Burger (SB) Vice-Chairperson/Articles and liaison with PR Company
Dr Sue Baker (DSBA) Projects
Mark Drummond (MD)
Sheralee Matravers (SMA)
Marcello Riggio (MR) (morning session)
Stephanie Poulter (SP) Conservation Grazing Officer
Rob Taylor (RT) DNA and Moorland Communications

Susan McGeever (Secretary)
Margaret Partridge-Keane (MPK) President (morning session)

The Chairman, NH, opened the meeting at 10.00am and thanked everyone for their attendance. This meeting was specifically to discuss the Inspection Discussion Day.

1. Apologies

Apologies had been received from Vicky Lamb (VL).

2. Declaration of Interest/Confirmation of Confidentiality

There were no declarations of interest.

GB proposed and SB seconded the proposal to maintain confidentiality and this was unanimously agreed.

3. Inspection Discussion Day

Following on from the Trustees meeting on 7/9/2021, NH had written to Maddy Buttner who had agreed to assist in running the Inspection Discussion Day. MB's reply which had been received on 16/9/2021 had been circulated to all Trustees.

It had been disappointing that the Trustees had felt that the pressure of social media should have meant the cancellation the September date.

The consensus of opinion was that the viewpoint that the Inspection Discussion Day itself should be in person was upheld by the Trustees.

It was not felt that the day would lend itself to an online meeting and a hybrid meeting would be unworkable and might not give equal weight to all speakers.

The venue for the meeting should be central England to allow as many people, from as many areas of the country to attend as possible.

It was agreed that holding Zoom meetings to gather member's views on the topics to be discussed would be of value. Members should be asked to submit their views in writing so that their views were their own and not someone's interpretation.

It was again noted that many members were not breeders and thus had no first hand knowledge of the inspection process itself and its role within the Society both as a means of inspecting the foals but also meeting breeders and garnering views.

It was also noted that a significant number of people commenting on social media were not members and some may not even have had contact with an Exmoor pony.

A review of inspections was necessary and the Society needed to create a document that act as a starting point for further discussion. Every member had a vote and every member should have enough information to be able to make a considered decision and direct involvement in the process was important.

Points to consider were:

Why

How

Potential advantages of the current system

Potential disadvantages of the current system

Possible future paths i.e. a suite of options for people to consider

Again it was felt that Area Reps could play a part as they were there to represent their members and could, perhaps, assist in the setting up on Zoom meetings.

Given that the Trustees had set a date of Sunday, 24th April 2022 there was sufficient time for all members who wished to attend to make arrangements to do so.

The Trustees would host the Zoom meetings and all members would be asked to register their interest in attending a Zoom discussion.

It was felt that the Zoom meetings should be a maximum of 20 members so that everyone had an opportunity to be heard and as many meetings as necessary would be held to accommodate all interested members. The days and times should vary to allow for those who worked or were farmers so that again maximum participation was assured.

It should be made clear that the Zoom meetings were not decision-making meetings, they were to facilitate members being able to understand the process and make suggestions that would then be put forward for discussion at the Inspection Discussion Day. The Inspection Discussion Day would allow debate on all the suggestions put forward and those at the meeting would then be able to formulate recommendations and a debrief document would be circulated to all members.

It would then be incumbent for the Trustees to consider those recommendations and formulate documentation to go forward to the membership to vote on at an EGM.

For the benefit of new Trustees, NH explained that potential inspectors were supported by two members, preferably inspectors/judges, who believed they had sufficient knowledge to go onto the training programme. Each candidate was then assessed by three senior inspectors who would recommend them going onto the scheme. The training period was three years and each candidate had to attend a minimum of three inspections a year and assess a minimum of 50 foals over that period. Wherever possible, candidate should attend at least one moorland inspection. Providing all the reports came back recommending the candidate to progress through the three year programme and ultimate be included on the inspection panel. New inspectors were generally paired with experienced inspectors for their first few inspector appointments.

Trainee inspectors who wished to could learn to brand but since 2014 only those ponies returning to the moor were branded.

All inspectors received a set of guidelines which were reviewed on a regular basis and Inspector's Days were organised. The latest of these days had been planned for 2020 but had had to be abandoned due to Covid 19. The days were located in different areas of the country to ensure that over any given three year period, each inspector would have a day to attend within a reasonable travel distance.

The Secretary wrote to all inspectors each year to ascertain that they wished to continue on the panel and the geographical area they were able to undertake inspections.

All new breeders received guidance on the inspection process and what to expect and inspectors were able to further explain its purpose when they arrived to inspect.

Not every foal passed inspection but this was not a final judgement as all foals were eligible to be put forward for re-inspection and foals registered in Section X who passed at this second inspection were eligible to be registered in Section 1.

The information sent to new breeders included information on the re-inspection process and the inspectors were also able to explain the process.

It was agreed that a letter regarding the Inspection Discussion Day should be included as a separate document with the autumn newsletter.

Following discussion on the Inspection Discussion Day the following points were raised:

1. It was noted that not all Trustees had submitted their reports for the Autumn Newsletter – this was now 11 days overdue. GB to write his piece once all other reports received.
2. NH advised that the Breed Show had taken up a considerable amount of time and the result of the complaint to HOYS was that Dunkery Hornbill had been disqualified from HOYS. In addition, Mr & Mrs Wallace had made the decision to withdraw their gelding from the Breed Show. This meant that the Secretary had had to update all the results and contact all those involved to advise them of the revised placings both in classes and in championships before the results could be published. There had also been a number of anomalies to clear up with regard to riders and exhibitors in the junior classes.
3. The Secretary felt that the Breed Show schedule had to be clearer to ensure that competitors understood that different classes came under different rules. Competitors should be pointed to the relevant rules for each class or section of classes as appropriate.

In addition, the schedule indicated that those competing in the junior classes had to be Junior members. She felt that this should be amended to read Junior/Family member so that it was clear, members did not have to pay for their children to be junior members just to compete in the Breed Show as it defeated the object of Family membership. Furthermore, with regard to Family membership, a query had been raised as to whether it covered cousins. It was felt that Family membership should relate to two adults and their children.

4. A new Breed Show Secretary would need to be identified and RT felt that a separate Breed Show Secretary and Entry Secretary did not work. The whole job needed to be under one person who knew the rules inside out. It was not just a day but required a significant amount of work in the run-up to the show as well as at other times of the year to organise NPS affiliations etc. This should be a paid position.

It was noted that more than one person was required on the day to ensure the smooth running of the show.

5. Whilst accepting it was ultimately the competitors responsibility to ensure that they were competing in accordance with the relevant rules, it was also incumbent on the Society to ensure that those rules were clear to all – competitors, judges, handlers, stewards etc.

RT re-emphasised his belief that there should be no qualifiers at the breed show.

6. The Secretary asked who was sorting out the points scores this year and NH advised it was an outstanding item. It was not something that could be done on the day.

NH closed the meeting at 11.21 thanking those who had attended for their input.