

CDA Communications Strategy

March 2019

Two Key Messages

1. Commoning benefits everyone

Whether for access and health, landscape and biodiversity, or maintaining local culture - all interests depend on continued grazing. This mutual benefit for the general public and those who common is at the heart of the “shared Forest” concept. There is no “them” and “us” – We all benefit in one way or another.

2. Commoning is a commitment not a career

Commoning is neither a serious income stream nor a charity. We do it because we love it; but it is costly: back-up land, hay, and routine care are all costly in Britain’s most expensive National Park. Rising costs mean that commoners need increasing support from their jobs and other sources, including agricultural and environmental support schemes. It also requires a considerable year-round time commitment. Commoners are ordinary people with an extraordinary commitment to this special landscape and culture

Consistent Delivery

General Principles

The CDA will be respectful, honest and open in its communications. It will not mislead or abuse. Every communication will aim to help people get to appreciate and trust the CDA, and improve understanding of commoning.

Procedure

All official communications will be delivered by an officer of the Association or by an elected member of the CDA committee with the express and specific endorsement of an officer.

It is good practice that all approaches from the media (for a statement on any aspect of New Forest commoning, invitations to speak at public events, or other public statements) should be notified to an officer for consultation prior to delivery. In most situations the Chairman will be the most appropriate officer for consultation, and where this is not possible within an appropriate time then the opinion of one or more of the following officers should be sought: President, Treasurer, Secretary, Assistant Claims Secretary.

All statements should aim to reflect the CDA communication principles (above) and its Key Messages, and should aim to support current policy positions.

Specific Issues

Commoners care for their animals

Commoning is based upon a daily, year-round commitment to the animals that are turned out to graze. Whenever an animal has a problem it will be brought home to recover, and will only return to the Forest when it is fit to do so. It is not unusual to see a commoner riding out after work, whatever the weather, to check on their animals. Pride in their animals and concern for their welfare mean that commoners will do whatever is needed to keep their animals well, all year round

Commoners subsidise their commitment

Most commoners have “proper” jobs, that make it financially possible to commit the time and money needed to maintain a Forest herd livestock. Vets bills, hay for stock brought home, and running repairs to back-up land all cost money. The New Forest is now the least affordable National Park in Britain, with particularly high costs, yet still relatively low wages within its rural economy. Support through the Common Agricultural Policy has provided an important boost to holdings and incomes, even allowing some to purchase increasingly scarce, but essential, back-up land for their animals when they need to come in off the Forest.

Commoners care for the Forest

The reason that so many local people give up their time to commoning is that they love the New Forest; not just its cultural heritage, but the unique environmental benefits that constant grazing provides. Commoners have exceptional knowledge of their local area and are often the first to spot any environmental problems.