

# MINUTES OF THE 51<sup>st</sup> MEETING OF THE DARTMOOR STEERING GROUP

THURSDAY 3 NOVEMBER 2011

## Present:

### Members:

Richard Thomas	Chairman
Bill Hitchins	Chairman, Dartmoor National Park Authority (DNPA)
Christine Marsh	Member, DNPA
Maurice Retallick	Deputy Chairman, DNPA
Prof Ian Mercer	Chairman, Dartmoor Commoners' Council
Roger Halliday	Duchy of Cornwall
Richard Andrews	Natural England (NE)
Brig Ged Salzano	Comd Commando Training Centre Royal Marines (CTCRM)
Brig Piers Hankinson	Comd 43 Wessex Brigade (Wx Bde)
Col Chris Sloane	Comd Defence Training Estate (DTE)

### Joint Secretaries:

Lt Col Chris Robinson	Regional Executive Officer DTE South West
Dr Kevin Bishop	Chief Executive, DNPA (Lead Secretary)

### In attendance:

Lt Col (Retd) Peter Mellor	SO2 LTAR 4 (Wx) Bde
Rob Steemson	DNPA
Nigel Sharpe	Defence Estates Land Agent
Lt Col Mark Hiskett	Comd DTE SW

## **ITEM 1 - CHAIRMAN'S OPENING REMARKS**

1. *The Chairman* thanked DNPA for hosting the meeting and welcomed Members, in particular Brigadier Hankinson, Col Sloane and Lt Col Mark Hiskett, Comd DTE SW.

## **ITEM 2 – MINUTES OF THE 50<sup>th</sup> MEETING HELD ON 6 OCTOBER 2010**

2. *Dr Bishop* reported that the minutes had been circulated and, as no comments had been raised, were agreed as a true record.

### **ITEM 3 – MATTERS ARISING**

3. *Dr Bishop* reported that with regard to Procurement, the draft letter had been circulated to DSG, had been returned and subsequently sent to Andrew Robathan MP, Under-Secretary of State for Defence, and copied to Richard Benyon MP, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Defra.
4. Bill Hitchins reiterated his offer to run an event(s) in partnership with the MOD to support returning service personnel and/or their families. It was noted that discussions are ongoing and dates are being sought. *Brigadier Salzano* expressed his thanks for the offer and explained that operational pressures had meant it had not been possible to find a suitable date so far. He noted that early 2012 should provide a window of opportunity and has passed details to the Royal Navy/Royal Marines Welfare Organisation.

**AGREED: Rob Steemson (DNPA) to contact CTCRM in early spring to take this issue forward.**

5. *Mrs Marsh* requested an update regarding MOD impact on the local economy (para 16). *Lt Col Mellor* reported that a report on the joint 43 Bde and Wiltshire County Council project had been sent to Defra and MOD in August. The MOD had shared this report with DNPA and the Bde will run another food fair in the Autumn 2012. Following discussion it was agreed that the monitoring programme for the Dartmoor Training Area should look at economic value of military training, potential for use of local suppliers and community benefit.

**ACTION: Dartmoor Working Party to consider how the monitoring programme can be developed to include the economic value of military training, potential for use of local suppliers and community benefit.**

6. *Mr Retallick* requested an update and assurances from MOD regarding the recent damage to the moor caused by MOD vehicles. *Col Sloane* reported that the damage had been caused by new vehicles which were being assessed. An assessment of the damage took place immediately following the incidents. The land owner was kept fully informed of all incidents and the actions taken by the military to repair damages thereafter. DTE WD Standing Orders clearly identify the vehicle limitations permitted on the Moor. *Col Sloane* highlighted that: the damage was accidental; these were newly issued vehicles and that the consequences of their use on Dartmoor had not been fully appreciated. He undertook to keep the National Park Authority informed regarding the repair and actions to prevent a re-occurrence.

### **ITEM 4 – MINUTES OF THE DARTMOOR WORKING PARTY MEETINGS HELD ON 9 MARCH 2011, 22 JUNE 2011 AND 7 SEPTEMBER 2011**

7. *Lt Col Robinson* reported that the DWP meets three times a year. Minutes have been circulated. A précis of the main points of discussion is as follows:

8. Meeting of 7 September 2011

- (a) Rural Elements Estate Strategy (REES) Funding - Contributions to DNPA in 2011/12 amount to £5,000 - £3,000 towards the Biodiversity Action Plan Working Group and £2,000 for the Moorland Vision Project.
- (b) Ten Tors – Dartmoor Commoners’ Council had been invited to participate in the Ten Tors Briefing Day in October 2011. This they did, in an observational capacity, with the intention to fully participate in 2012. Revised rare bird nesting areas have been noted and will be shown in the new military maps due to be produced next year.
- (c) Dartmoor Training Area report – Wildfire support to commoners will be supplied by Landmarc on a voluntary basis provided it is safe to do so and overtime has been agreed. With regard to support for swaling, Landmarc will not loan its equipment but is prepared for it to be hired, operated by Landmarc staff; payment will be charged at a reduced rate. Following questions and discussion, *Col Sloane* suggested he bring a consolidated statement regarding this issue to the next DWP. *The Chairman* thanked *Col Sloane* for this undertaking.

**ACTION: *Col Sloane* to present a statement regarding the use of military equipment in the fighting of wildfires and providing assistance during swaling to the next DWP on 15 March 2012.**  
**(NB this was subsequently re-scheduled to 20/3/12 as stated below)**

9. Meeting of 22 June 2011

- (a) Payback scheme - DNPA had reported that it was considering a voluntary contribution scheme and intended making a formal proposal in autumn 2011.

*Dr Bishop* advised that “£ for the Park” is a voluntary contribution scheme whereby participants of large scale organised events are invited to make a donation towards practical conservation and access projects in the National Park thus enabling them to put something back into Dartmoor in a practical way. The scheme was approved by Members of the Authority at their meeting on 7 October 2011. He thanked Brigadier Hodder and Lt Col Mellor for their support and the agreement that the scheme would be trialled at Ten Tors 2012 and then fully incorporated into Ten Tors 2013.

- (b) Dartmoor Commoners’ Lunch has been confirmed for 28 November 2011 to be held at Okehampton Camp.

10. Meeting of 9 March 2011 – no issues arising from this meeting.

11. Future meetings were confirmed as follows:

- 15 March 2012 - CTCRM Lympstone (**NB** subsequently re-scheduled to 20 March 2012)  
6 June 2012 - DTA Okehampton  
6 September 2012 - Natural England HQ, Exeter

12. *Mr Hitchins* asked what weight (if any) is given to National Park status when the MOD is determining the allocation of REES funding. *Lt Col Robinson* advised that funding is allocated in support of environmental and conservation issues, and in line with the Integrated Rural Management Plan. He undertook to ascertain whether National Park status was accorded any particular weight in the determination of bids for REES funding.

**ACTION: Lt Col Robinson to advise the Steering Group whether National Park status was accorded any particular weight in the determination of bids for REES funding.**

#### **ITEM 5 – LICENCE RENEWAL**

13. *Mr Halliday* reported that the licence has now been signed by both parties. He noted that the process had taken a long time and that one of the lessons to learn for any future renewal would be to allow sufficient lead time.
14. *Mr Halliday* circulated copies of Part 2 of the licence to members of the Steering Group. Members expressed their thanks to Lt Col (Retd) Tony Clarke for his hard work in making sure that the new licence will be fit for purpose.
15. Integrated Rural Management Plan (IRMP) – *Col Sloane* reported that the new IRMP has been published for Dartmoor Training Area, which fulfils the key obligations in the 2012 Duchy of Cornwall licence for military training. The format follows the Defence Infrastructure Organisation's (DIO) Practitioners Guide that was adopted last year for all MOD land holdings. Hard copies were circulated; it can also be found on the Dartmoor section of the MOD website. The IRMP will be re-written every five years and the action plan will be updated annually. He commended the plan and asked the Steering Group to endorse it.
16. *Dr Bishop* suggested that DSG charged the DWP to bring a plan to DSG detailing the monitoring work to be carried out for the mid-term environmental stock-take required by the licence. Some of this work is incorporated into the IRMP.
17. *The Chairman* commented that this was a good idea; it was important to establish an agreed monitoring plan. He urged the DWP to consider the monitoring objectives, what the plan is designed to achieve and report on individual responsibilities.

**ACTION: DWP to develop proposals, for consideration by the DSG, for monitoring of the Dartmoor Training Area as a basis for the mid-term stock take required by MOD and Defra.**

18. *Dr Bishop* reported that at the last DWP one issue identified as holding up the implementation of the IRMP was the review of MOD byelaws. He asked whether this would be taken forward. *Col Sloane* advised that there is no timetable as yet but undertook to draw up a time-line.
19. *The Chairman* stated that documents DSG 2011 05 and 06 regarding lessons learned had been discussed in draft format at the previous DSG meeting and been through the Working Party, therefore, he did not propose going through them in detail. He proposed sign off, which was agreed by all members of the Steering Group. *The Chairman* expressed his thanks to everyone who had made a contribution. It was noted that the executive summary, main report and appendices are to be placed on the MOD and DNPA websites.

**ACTION: Lead Joint Secretary to ensure that Lessons Learnt papers are placed on the MOD and DNPA websites.**

#### **ITEM 6 – TEN TORS**

20. *Brigadier Hankinson* reported that he had opened the Training Managers' briefing on 8 October 2011 at Okehampton and wished to reassure the Group regarding their concerns about the rare bird breeding areas, farming and safety issues. Emphasis at the briefing was placed on these sensitivities. He handed over to Lt Col Robinson to report on the three year review.
21. *Lt Col Robinson* reported on the three year review, published on 15 September 2010. A summary of the main points was provided during the meeting and a detailed resume of the recommendations is as follows:
  - The Team Managers' Brief is brought forward to late September/early October in line with the new training start date.
  - Walking Training should start in October of the previous year following the Team Managers' Brief, allowing more time to train on the North Moor outside the bird and livestock breeding periods.
  - The limit of 10 trainees per team is increased to 12 to allow two groups of 6 to train from 1 February.
  - Teams may train on the North Moor during the period from October (following the Training Managers' Brief) to 31 January.
  - The two weekend training restriction is changed to four days to allow greater flexibility and allow maximum opportunity to train on the North Moor.
  - Establishments should submit and update the Team Outline Training Programme to 43 Wx Bde to assist with statistical analysis of training locations.
  - The formal requirement for a DSG 3 year Ten Tors' Review ceases following this report as Ten Tors is effectively 'reviewed' annually through

the DWP June meeting, which enables issues to be identified and addressed, and the DSG can call for a review at any time.

- The Ten Tors' Policy Committee is re-energised to include representatives of Team Managers and Heads of Establishments.
  - Details of those farms on Dartmoor that offer camping/bunkhouse facilities and produce for sale, be made available to Team Managers. Links to local accommodation (B&B/hotels etc) will be available on the TT website.
  - Promoting understanding of the special qualities of Dartmoor, and greater engagement through school education programmes, scouting awards etc. should be developed by the Ten Tors' Policy Committee.
  - The closure of gates, if in doubt, is further emphasised to Team Managers.
  - The sanctions given in the Ten Tors' Rules against offenders are enforced appropriately.
  - The danger of wildfires and the action to be taken continues to be emphasised at the Team Managers' Brief.
  - Defence Training Estate South West and the Ten Tors' organisers continue to engage with Okehampton officials to improve links and mutual cooperation.
22. Other issues addressed in the report include disruption of livestock, lambs and calves, implementation of a new version of the Countryside Code, socio-economic impacts on local communities, the risk of fire on the moor, amongst other issues. The report also addressed the issues arising from the Charlotte Shaw Inquest.
23. *Brigadier Hankinson* reported that Dartmoor farmers provided much of the food for official receptions for the 2011 event. MOD, and their Partners, Landmarc, are keen to continue to work closely with local retailers and £620k is injected into the local economy by the event according to research undertaken by the University of Exeter. Local suppliers will continue to be encouraged to advertise their products.
24. *Mr Retallick* stated that Dartmoor farmers and other local suppliers would like to be involved in the event again next year.
25. *Lt Col (Retd) Mellor* confirmed that Dartmoor Farmers Ltd, the Lions from Okehampton, and other local suppliers will be invited to take part next year and that MOD would continue to work closely with local businesses, and the town council, to maximise the opportunity for local economic benefit.
26. *Dr Bishop* confirmed that he would ensure relevant details are given to Lt Col (Retd) Mellor.
27. Following discussion, it was clarified that any member of the DSG could call for a review of Ten Tors and that the Working Party effectively carries out an annual review through the June meeting, which includes additional representation from the Commoners' Council.

28. *Lt Col (Retd) Mellor* clarified that following a request from team managers for training groups to be increased to 12, the Task Group had recommended that, from 1 February, teams of 6 will be permitted to train within groups of 12 for safety reasons. The training period for Ten Tors can begin in October following the team managers briefing day.
29. *Brigadier Hankinson* thanked David Marino from the Duchy of Cornwall for chairing the Task Group. He stated that he believed everyone could be pleased with the confirmation that those measures to mitigate environmental and socio-economic impacts, as identified in the original Ten Tors Review Paper, were acted on and benefits to local communities and the National Park maximised.
30. He also stated that he hoped all would agree that it was a very worthwhile exercise and with new guidance in place, and following the Charlotte Shaw Inquest and Coroner's Rule 43 Recommendations, everyone could now move forward.
31. *Brigadier Hankinson* reported that 514 teams had taken part in the 2011 Ten Tors event. He confirmed that support for the event for 2012 would be similar to previous years. He advised that, although military involvement in the event was not a given, he was trying to set up arrangements on a more sound basis.
32. *Mrs Marsh* emphasised that everyone appreciated the military's involvement in Ten Tors; she felt that the event may not happen without its support. She offered to liaise with SW Highways to see if they could assist with regard to use of sliproads. This was welcomed. *Mr Retallick* added that the farmers and landowners appreciate the military input too, as all necessary safeguards are put in place.
33. *Dr Bishop* commented that it is easy for everyone to focus on costs and to lose sight of the benefits of events like Ten Tors. Ten Tors helps shape the values, attitudes and fitness of thousands of young people – it literally changes lives. Although the Authority has concerns regarding timing, it acknowledges that the event has a key role to play in achieving National Park purposes. The Authority would want to work with 43 Wx Bde to ensure a viable future for Ten Tors.
34. *Professor Mercer* commented that Ten Tors might be seen as Dartmoor National Park's version of the Lake District's "Adventure Capital".
35. *The Chairman* concluded that the DSG was unanimous in supporting Ten Tors and that everyone would wish to have every opportunity to make as constructive a contribution as possible to its future evolution. He requested that *Brigadier Hankinson* keep members informed of any issues that need to be raised. DSG will look to every aspect of the event to have a positive impact.

## **ITEM 7 – CRAMBER**

36. *Col Sloane* reported that the MOD's existing consent for dry training on Cramber Tor (dealt with under Crown Immunity provisions) expires on 6 January 2013. It was the Defence Infrastructure Organisation's (DIO) intention to submit a planning application for continued military training. He reported that the DIO submitted a formal Screening Report to DNPA in summer 2011. DNPA, following consultation, had accepted that there was no requirement for a statutory Environmental Impact Assessment under the Environmental Impact Assessment Regulations 1999. However, MOD has been invited to submit a non-statutory Environmental Statement in support of its application, taking into account planning Policy Statement No. 7 (PPS7) (Sustainable development in rural areas) and the circular on National Parks (2010). *Col Sloane* also noted that the Major Development Test specified in PPS7 required MOD to demonstrate the need for Cramber, scope for undertaking the training provided on Cramber outside the National Park and any detrimental effect on the environment, landscape and recreational opportunities. MOD staff will be scoping these requirements with DNPA staff in the near future and it is anticipated that the application will be submitted to DNPA in mid 2012.

## **ITEM 8 – OP HERICK EXPERIENCES AND FUTURE BASING POLICY IMPLICATIONS FOR THE SOUTH WEST**

37. *Brigadier Salzano* briefed the meeting and brought the Steering Group up to date. He reported that from January onwards the use of the moor will return to normal; staff will have returned from leave and will recommence with exercises.

## **ITEM 9 – ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

38. **Commandant post at Okehampton** - *Dr Bishop* advised that from the National Park's perspective, it would be beneficial to see a full time officer in charge of military training.
39. *Mr Halliday* endorsed *Dr Bishop's* comments, adding that over the past 21 years it has proved invaluable to have a commandant 'on the ground', working in tandem with the Duchy's Deputy Bailiff, David Marino. Between them they have achieved a lot. There is a distinction between a uniformed officer and a civil servant; the uniformed officer commands the respect of troops and of the general public.
40. *Col Sloane* understood this request but advised that he is currently very restricted with regard to filling posts due to funding cuts. The DIO is looking to reduce staff numbers significantly. The proposed solution is that Lt Col Robinson will take on the responsibilities for Dartmoor as well as his role as Regional Executive Officer, and this will be re-examined after six months. Lt Col Robinson is to take on these additional responsibilities in the new year.

41. *Dr Bishop* added that he appreciated the difficult circumstances but advised that he felt that Dartmoor is different to other areas: the training area is within a National Park and thus the eyes of the nation are on the MoD not just in terms of safety but also their custodianship of that part of the National Park.
42. The DSG collectively accepted Col Sloane's assurance that he wants a solution that will work and noted his commitment to review the situation in six months time and report back.

**ACTION: Col Sloane to review the arrangements for supervision of DTA after six months and report to the DSG.**

43. **DSG Chairman – term of office** – *Dr Bishop* notified the Steering Group that the joint secretaries had submitted an application to Defra and MOD for a 12 month extension to Mr Thomas' office as DSG Chairman. He understood that Ministers had approved this extension. He would be seeking guidance from MOD and Defra regarding the recruitment process for a new Chairman.
44. *Professor Mercer* proposed, and it was agreed by the Steering Group, to record the Group's thanks to Lt Col (Ret'd) Tony Clark for his invaluable work and commitment over the years.

#### **ITEM 10 – DATE AND LOCATION OF NEXT MEETING**

45. The next meeting will take place on 14 November 2012 at Lympstone.

There being no other business the meeting closed at 12.50pm