

MINUTES OF THE 53RD MEETING OF THE DARTMOOR STEERING GROUP

WEDNESDAY 13 NOVEMBER 2013

Held at Okehampton Camp

Present:

Members:

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| David Incoll | Chairman |
| Col David Kassapian | Comdt Commando Training Centre Royal Marines (CTCRM) |
| Dick Beetham | DIO Ops Training |
| Bill Hitchins | Chairman, Dartmoor National Park Authority (DNPA) |
| Maurice Retallick | Deputy Chairman, DNPA |
| Christine Marsh | DNPA |
| Veryan Heal | English Heritage (EH) |
| Roger Halliday | Duchy of Cornwall |
| Richard Andrews | Natural England (NE) |
| John Waldon | Dartmoor Commoners Council |
| Maj Chris Robinson | 43 Wessex Brigade (Wx Bde) |

Joint Secretaries:

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| Capt Ian Jarvis | Comdt & Trg Area Safety Officer West Devon |
| Dr Kevin Bishop | Chief Executive (NPO), DNPA |

In attendance:

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| Rob Steemson | Head Ranger, DNPA |
| Nigel Sharpe | Defence Land Agent, DIO Land Management Services |
| Lt Col David Marino RM | Deputy Bailiff, Duchy of Cornwall |

Apologies:

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| Brig Piers Hankinson | Comd 43 Wx Bde |
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ITEM 1 – CHAIRMAN’S OPENING REMARKS

- 1 The Chairman welcomed members and introduced himself and the two new members to the group, Veryan Heal (new representative for English Heritage) and John Waldon (new Chairman of the Dartmoor Commoners’ Council. He asked that everyone around the table introduce themselves.

ITEM 2 – MINUTES OF THE 52ND MEETING HELD ON 14 NOVEMBER 2012

- 2 The previous minutes were agreed by the group.

ITEM 3 – MATTERS ARISING

- 3 Bill Hitchins stated that, with regard to Paragraph 3, he was disappointed that CTCRM had declined the offer made by DNPA to host an event(s) for returning service personnel and/or their families. He stated that the National Park Authority would still be interested in working with CTCRM if circumstances change. Col David Kassapian replied that CTCRM remain very grateful for the offer.
- 4 With reference to Paragraph 11 of the minutes, Maurice Retallick asked if there was an update on the byelaw review. Nigel Sharpe replied that there over 200 byelaws which need reviewing and only 3 full time staff, meaning there is a huge backlog of byelaw work to be undertaken. The byelaws have been prioritised, based on security and public safety issues and a list of the top 50 has been produced. Dartmoor does not feature within the top 50. The top 50 will be reassessed from time to time, but even if Dartmoor is more highly prioritised, it is estimated that they will not be done within 5 years. Maurice Retallick expressed his concern at the potential delay and the impact this would have on delivering elements of the Integrated Rural Management Plan.
- 5 Capt Ian Jarvis suggested the Inter-visibility Study continues so the work is completed and the Byelaw Review Team can be informed of any required changes.
- 6 With reference to Paragraph 17, Bill Hitchens congratulated Capt Jarvis on his new appointment. He also thanked Maj Chris Robinson for all the hard work he did whilst in the position.

ITEM 4 – MINUTES OF THE DARTMOOR WORKING PARTY MEETINGS HELD ON 20 MARCH 2013; 12 JUNE 2013; 6 SEPTEMBER 2013

- 7 Dr Kevin Bishop stated he was pleased a new Chairman had been appointed for the Steering Group. He noted that the process of appointing a new Chairman had taken in excess of 18 months and hoped that the delays encountered could be avoided in future. He also stated that the letter confirming David Incoll’s appointment had not detailed a precise term of office.

Post meeting note – it was decided that the Chairman, David Incoll, should plan to stay until December 2016, after his fourth meeting, and to put this intention in a letter to Ministers.

- 8 Dr Kevin Bishop then referred to the Dartmoor National Park Management Plan, which the Authority, on behalf of all partners, has been reviewing for the last 12 months. This is a plan for the National Park, not just the Dartmoor Training Area, setting a long term vision as to how the National Park should be managed. It also sets out detailed actions as to how to take forward that vision. The specific ambition around military training remains as in the previous plan and one of the indicators that has been proposed to be monitored within the plan is the public access, and where it is limited due to live firing.
- 9 Dr Kevin Bishop also highlighted the proposal to use the training ranges for an unmanned drone. Capt Ian Jarvis had organised a briefing for this, involving the Commoners and Natural England, among others. Due to safety reasons, the drone can only be used when the range is closed. This means any use of the drone would be during the licenced firing days, not additional days. The drone is called Desert Hawk.
- 10 Bill Hitchins enquired as to the implications of the Strategic Defence Review and its potential impact on Dartmoor Training Area, in particular the potential impact of troops returning to the UK from bases in other countries. Maj Chris Robinson responded that, under the auspices of Armed Forces 2020, there will be two large troop movements. One is returning troops from Op Herrick, Afghanistan and the other is troops returning from Germany. The troop movement from Germany has been declared by Ministers to take place by 2018. The prospect is enormous. 43 Wessex Brigade will change to 1 (Artillery) Brigade from Jan 2015 and will have an increase in responsibilities as numbers of service personnel in the SW increase from 17% to 28% of the total Army strength. A third armoured Brigade (2000 personnel plus dependants) will be moving to Salisbury Plain Training Area (SPTA). As more tank and track training will take place on SPTA, this will inevitably mean more light training moving to Dartmoor, but usage would be within existing licences and allocations. There will also be a new Brigade Commander, Brigadier Jez Bennett, arriving in September 2014. Bill Hitchins asked that the Steering Group be regularly updated on any progress in future.
- 11 Capt Ian Jarvis advised the Steering Group that there will also be a reorganisation in the near future with regards to the bookings process.
- 12 Christine Marsh raised the issue of renewable heat and asked if there was any progress with installing a biomass boiler at Okehampton Camp. It was reported that there was no progress on this in the Camp, and she made the point that Okehampton College are in the process of installing a biomass boiler and would be able to help with any information regarding grants.
- 13 Bill Hitchins thanked the MOD for their essential support in the Dartmoor Mires project, in particular, their support in previous years for clearance of unexploded ordnance.

- 14 Bill Hitchens asked for a detailed briefing at the next Steering Group with regards to the potential to change the 6 week notification period for live firing. Dr Kevin Bishop explained that DNPA would like to extend the notice period for live firing, but that due to the Strategic Defence Review and a lack of objective statistics, a study into this by the MoD had been prevented. He said that the DNPA would like to know what the statistics are. Capt Ian Jarvis questioned what the benefit to the public would be in extending the notice and stated that the increase would result in a lack of flexibility in the Military bookings process. Dick Beetham echoed this and stated that the MOD would not wish to deploy forces without them being properly trained, sometimes this may mean as quickly as possible and by extending the notice period, this may become an issue.

The Chairman placed this as an action on the Dartmoor Working Party.

ITEM 5 – MID TERM MONITORING STRATEGY

- 15 The Chairman asked the joint secretaries to define the Steering Group's role with regards to this.
Dr Bishop stated that as part of the licence renewal, and in support of the Ministry of Defence's (MOD) continuing use of the of the area for military training, Defra (Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs) had asked the MOD to provide a report at the mid point of the new licence, which would be a stock-take of the training area's environmental management system, which includes environmental management tools and monitoring, usage data and public access (Hansard,27 January 2009). The Steering Group thought it might be useful if the parameters were agreed in advance, so that when the mid-point is reached, there is consensus on the remit and the approach. It was also reflective of the fact that to do the monitoring, you need time series data.
He clarified that the military presence is but one factor in all of the things the DNPA are seeking to monitor.
Capt Ian Jarvis pointed out that the role of the Steering Group is not to formally adopt the strategy but rather endorse the approach being proposed, and report to ministers.
- 16 Nigel Sharpe then informed the group that the Mid-term Stocktake is only one objective; the other is to deliver the Integrated Rural Management Plan (IRMP). This outlines the proposed management of the MOD estate and the activities on the training areas where the MOD don't have management responsibility of the land. The proposed framework concentrates on the environmental and public access aspects. The mid-term review also specified that the MOD should look at public access and there is a proposal within the framework documents that the MOD will contribute towards the cost of a visitor survey, the methodology to be agreed in future. It was agreed that public perception was a big issue.
Nigel Sharpe also echoed that the Mid Term Monitoring Strategy isn't an exclusive MOD monitoring programme; it is monitoring of Dartmoor conditions generally.
Richard Andrews commented that Natural England have carried out work on SSSI/SAC Commons Standard Monitoring, which needs to be considered by the MOD.

Nigel Sharpe agreed to take this action.

John Waldon stated that the Commoners have a monitoring duty under Farming Futures and he would provide a form of wording to Nigel Sharpe.

In a discussion on economic impacts, the DNPA clarified that they were looking at the hinterland of Dartmoor.

- 17 Roger Halliday made the point that the mid-term review must focus only on that which was stipulated. These requirements did not include economic value, which is a separate issue.
- 18 In discussion, whilst acknowledging that economic impacts are not within the remit of the mid-term stock take set by Ministers, there was general recognition that the economic impact of the presence of the military on Dartmoor and its hinterland was an important issue that needed to be assessed.

ITEM 6 – PROCUREMENT

- 19 Dr Kevin Bishop started by reminding the Steering Group that this issue emerged as an agenda item during the licence renewal process. After a meeting with Vestey Foods and the MOD, and also a workshop with local farmers, the clear message coming out was that the Steering Group needed to influence the MOD's guidance on contracts and in particular on SMAC's (Super Multi Activity Contracts). At the last meeting the Steering Group mandated the Chairman to write and ask ministers for a contact to take this forward, but no progress had yet been made.
- 20 Dick Beetham drew the Steering Group's attention to the EU and UK Legislation on contracting. He explained that food procurement is let by Defence Food Services Project Team. The contract is subject to competition on a fairly regular basis, and at present the prime contractor is Purple Food Services. The current prime contract is due to expire in December 2014 and will then be re-let by the MOD. Purple Food Services sub-contract to Vestey Foods and Supreme Foods, who supply food to service personnel on operations and training. The SMACs are due to be replaced by Project HESTIA.
The MOD cannot breach EU legislation on competition or value for money but that is not to say that local producers/suppliers should not work for the sub-contractors. Dick Beetham clarified that the MOD is in contract with the prime contractor, not the sub-contractors.
- 21 Col David Kassapian stated that as a tactical operator, he was just as frustrated with these strictures and bureaucracies under which he is operating (at CTCRM Lympstone).
- 22 The Chairman mentioned that in other areas of government, there has been a lot of encouragement for e-tendering, designed to give small businesses the opportunity to access tendering processes, and questioned if there was any apparatus of that sort operating within MOD. Dick Beetham replied that he was not aware of any such mechanism.
- 23 John Waldon acknowledged that procurement is a very important issue with local farmers / producers. He went on to say that it is clear the MOD is trying its best to

source local food when it has the flexibility to do so, for example the annual Commoners' Lunch.

- 24 Capt Ian Jarvis will shortly be meeting with Owen Clarke, from MOD Procurement . He will see what is and is not possible within the constraints that the MOD has to work under. It was agreed that Capt Ian Jarvis would arrange a further meeting with Owen Clarke and to extend the dialogue by including an invitation to the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) and local and county councils.

ITEM 7 – HOLMING BEAM HUT

- 25 Dick Beetham reported that the Architects Design Group and Francis Roberts Architects, as appointed by HRH, are now involved in the hut design. He is confident that by the end of the financial year, all consent and design will be in place, to go forward to the construction element.
Dr Kevin Bishop replied that he is glad to hear progress is being made and looks forward to the Authority receiving the planning application.
- 26 Capt Ian Jarvis thanked both the Duchy and the National Park Authority who have enabled things to be moved along at pace.

ITEM 8 – INTER-VISIBILITY STUDY

- 27 Nigel Sharpe started by explaining that the objective of the study is to evaluate the current range safety infrastructure (primarily flags and lookouts) to ensure that it ensures public safety whilst minimising the impact on the landscape. A computer based assessment was carried out which showed two things; the areas from which the flags were visible, and the visibility along the range boundaries from lookouts. Options for moving the lookouts were then investigated to increase the view along the range boundary, and to see if any flags could be made redundant and removed. A number of site visits were planned to “ground truth” the computer based assessment, but so far, only one has been undertaken due to snow and fog causing cancellations. Having undertaken the site visit, a number of evaluation principles were established, which will be applied during future site visits.
Nigel Sharpe then went on to inform the group on the evaluation principles. There are two aspects to be assessed.
Outside looking in- the public must have the necessary information to guide their use of the ranges safely. In this evaluation, an assessment needs to be made as to whether or not the infrastructure used to give this information could be reduced or, if moved or changed, could achieve the same effect with less impact.
Inside looking out- MOD must have the minimum necessary infrastructure in the right place to manage the safety of the range area. It was estimated that there needs to be a further 7 “ground truth” visits undertaken to cover the three ranges.
If it is found that any flags can be removed or replaced, it cannot be done until the range byelaws are reviewed, as it will invalidate the Byelaws. The Byelaws specify the location of the flags.
- 28 Dr Kevin Bishop questioned whether it was worthwhile committing staff time to a project which would not potentially be implemented for a considerable number of

years given the delays noted previously with the byelaw review. Capt Ian Jarvis stated that it was worthwhile to continue, as relocation of lookout positions were not subject to the byelaws and so some landscape improvements may be possible. Other change proposals would also help to inform the Byelaw Review.

ITEM 9 – NEW TRAINING ESTATE CONTRACT BRIEF

- 29 Dick Beetham advised the Steering Group that the current contract is supported by Landmarc and ESS and that the contract was let in 2003, for a period of 10 years. This has subsequently been extended to Sept 2014. The National Training Estate Prime Contract, which will bring together all UK contracts on the training estate, has three bidders. They are Babcock, KBR and Landmarc. These bids are now in a period of evaluation. He expected the winning bidder to be notified between April to June 2014, with a new contract in place between November 2014 and January 2015. Dick Beetham stated that the contract requirement includes sustainability and that he would raise the question of the biomass boiler raised earlier by Christine Marsh.

ITEM 10 – TEN TORS – NEW APPROACH

- 30 Maj Chris Robinson re-emphasised that the label of the Territorial Army will be changing to the Reserves. He then reported that the Wessex based units of 43 Wessex Brigade, will continue to support Ten Tors. The new approach for 2014 is driven by concerns about resilience and safety. There will be new routes with 10 Safety Control points, with direct road access. There will be 17 Check Points, each with a 4 man team that can walk in, reducing demands for helicopter insertion and extraction. This will provide a better response from a safety control point of view and enable better monitoring of rivers and routes. Princetown will have designated road crossing points and only the 45 and 55 milers will be wild camping. The 35 milers will be camping at the safety control points.
- 31 Maj Chris Robinson also mentioned that Ten Tors groups had donated £1,200 as part of the '£ for the Park' initiative. He said that he had hoped to bring a cheque to this value to present to the Chairman of the National Park Authority but this had not been possible. He then went on to confirm that 43 Wessex Brigade would transfer the money to the National Park Authority electronically as a matter of urgency. It was agreed that when the Authority received the money they would liaise with 43 Wessex Brigade about publicity so groups participating in Ten Tors were clear about how the money was being used to support practical conservation and recreation projects with details included in the ten tors 2014 leaflet. Bill Hitchins thanked 43 Wessex Brigade for their support during 2013 and their continued support for '£ for the Park' as part of Ten Tors. John Waldon suggested this opportunity could be used to encourage other large events to similarly contribute and added the Commoners Council would like to be engaged in that process.
- 32 Maurice Retallick thanked 43 Wessex Brigade for ensuring that local suppliers are present during the Ten Tors event. Maj Chris Robinson responded that there is every

intention to continue this and also for local farmers to participate in the briefing prior to the event.

ITEM 11 - USAGE STATISTICS

- 33 Capt Ian Jarvis went through the Usage Statistics with the Steering Group. He explained that there are nearly twice as many days available for live firing at Willsworthy than at Okehampton or Merrivale. He also highlighted the days where at least 24 hours public notice has been given due to a cancellation. The results show consistent high use of the areas.
- 34 Capt Ian Jarvis advised that in the future his office would take responsibility for producing the figures and they would not be submitted to the National Park Authority for checking. Bill Hitchins asked for assurance that the figures will be accurate, as in previous years there had been errors. Capt Ian Jarvis advised that many of the calculations are now made automatically from the base data, rather than manually, and will be more accurate.

ITEM 12 – ANY OTHER BUSINESS

- 35 Bill Hitchens stated that next year is the 100th anniversary of the First World War. He questioned if the MOD have any plans to mark the occasion. It was agreed that there is no knowledge of anything specific to Dartmoor, although plenty happening nationally.
- 36 Capt Ian Jarvis mentioned that as organisational updates have been conducted, against the original terms of reference of the Steering Group, some representatives have changed. Are there any other representatives the Steering Group would like to join. Dr Kevin Bishop advised that the Membership is determined by Ministers.
- 37 Capt Ian Jarvis then went on to add that perhaps Brigadier Ged Salzano would like to attend future meetings in addition to the current CTCRM representation due to changes within the MOD. Col David Kassapian responded that if a slightly broader view from the perspective of the major user is required, and it is the desire of the Steering Group, the Brigadier would be happy to attend. However, he would continue to attend and brief any matters arising to the Brigadier as necessary.
- 38 Capt Ian Jarvis lastly commented that as the group is responsible to Ministers, there are two new Ministers in post. Anna Soubry who is a Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Defence (Minister Defence Personnel, Veterans and Welfare) and the Waste, Water and Forestry Minister, Dan Rogerson. He questioned that with two new Ministers in post, perhaps a positive engagement with them would be to the benefit of the Steering Group. The Chairman decided that at this stage, perhaps the Steering Group send a letter congratulating the Ministers on their new posts and making them aware of the group's existence.

Post Meeting Note: It has subsequently been established that Lord de Mauley, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State (Natural Environment and Science) and Government Spokesperson, Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, has responsibility for the Dartmoor Steering Group within that department.

ITEM 13 – DATE OF NEXT MEETING

39 The next meeting will take place on 12 November 2014 at Okehampton Battle Camp.

There being no other business the meeting closed at 12:30