

# MINUTES OF THE 55<sup>th</sup> MEETING OF THE DARTMOOR STEERING GROUP

WEDNESDAY 18 NOVEMBER 2015

Held at Parke, Bovey Tracey

## Present:

### Members:

David Incoll	Chairman
Lt Col A de Reya	Chief of Staff (for Comdt CTCRM)
Peter Harper	Chairman, Dartmoor National Park Authority (DNPA)
Maurice Retallick	Deputy Chairman, DNPA
Kevin Ball	DNPA
Lt Col Peter Bates	SO1 Ten Tors (for Comd 1 Arty Bde & HQ SW)
Lt Col David Marino RM	Deputy Bailiff, Representing Duchy of Cornwall

### Joint Secretaries:

Dr Kevin Bishop	Chief Executive (NPO), DNPA
Lt Col Tim Jalland	PTSO & Commander SW Region HQ DIO Service Delivery Training

### In attendance:

Rob Steemson	Head Ranger, DNPA
Nigel Sharpe	Defence Land Agent, DIO Land Management Services
Richard Brooks	Principal – DIO Environmental Support and Compliance
Alan Mitchell	1 Arty Bde & HQ SW

## Apologies:

Chris Gregory	Land Steward, Duchy of Cornwall
Richard Andrews	Natural England
John Waldon	Chairman, Dartmoor Commoners' Council

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

- 1 The Chairman welcomed and thanked everyone for attending the meeting, especially the new faces from the military.

## **ITEM 2 - MINUTES OF THE 54<sup>th</sup> MEETING HELD ON 12 NOVEMBER 2014**

- 2 The minutes of the 54<sup>th</sup> Dartmoor Steering Group (DSG) meeting had been previously agreed by circulation. Actions had either been implemented or were to be discussed later on the agenda.

- 3 Maurice Retallick referred to the Minutes of the Dartmoor Working Party (DWP) meeting held in October 2015, where it was noted that Landmarc were considering a project focused on sustainable procurement. He asked whether Steering Group members would support the Chairman writing to Landmarc to express interest in Dartmoor Training Area and the associated local military facilities being a pilot area for this work. Following discussion this was agreed by all present.

**ACTION:**

**Joint Secretary to draft a letter for the Chairman to send to Landmarc expressing interest in Dartmoor Training Area and associated military establishments being a pilot area for their work on sustainable procurement**

- 4 Peter Harper expressed thanks on behalf of Dartmoor National Park Authority, to all the military personnel involved with the Study Tour that took place as part of the 2015 UK National Parks Conference. He felt that those who took part came back with a greater understanding of how we all work together.
- 5 Kevin Ball reiterated that fact. He too had attended the Study Tour, which he described as brilliant, and he had received many positive comments from participants regarding the working relationship between the Ministry of Defence (MoD) and the National Park.
- 6 Kevin Ball asked if the feasibility study for a bio-mass boiler at Okehampton Camp had been progressed. He stated that that the bio-mass boiler at Princetown Visitor Centre had proved very successful and that the military would be very welcome to look around, if this proved useful.
- 7 Peter Harper questioned whether the military were able to claim money under the Renewable Heat Incentive as this might prove a positive factor in deciding on bio-mass boiler installation, or not.

Lt Col Tim Jalland reported that nothing had been mentioned, therefore he thought not, but he would look into the matter as it could be a potential invest to save project.

**ACTION:**

**Lt Col Tim Jalland to determine whether Defence Infrastructure Organisation (DIO) or Landmarc were considering the potential for a biomass boiler at Okehampton Battle Camp.**

**ITEM 3 - MATTERS ARISING**

- 8 Lt Col Tim Jalland stated that following the correspondence between the DSG Chairman and the Minister, Mark Lancaster TD MP, he felt that he should apologise to the Steering Group. He was aware that previously, colleagues in both the military and Civil Service had made promises regarding Holming Beam Hut, which should not have been made and he felt obliged to apologise for that. Like all governmental departments, MoD has suffered budgetary cuts. The reduction in the MoD budget means that funds will be focused on making/keeping the ranges safe. He explained that DIO had been assured that, in its present state, Holming Beam Hut is purposeful

for up to another 10 years. He appreciated that this was not what the Steering Group wanted to hear given previous commitments, but he wanted to be honest. The replacement/improvement of Holming Beam Hut was not going to happen in the foreseeable future, due to lack of funds.

- 9 David Incoll referred to his letter from Mark Lancaster TD MP and asked if the options mentioned therein had changed since July 2015.
- 10 Lt Col Tim Jalland reiterated that they were not in a position to pursue the project. He did not expect the financial situation to materially alter following the publication of the 2015 Spending Review; there was insufficient budget to afford to invest in a replacement for Holming Beam Hut.
- 11 Peter Harper thanked Lt Col Jalland for his honesty and clarity. He expressed his concern and dismay that clear assurances and commitments, given at more than one meeting of the Steering Group, had not been honoured. Whilst he understood the financial situation he felt that this episode undermined the role and authority of the Steering Group. It was important that lessons were learnt and that all parties treated the Steering Group with the respect and authority it should command as a statutory body that reports direct to two Government Departments.

All Agreed

- 12 David Marino voiced his disappointment, particularly with the involvement of HRH Prince of Wales. However, there appear to be no safety issues with regards Holming Beam Hut, currently the building appears to be in a functional state for up to another 10 years and it was time to move on.

#### **ITEM 4 - MINUTES OF THE DARTMOOR WORKING PARTY MEETINGS HELD IN 2015**

- 13 Lt Col Tim Jalland thanked members of the Working Party for getting the papers together during this, his first year. He was aware that normal practice is for three meetings per annum and that the Working Party had met only twice in 2015 – an experiment to see whether the work could be conducted more efficiently. He stated that he planned to revert to three meetings per annum to ensure that progress on key items, such as the mid-term monitoring strategy, were progressed in a timely fashion.
- 14 Peter Harper questioned whether National Park Authorities across the UK would have an opportunity to comment and input to the methodology for the new Integrated Rural Management Plans (IRMPs). He noted that the Authorities had contributed to the previous guidance.
- 15 Richard Brooks replied that they are currently looking at areas with different pressures and how they will work. When IRMPs are updated in other National Parks, the relevant National Park Authority, would be consulted.
- 16 Peter Harper expressed concern that National Park Authorities were not, apparently, to be provided with an opportunity to contribute to the guidance for the preparation of IRMPs. He asked for details of the timeline for the preparation of the Dartmoor

IRMP; whether this was budgeted for; and, if there was a budget for agreed actions that might arise from the IRMP?

- 17 Richard Brooks responded that he envisaged that the Dartmoor IRMP would be revised within the next 12-15 months, that the process was budgeted for, that all stakeholders would be consulted but that there was no agreed budget for actions that might arise from the IRMP – these would be considered on a case by case basis.

**ACTION:**

**Richard Brooks to ensure that details of the IRMP process for Dartmoor are presented to the next meeting of the Dartmoor Working party for views and comments.**

- 18 Maurice Retallick referred to item 7.1 of the minutes from the DWP held on October 8<sup>th</sup> 2015, regarding the Commoners' Briefing, and enquired as to when invitations were likely to be sent. He felt that the Briefing was significant to the Commoners in terms of PR.

**ACTION:**

**Lt Col Tim Jalland to check the invitation list for the Commoners' Briefing.**  
(Afternote: The Commoners Briefing took place on 26 November 2015 and was deemed by those present to be a success.

**ITEM 5 - MID-TERM MONITORING STRATEGY**

- 19 Lt Col Jalland stated that the Mid-term Monitoring Strategy, produced by Nigel Sharpe, illustrated who the military thought should be doing what. He noted that insufficient progress had been made since the last Steering Group meeting and committed to ensuring this was a priority for the Working Party in 2016. He also undertook to ensure that all of the relevant organisations were invited to engage in this process, even if they were not part of the formal Working Party membership.
- 20 Richard Brooks stated that however the group was made up, it was important to ensure they were the right people and that it was made very clear to them what they were to monitor, and why, so that a work programme could be put together and presented to the MoD in order to gain funding. He was keen that the mid-term monitoring strategy linked to the wider State of the National Park and Management Plan process and that the option of pooling resources was fully explored.
- 21 David Marino raised the issue of attendance at Working Party and Steering Group meetings. He noted that key partners appeared to have 'withdrawn' from the Working Party and Steering Group and that was not helping effective partnership working.
- 22 David Incoll proposed that he contact members to encourage more attendance at meetings.
- 23 Kevin Bishop and Lt Col Jalland stated that they would be happy to write to members of the Working Party on behalf of the DSG Chairman, reminding them of the

importance of their attendance and input to initiatives such as the mid-term monitoring strategy.

- 24 Kevin Bishop stated that, for clarity, the gaps in the draft mid-term monitoring strategy needed completing and asked how the archaeological survey-work, discussed at the last Steering Group meeting, was progressing.
- 25 Nigel Sharpe informed Steering Group members that although the rolling five year monitoring system was one year adrift, they were confident that with Landmarc having secured a new contract, they would catch up. Currently, they are only monitoring scheduled monuments and this was a change from previous studies. He stated that the surveys indicated that general disturbance from the public had as much, if not more, impact than military use.
- 26 Kevin Bishop was grateful for the reassurance of the continued archaeological surveys but disappointed by the restricted focus. He asked if ecological surveys would also be undertaken.
- 27 Richard Brooks reiterated that there was a limited budget within MoD for environmental and ecological monitoring. The Steering Group has to be clear as to what monitoring is required and why, to ensure funding – it has to tick the right priorities. Appropriate activity will be funded.
- 28 Kevin Bishop expressed concern that the response by Mr Books could mean that the delay, by the MoD, in progressing the mid-term monitoring strategy was effectively denying the resources to fund monitoring because the Steering Group had not had the opportunity to discuss a revised strategy and agree priorities. He also stated that he believe the current IRMP contained clear commitments about continued monitoring.

#### **ACTIONS:**

**Lt Col Tim Jalland to set forward a calendar of dates for Working Party meetings and consider a meeting in early 2016 focused on the monitoring strategy. DIO will prepare an up-dated monitoring strategy for discussion at this meeting;**

**The Joint Secretaries to send a letter, on behalf of the Chairman, to members of the Working Party stressing the importance of attendance and engagement in key agenda items;**

**At their next meeting the Steering Group will be provided with an up-dated Monitoring Strategy, details of completed and planned survey work, and results to-date.**

#### **ITEM 6 – INTERVISIBILITY STUDY**

- 29 Nigel Sharpe reminded members of the Steering Group that the intervisibility study had been on-going for a number of years. The study was focused on range safety and the visual impact of military infrastructure, such as flags, range clearer huts and boundary markers. The outcome sought was a safe range with minimal visual impact. The study had initially been a GIS-based exercise but over the last 18 months officers from DIO, Duchy of Cornwall and National Park Authority had been

involved in 'ground truthing' some of the initial findings. He noted that many of the recommendations required an amendment to the military byelaws. The MoD's byelaw team is very small and is looking at reviews in order of priority based on safety aspects. As Dartmoor Training Area has just been passed as safe, it is not a priority in terms of a byelaw review. Given the current work programme for the byelaw team it will probably be at least ten years before they have time and capacity to devote to Dartmoor. Whilst this means that the majority of the recommendations cannot be acted upon at the current time, there are a number of places where the public can approach the range danger area without having seen any advance warning. It is proposed to erect repeater signs at identified sites in order to rectify this. The signs would not be large, A3 or possibly smaller, and would be placed on gates or stiles at key points where no range boundary signs exist. .

- 30 Maurice Retallick asked for clarity on how many flags could be removed without byelaws being involved.
- 31 Nigel Sharpe referred Mr Retallick to Annex A of his report and the column marked 'byelaw change requirement'
- 32 Peter Harper asked for clarity as to whether the proposed new signs, giving people advance warning that they were approaching a range danger area, were required on safety grounds. In response, Nigel Sharpe stated that there was no requirement for these signs on safety grounds. Peter Harper stated that he was concerned about a potential proliferation of signage; if, as stated, the signs were not required on safety grounds he remained to be convinced that there was a robust business case for them and this could be a potential saving and the money used for other works that all parties agreed to.

The Chairman expressed concern that in 2014 the Steering Group was told that it would take ten years for a byelaw review and a year later they were being given the same message. He was concerned that Dartmoor was not being considered as a priority and asked that MoD look at whether they could use external capacity to progress the review.

- 33 Richard Brooks stated that the work may not be done in ten years as sites are changing all the time. He suggested that members of the Steering Group need to be realistic: nuclear sites and those of a high security risk are in the top 50, not places like Dartmoor.
- 34 Peter Harper said that the DSG wanted clarity regarding what could be done; what would be done, and when. He felt that the National Park Authority had invested time in this process, as with Holming Beam Hut, only to be told at the conclusion that the range was safe and thus not a priority. If progress hinged on range safety why was this inspection not completed at the start of the process? He supported the Chairman's request that MoD look at procuring external capacity to assist the byelaw review. He accepted the need to prioritise high security risk sites but surely this also helped make the case for a simpler process for low risk sites?

The Chairman asked that MoD explore all options to expedite the byelaw review and report back to the Working Party. He indicated his willingness to raise the matter with Ministers, if required.

**ACTION:**

**MoD to explore all options to expedite the byelaw review;  
The case for any new advance warning signs to be re-considered.**

**ITEM 7 – TEN TORS**

- 35 Lt Col Peter Bates explained that he was deputising for Bde Jez Bennett. He reported that Ten Tors 2015 had been successful: safety issues had been addressed; a traffic management plan had been written; the Ten Tors Team had worked well; the BBC had filmed the event for Blue Peter (even though the presenters only lasted one day); the Head of the Army had visited; the parking plan had been improved; and they had raised money for the National Park through '£ for the Park'. He reported that Ten Tors 2016 would take place over the weekend of 7 – 8 May.
- 36 Maurice Retallick thanked the MoD for the financial donation via £ for the Park and stressed how much the Authority had appreciated it. He then asked if the military were committed to sustaining Ten Tors; whether there was any update on work strands as per paragraph 35 of the DSG minutes 2014; what actions had been taken to deter Ten Tors teams straying into ground nesting bird sites, and whether any decisions had been made regarding local producers/traders selling refreshments during the Ten Tors event.
- 37 Lt Col Bates responded that the military was not committed to sustaining Ten Tors. Once again, this was due to funding. However, it will continue for as long as they are able. He explained that Ten Tor Team Managers are provided with maps with all known bird nesting sites clearly marked and were asked to ensure those areas were not entered. He detailed that 150 letters had been sent to Team Managers regarding potential or actual issues during the event. The Army retained the right to ban groups who do not adhere to the rules and transgress into bird breeding areas and have done this. With regard to local procurement, he envisaged the same arrangements as per Ten Tors 2015.
- 38 Kevin Bishop offered assistance in helping to get the message out to MPs, including the Minister for National Parks, Rory Stewart MP.

**ACTION:**

**Kevin Bishop & Lt Col Bates to jointly invite Rory Stewart MP to attend Ten Tors 2016.**

**ITEM 8 – USAGE STATISTICS**

- 39 Lt Col Jalland stated that as per the statistics circulated, the figures had not changed much over the last couple of years. He felt that more use could be made of the

ranges and they had not experienced any fallout from the troops returning from Germany.

Lt Col Bates replied that, unfortunately, the lack of mobile coverage and WiFi on Dartmoor was one of the reasons it is not used more.

**ITEM 9 – ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

40 None

**ITEM 10 – DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

41 The next meeting will take place on 16 November 2016 – at Okehampton Camp.

There being no other business, the meeting closed at 11:50