

# MINUTES OF THE 56<sup>th</sup> MEETING OF THE DARTMOOR STEERING GROUP

WEDNESDAY 16 NOVEMBER 2016

Held at Okehampton Camp

## Present:

### Members:

|                    |   |
|--------------------|---|
| David Incoll       | Chairman  |
| Lt Col Jon Coomber | Chief of Staff CTCRM                                    |
| Maurice Retallick  | Deputy Chairman Dartmoor National Park Authority (DNPA) |
| Kevin Ball         | Devon County Member Okehampton Rural and DNPA           |
| Chris Gregory      | Land Steward Duchy of Cornwall                          |
| Cathy Fitzroy      | 3 Moors Team Leader Natural England (NE)                |
| John Waldon        | Chairman Dartmoor Commoners Council                     |

### Joint Secretaries:

|                    |  |
|--------------------|--|
| Lt Col Tim Jalland | Regional Commander DIO SD Trg SW             |
| Dr Kevin Bishop    | Chief Executive (National Park Officer) DNPA |

### In attendance:

|                        |  |
|------------------------|--|
| Nigel Sharpe           | Defence Land Agent, DIO Land Management Services |
| Lt Col David Marino RM | Deputy Bailiff Duchy of Cornwall                 |

### Apologies:

|                    |  |
|--------------------|--|
| Bill Hitchins      | Chairman DNPA                              |
| Lt Col Peter Bates | SO1 Ten Tors (for Comd 1 Arty Bde & HQ SW) |

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

1. The Chairman welcomed all members to the 56<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Dartmoor Steering Group.

## **ITEM 2 – MINUTES OF THE 55th MEETING HELD ON 18 NOVEMBER 2015**

2. Kevin Bishop confirmed previous minutes were agreed by way of circulation.

## **ITEM 3 – MATTERS ARISING**

3. Attendance. David Incoll stated that last year David Marino had raised the matter of attendance by other parties at Working Party meetings and the minutes produced this year suggested better attendance overall. This was confirmed to be the case

4. Sustainable Procurement Pilot. Tim Jalland has been in touch with Tim Jones (Board member of the Heart of the South West Local Enterprise Partnership) about Big Food Project and they will meet shortly discuss working together. David Incoll noted that the previous contract which commenced 2 years ago was let to a North Eastern company with an option to sub-purchase locally and queried if this had been instigated. Maurice Retallick thought that this had not happened and, in line with Government policy, he would like to see the MoD pursue the use of local suppliers both for goods and contractors. He queried why it had not happened to date; Tim Jalland responded that unfortunately it had been lost during the change of delivery contract across the Defence Estate. He confirmed that he has now contacted Tim Jones and there is a commitment to move this forwards.
5. Biomass Boiler. Tim Jalland advised that it is being considered, but it would not happen immediately and there is a chance it will not be provided for Dartmoor. There are hurdles, including the fact there is no wood supply here so it would need to be bought in. Kevin Ball advised that there is a biomass boiler at the National Park Visitor Centre, Princetown which the Authority has funded as an 'invest to save' scheme. He questioned whether the Defence Infrastructure Organisation was eligible for the Renewable Heat Incentive Scheme, if so, it could be a similar 'invest to save' scheme for them. He also stated that there was a Dartmoor Woodfuel Co-operative and other local suppliers, so sourcing of wood chip should not be a problem.
6. Byelaw Review. Tim Jalland advised no change. DIO SD Training is looking at ways of getting their own byelaw team, to bypass the current single team of 4 people for the entire country. He explained that there are areas with no byelaws, and these must be prioritised to make them legal. It could be a 10 year wait for the Dartmoor review. David Incoll commented that it has been a 10 year wait for a number of years. He queried whether the Secretary of State could be authorised to make a decision when the landowner and relevant organisations, like the National Park, were all in agreement of the review, so that it need not go to the review team to be held up for a number of years. Maurice Retallick asked if a local legal team could be employed to review the byelaws. Tim Jalland explained that, as the byelaws maintain a safe place to train and keep them compliant, legal and protected, they do need to be reviewed by the correct team. He advised that there are areas without such byelaws which take priority over those with them. He explained that each byelaw is specific to each area, they are all different and each requires a large amount of work. David Incoll agreed that the amount of work involved in a review is disproportionate to the outcome sought however, where there is total agreement cannot the Secretary of State make an order to amend them? Nigel Sharpe explained that part of the problem is that nationally the byelaws have been subject regularly to legal challenges, which has occupied the legal team. There is a concern that not following formal process for amendment could create a vulnerability to legal challenge. Kevin Bishop sought clarity with the position of the byelaws. His understanding is that all parties had contributed to the work on the Intervisibility study which had produced a set of recommendations for amendments to the lookouts and boundaries. Those changes have been deemed safe but cannot be instigated until the byelaws are formally amended. Therefore, it is not an issue of a safe place to train, but rather an issue with the capacity of the MoD byelaw team. Tim Jalland advised this is not strictly the case; you cannot make changes to a training area without the byelaws being changed and not undermine that byelaw. He advised that he would like it changed and will keep working at it, but Dartmoor is not the only area with this issue. Kevin Ball asked if the team work area by area. Tim Jalland explained that they work in order of importance and at the moment Dartmoor is deemed safe. The overall delay is due to lack of staff capacity and priority.

## **ITEM 4 – MINUTES OF THE DARTMOOR WORKING PARTY MEETINGS HELD IN 2016**

7. Tim Jalland advised that the past year has seen the continued tightening of the MoD purse strings. As a result the budget to manage the Defence Training Estate is primarily focussed on the maintenance of the safe place and funding of other priorities has been less. This has been evident on the tenanted estate and infrastructure. Only 30% of funds requested were received this year and for next it will be 27%. Consequently the Dartmoor Working Party (DWP) has been driving towards a more collaborative way of working between the key stakeholders. This was initiated by an early year meeting between the MoD and the National Park to look specifically at the Mid-Year Monitoring Review and to better develop the mutual work towards review. This identified the need to re-introduce the third and quarterly meeting of the DWP which had been in abeyance and which will help drive towards meeting the monitoring requirements. The focus has been towards the review with continued working together to better steward the estate to ensure it continues to be protected in order to provide a special place for the Nation. Working together not only enhances the Moor but also supports the important part it plays in the training of those who are going on operations and as such the training on Dartmoor helps save the lives of those serving their country.
  
8. Tim Jalland explained that collaborative stewardship of the estate is key to looking after Dartmoor and as such stewardship has been a central part to the Working Party this past year. However, it should be remembered that MoD funds to support this work are relatively small in the bigger scheme of things. The MoD provides a central pot of £1.8m to cover stewardship across the whole of the country. As such each year bids are made for the funding. This year MOD has made a concerted effort to ensure the National Park has been involved in the bidding process from the start to ensure MOD can support some of its projects whilst at the same time meeting the needs of the Mid Term Review. This has included:
  - a. Investigation into the movement of Standon Look Out which has resulted in a decision to look at moving the hut when the current structure needs replacing. Kevin Ball asked if the feasibility study has begun. Nigel Sharpe advised that he had met with archaeologists on site and they had established that the Look Out, which stands on MoD freehold land, is not sited on top of a scheduled monument - hence the decision to leave it where it is until replacement becomes necessary. At that point it could be re-sited off the skyline.
  - b. A monument condition survey for Cramber Tor which will take place whilst the vegetation is reduced during the winter months.
  - c. Public access improvements at Merrivale which have resulted in a decision to build up the current stone causeway with a secondary benefit of building up the peats through the build-up of silts and sediments.
  - d. A second site at Cowsic Bridge which would receive the same treatment using granite “stepping stones”, enabling the Moor to regenerate.
  - e. SSSI improvements at Willsworthy where firebreaks will be made.
  - f. An early helicopter request so that MoD can provide some support next year to the project at Postbridge.
  - g. Reference the refurbishment of the National Park Visitor Centre at Princetown, a meeting has taken place with Richard Drysdale, the Visitor Services Manager, in order to identify how the MoD can contribute to the exciting and interactive displays. This is being followed up with a further meeting between the Centre and the MoD’s Public Relations/Communications team in order to better inform the requirement and take it forward.

- h. The MoD's delivery contractor Landmarc will assist with the utilisation of boulders at Antony Stile to help reduce erosion.
9. Tim Jalland thanked the Dartmoor Working Party members for their work and support towards the continued good stewardship on the Moor.
10. Kevin Ball stated that the National Park was grateful for the stewardship funding.
11. Kevin Ball stated that, from the minutes, it looked as if the number of complaints had increased. Tim Jalland advised that they had not, however he had initiated an improved reporting system.
12. Kevin Ball queried the progress of the film about training on Dartmoor, for the National Park Visitor Centre. Tim Jalland advised that, in addition to including military training on the moor, it will also cover the MoD's full involvement in the stewardship of the moor. It will also provide a feed into various social media sites.
13. Cathy Fitzroy requested, with reference to all works carried out, that Natural England is informed to ensure that appropriate consents are gained.

#### **ITEM 5 – MID TERM MONITORING STRATEGY**

14. Tim Jalland advised that, at the last Steering Group, he felt insufficient progress had been made since the 2014 Steering Group. Consequently the third DWP meeting was reinstated. In addition he initiated a meeting with the National Park in February, to review the obligation to report an environmental stocktake at the mid-point of the licence period. Out of this meeting it was agreed that the current Mid Term Monitoring Review Matrix should be reviewed and revised. The result was available to all at the meeting. The Matrix will be used to drive the important monitoring requirement and indeed, after the Safe Place to Train on Dartmoor, it is the top priority. All members of the DWP are involved in overseeing and contributing to the matrix. Tim Jalland felt that the work is not just to meet the obligation, but an opportunity to look beyond 2023 in order to ensure that this group is looking after the National Park for the benefit of future generations and the nation. Tim Jalland highlighted the pertinent points as follows:
  - a. Breeding Bird Survey. It has been provisionally agreed that the MoD delay the MoD Breeding Bird Survey so that it can incorporate the DNPA one taking place in 2018. This will improve consistency and efficiency. Maurice Retallick asked if this survey is a follow on from 2011 or did that not go ahead. Nigel Sharpe advised that it did not proceed in 2011 and it is therefore a follow on from 2006 and he confirmed that the MOD would provide funding for this.
  - b. SSSI. Standards Monitoring Natural England Programme. Cathy Fitzroy advised it does not have a fixed term however the Okehampton Forest of Dartmoor SSSI is due review next financial year. Natural England has been asked to provide the current programme; Nigel Sharpe and Cathy Fitzroy to meet with reference to this, outside of this meeting.
  - c. Biodiversity Action Plan Species. DNPA has been asked to forward survey suggestions to Nigel Sharpe for inclusion in Conservation Stewardship Fund bids for the coming year and beyond. This has included £4000 towards the Dunlin Survey in 2016/17.

- d. Peatland Partnership Project. Following a meeting between Nigel Sharpe and Ally Kohler of the National Park, the MoD has agreed to fund £2.5K towards the Partnership in 2016/17.
  - e. Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB). Nigel Sharpe has been in discussion with Helen Booker regarding the Ring Ouzels. It was agreed that DNP should be involved in the discussions too. RSPB currently bird mapping.
  - f. Water Quality. Environment Agency have the data. Natural England provides data to DNP on an annual basis but the information provides insufficient detail. No assessment could be made as to whether MoD or farming caused any problems. Further conversation to take place between Nigel Sharpe and Environment Agency.
  - g. Archaeology. Funding is available for the Cramber Archaeology Survey this year and a bid for some funding in 2017/18 for Merrivale has been submitted.
  - h. Public Access. The MoD to supply the questions and some financial contribution towards the National Park Survey in the 2017/18 bid. During 2017/18 MoD will also be undertaking the Cramber Survey in accordance with conditions imposed under the Planning Consent. Noted that this could be included within an expanded National Park survey
  - i. Public Perception of the Military. MoD currently compiles and maintains a register of relevant surveys covering access. Nigel Sharpe will be investigating the information held by other parties.
  - j. Visitor Centre. Already covered MoD support to the National Park Visitor Centre, Princetown under item 4 para 8g.
  - k. Compliment and Complaints. The process for this was reviewed earlier in the year and a new complaints form developed and distributed in order to improve the monitoring of complaints. This appears to be working well.
  - l. Ten Tors. This will be included in the Monitoring Matrix as it plays a large part in the military element on the Moor and provides income to the local community, engagement with the local youth organisations and positive public relations and media opportunities for Dartmoor.
  - m. Additional Monitor Sources. The Commoners are being better engaged with in order to obtain more information reference Farming Futures to support the monitoring.
15. Tim Jalland stated he felt that the monitoring programme was now better developed and that there was clarity of how to answer the questions associated with the mid-term stock-take. He offered his thanks to all who had been involved.
16. Maurice Retallick queried if the consultation for the mid term monitoring strategy broadens beyond the Dartmoor Working Party. Tim Jalland confirmed that this is already happening; there is better engagement with all agencies which support Dartmoor, for example those involved already include Natural England, Historical England, RSPB, the Commoners Council and the water authorities amongst others. Maurice Retallick asked that the MoD consider seeking views from other local stakeholders such as the Dartmoor Preservation Association and Local Access Forum. He also asked if there was financial assurance that the monitoring would carry on. Tim Jalland explained he would continue to bid for stewardship funding but he is competing with other areas for these funds.; he will continue

to bid and to fight hard for all of the South West, not just Dartmoor. Dartmoor does tend to sit high on the priority list due to the complexities of the licence the MoD train under. Nigel Sharpe advised that the Integrated Rural Management Plan assists in the funding bid, as does the Duchy Licence which states that there must be a management plan in place.

17. Kevin Bishop commented that whilst pleased to see the progress made in the last twelve months it should be noted that the monitoring programme was behind schedule and important time-series data would be lost. For example, one of the bird breeding survey dates has been missed and there is a delay with the archaeological surveys. Tim Jalland acknowledged the importance of the land the MoD train on and is endeavouring to gain the relevant funding for it to be continually managed in the correct manner. Chris Gregory queried how any potential funding risks will relate to works set out in the matrix. He is concerned that the MoD could be in a position where they are unable to deliver and felt it sensible to mitigate that risk to avoid exposure. David Incoll suggested that it would be sensible to write to the ministers for MoD and DEFRA after this meeting to stress the importance of the funding for the statutory stewardship.

**ACTION:**

**The Joint Secretaries to send a letter, on behalf of the Chairman, to the ministers for MoD and DEFRA to stress the importance of the funding for statutory stewardship. Content to be agreed after this meeting.**

**ITEM 6 – TEN TORS**

18. Tim Jalland commented that Ten Tors is an enduring, unique military exercise which benefits from being held on Dartmoor. 2016 was a resounding success with a great atmosphere and a full complement of possible attendees including nearly 400 for the Jubilee Challenge; well done to Peter Bates and his team. This year included the Fresh Tracks Challenge for the first time, part of the Jubilee Challenge which involved Dartmoor ponies being led around a short course on the Saturday and this had proved very successful. He does not envisage any threats to the future of Ten Tors and views it as an ongoing event. Donate to the Park increased in 2016 with £1450.00 being sent to the National Park, not including some individual team donations with value unknown. The 2017 event will take place 6<sup>th</sup>/7<sup>th</sup> May. Planning is well underway and there have been a healthy number of applications already. Team Managers met at Okehampton Camp on 8<sup>th</sup> October. No major changes are expected. Kevin Ball commented that Ten Tors is a very positive event for Okehampton and for local revenue and wished the thanks of this group for Peter Bates and his team and their hard work in 2016 to be formally recorded. Kevin Ball stated that he was pleased to hear Tim Jalland's comments regarding the ongoing longevity of the event.
19. Kevin Ball advised 2017 is the 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Jubilee Challenge; it may be suitable to do something special to mark the event. Tim Jalland confirmed that Peter Bates is going to major on the Jubilee Challenge next year. Kevin Bishop advised that DNPA would be willing to produce some anniversary certificates to present to participants.. Peter Bates should address any requests to Kevin Bishop.
20. Kevin Ball queried the position with the Outreach Initiative – was it successful/would it continue? Tim Jalland was unaware of the answer to this; and agreed to raise it with Peter Bates.

Kevin Ball commented that Donate for Dartmoor is a great initiative as it not only raises money for the National Park, but also raises an awareness that it takes time and money to maintain the National Park. He thanked the MoD for their contribution via the ten Tors

teams and asked that they continue to proactively promote it to all team Managers and suggested that the Authority could provide some text for inclusion on the Ten Tors website and event booklet to highlight how the money raised was used. He also stated that Donate for Dartmoor was about time as well as money and would like to thank the Ten Tors teams that have provided volunteer time.

21. John Waldon advised that at the last Commoners' Council meeting the members asked that he record that the Commoners are pleased with the opportunity to meet with the Team Managers to discuss their farming needs however it is proving difficult for them to find the time to give up a whole day to the cause due to their farming commitments. They would like to explore the option for more farmers to attend but for a shorter period of time each. He stressed that they are very supportive of the meeting but wish to be more efficient in their attendance.
22. John Waldon advised that the Commoners Council wish to see a 'No Dogs' policy at all events following the incident last year. Kevin Bishop felt that although this can be encouraged, it would be difficult to enforce.
23. Cathy Fitzroy commented that the main event and the Jubilee Challenge could be better linked, especially on the Friday, to encourage understanding of the Jubilee Challenge by the main attendees.
24. Cathy Fitzroy queried if the teams involved in Ten Tors could be used to take the photographs for the Farming Futures projects. John Waldon felt that this project was between Natural England and the Dartmoor Farming Futures trial. He agreed that the MoD could be approached to instigate this. Cathy Fitzroy explained that it would be an opportunity to engage the young attendees in the future of the moor. Kevin Bishop explained that Farming Futures is a pilot approach to a new agri-environment agreement whereby the Commoners do more of the monitoring.
25. Kevin Bishop commented that in recent years there has been the opportunity for local suppliers at Ten Tors; will this be sustained in future? Tim Jalland stated that he is not aware of any changes to the arrangement. Maurice Retallick asked if the tenders are promoted to local suppliers. Tim Jalland advised that they are open to all.

## **ITEM 7 – USAGE STATISTICS**

26. Tim Jalland advised that the statistics for Cramber and Ringmoor will follow.
27. Tim Jalland has analysed the statistics from 2013 – 2015 and noted a drop in training in 2014; unsure why although it may well relate to a drop in operational needs at that time as troops were returning from Afghan and the Middle East. Usage has returned to normal now.
28. Tim Jalland advised that live fire usage on Okehampton and Merrivale remains at between 50% and 60% of that booked, with Willsworthy higher. Dry training figures remain high. It is noted that there are more varied user units coming to Dartmoor from further afield, although total numbers are broadly unchanged.
29. Maurice Retallick asked if it was possible to be provided with the actual number of man training days (MTD) carried out on Dartmoor. Tim Jalland advised that he would look into this although it may prove difficult to capture this information. Jon Coomber explained that the figures record a specific output based on the amount of training which is required, rather than the actual number of troops. Tim Jalland advised that with the introduction of the new booking system – BAMS - hopefully in April 2017 it should be easier to report this in future

however at the moment the calculation for these figures could not be guaranteed to be accurate and he is not prepared to supply incorrect records.

30. David Incoll asked if it was correct that the absence of wifi was an impediment to training on Dartmoor. Tim Jalland advised that this situation is under review.

### **ITEM 8 – ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

31. Kevin Bishop wished to raise the current position with the Chairman of this group and asked David Incoll to leave the room. Kevin Bishop recalled that, as Joint Secretary, he had written to members seeking views on a potential extension to the current Chairman. There was unanimous support and the Joint Secretaries wrote to DEFRA to seek a 3 year extension. DEFRA replied to say that the MoD lead on the appointment process and the request had been forwarded to them. In September the MoD replied to say that the case had been forwarded to the MoD Minister. There has been no further reply to date. Kevin Bishop has approached them on several occasions to seek an up-date. He asked members for approval for the Joint Secretaries to write direct to Ministers to make them aware and/or to the permanent secretaries of DEFRA and MoD. It was agreed to write to both. Kevin Bishop informed members that he has kept the Chairman informed of the position and David Incoll had indicated that, should an extension offer be forthcoming, he would be happy to accept.

#### **ACTION:**

**The Joint Secretaries to send a letter, on behalf of the Chairman, directly to the Ministers and/or to the Permanent Secretaries for MoD and DEFRA to chase a response on this matter.**

32. Tim Jalland updated on the currently vacant full time post of Training Safety Officer at Okehampton Camp. Friday 18<sup>th</sup> November is the closing date for applications. He would expect to have a name before Christmas with a start date after. Tim Jalland will inform the DSG once this information is available.
33. Maurice Retallick commented that it would be beneficial to see a number of the long standing matters on the agenda brought to conclusion. Tim Jalland confirmed that he would like to see this too and will endeavour to keep pushing for relevant funding bids where appropriate.

### **ITEM 9 – DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

34. The next meeting will take place on 15 November 2017.
35. There being no other business the meeting closed at 12:05. David Incoll thanked all for their attendance.