

MINUTES OF THE 57TH MEETING OF THE DARTMOOR STEERING GROUP

WEDNESDAY 15TH NOVEMBER 2017

Held at Okehampton Camp – 1100hrs

Present:

David Incoll	Chairman
Dr Kevin Bishop	Chief Executive Dartmoor National Park Authority (DNPA)
John Waldon	Chairman Dartmoor Commoners Council
Lt Col Tim Jalland	Regional Commander DIO SD Trg SW
Peter Harper	Dartmoor National Park Authority
Mike Tanner	Col Comdt Commando Training Centre
Nick Ward	Team Leader Dartmoor for Natural England (NE)
Nigel Sharpe	Defence Land Agent, DIO Land Management Services
Lt Col David Marino RM	Deputy Bailiff Duchy of Cornwall (arrived 1200hrs)
Lt Col Crispin d'Apice RIFLES	Training Safety Officer DIO SD Trg SW

Apologies:

Chris Gregory	Land Steward Duchy of Cornwall
Bill Hitchins	Chairman Dartmoor National Park Authority (DNPA)
Cathy Fitzroy	Three Moors Team Leader Natural England (NE)
Maurice Retallick	Deputy Chairman Dartmoor National Park Authority (DNPA)
Kevin Ball	Devon County Member Okehampton Rural and DNPA

ITEM 1 – CHAIRMAN'S OPENING REMARKS

1. The Chairman welcomed all members to the 57th meeting of the Dartmoor Steering Group. He reported that the Steering Group had been honoured with Royal Visit in July by HRH Prince of Wales, Duke of Cornwall.

ITEM 2 – MINUTES OF THE 56TH MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY 16TH NOVEMBER 2016

2. Previous minutes were confirmed by way of circulation.

Questions:

- Bye-Law Reviews: Lt Col Tim Jalland explained that the situation has not changed and only a small team is in place. Last time this subject was broached it was suggested that it would be another 10 years before Dartmoor was once again looked at. A suggestion was made to add to the team but unfortunately it was suggested that it

would have to come down to expertise and legality and is, regrettably, currently not a high priority.

- Kevin Bishop mentioned that the Chairman's Annual Letter to ministers had raised the matter and to date no response has been received which was disappointing. It was considered that it should be raised again in the 2017 annual letter.
- Kevin Bishop raised the issue of the Chairman's Term of Appointment letter which did not clarify a start date. Therefore it was suggested that it would be 3 years from the date of the Meeting - 15th November 2017. All agreed and the Chairman accepted this indicating that his last meeting would therefore be November 2020.

ITEM 3 – MINUTES OF THE DARTMOOR WORKING PARTY

3. Tim Jalland welcomed Crispin d'Apice, as the new Training Safety Officer on Dartmoor and confirmed that he would also be responsible for the running of Ten Tors in the future; indicating that having him at Okehampton would be of much benefit to the event. Col Jalland also thanked the Dartmoor Working Group members for their work and support towards the continued good stewardship on the Moor.

4. He indicated that the past year had yet again seen the continued tightening of the MoD purse strings. The South West had only received a budget of £600,000, in July, to manage and maintain both rural and infrastructure over an area of 175,000 acres. Despite this the Dartmoor Working Party had continued to work hard at maintaining good links between the Dartmoor Stakeholders. He considered that the Working Party was working better together and as a result was more focussed on improving the outcomes required of the Mid Term Review whilst better jointly stewarding the estate. It would be important to keep up the momentum.

5. He reminded the Steering Group that having very little funds to maintain the training estate left him much reliant on the MoDs Stewardship Fund. He was delighted to be able to say that despite pressure for the fund to be reduced the central pot of £1.8m to cover stewardship across the whole of the country was still in place. Col Jalland said that his staff were in the process of putting together bids in order to obtain some of that funding for Dartmoor and that the National Park had already been engaged in the process. This included:

- a. **Okehampton Camp Security Right of Way.** Col Jalland stated that due to the current security situation the MoD together with the National Park and other stakeholders, had been investigating and planning for the re-routing of the current footpath through the camp, in order to make it less intrusive and as such more secure. The revised route running to Moorgate rather than Antony Stile had been supported, in principal, by Devon County Council. In the meantime further informal consultation had been taking place with the Ramblers Association, Dartmoor Society, Dartmoor Preservation Association and Open Spaces Society before the main consultation commences.

b. **DNPA Visitors Centre.** Last year Col Jalland had indicated that he was keen to better support the Dartmoor National Park Visitors Centre in the form of providing a short film covering the Defence on Dartmoor. He confirmed that a meeting had been held with Richard Drysdale of the Visitors Centre and that the MoD was in the process of putting a film together which he hoped would be completed and ready for presentation in March 2018. He suggested that he would be very keen to hold a proper "opening" event to raise awareness of both the MoDs efforts towards the stewardship of the Moor and the collaborative efforts between the stakeholders in those efforts.

Peter Harper suggested that the makers might like to approach Tony Clark from the Dartmoor Trust who had much archive footage that might be displayed at the same time.

c. **Economic Impact of Military Training on Dartmoor.** It was admitted that that despite the best efforts of Kevin Bishop to get the Food Initiative to become engaged this has not progressed.

d. **Integrated Rural Management Plan (IRMP).** Col Jalland hoped that most of the Committee would have received a disc copy of the latest draft of the Dartmoor IRMP. He apologised that he had not been able to provide a final draft for comment despite hoping to have done so. The lack of funding meant that the DIO had to overcome many conflicting priorities which had led to delays in others including the completion of national IRMPs. Indeed, since last year DIO had lost its mapping capability and was now having to go out to contractors. However, he suggested that the current version of the Dartmoor IRMP was still extant and continued to help with the work towards the Mid-Term Review. He would continue, despite the circumstances, to push for completion as soon as he could.

e. **Standon Lookout.** Last year further discussion was had over the move of the Standon Lookout because it had been considered to be located on a scheduled monument. Further investigation had shown that the lookout was located just outside the scheduled monument and it was proposed that the lookout remain at the current location until it needed replacing, at which point the MoD would look at finding a more suitable location.

f. **Cramber Tor.** The archaeological survey had been received and been issued to the National Park in satisfaction of the planning condition. Visitor surveys were carried out on 20th, 21st and 22nd July but due to poor weather conditions that planned for the 21st July had been postponed but was completed on 15-16 August. The response rate was larger than the previous survey with 47 on-site responses and 61 off-site responses regarding Cramber in relation to training area and off-training areas. MOD Ecologists undertook a Cramber Erosion and Vegetation Survey 15th & 16th August. Col Jalland indicated that there was even less evidence of military training compared with the previous study. The work indicated that there was also less evidence of erosion by recreational use with less erosion and indeed more

recovery of vegetation along the path leading to the training area from Eylesbarrow Cairn.

g. **Public Access.** The work carried out by the MoD, in support of public access at Prison Newtake Corner and Cowsic had all been completed during the last year. The MoD had also assisted with the funding of the recent National Park visitors survey.

h. **Firebreaks.** As part of the MoD's stewardship to protect the Moor at Willsworthy, firebreaks had been cut on a regular basis. Following a large fire last January it was decided that a review would be carried out, in conjunction with Natural England, to confirm the best location of these. This work was due to take place in the near future. Liaison with Natural England and Landmarc was taking place to ensure an inspection took place in the near future.

i. **Helicopter Support.** The MoD had again provided helicopter support to the National Park to help complete some works on the Princetown track. It was hoped that this sort of support could continue in the future but again would very much depend on availability of aircraft and funding. Peter Harper asked that the Authority's appreciation of this support be noted.

j. **Anthony Stile.** As part of the MoD's stewardship efforts Landmarc, the Industrial Partner, had completed some maintenance works to improve the area around Anthony Style.

k. **Cowsic Erosion Repairs.** Col Jalland informed the meeting that the MoD had carried out improvements to eroded areas of peatland near the Cowsic Bridge and Prison Newtake Corner. Working together with the Duchy of Cornwall and National Park, Landmarc had installed granite causeways across the eroded peatland to enable better access by the public. It had been noted that some of the peat levels were already recovering. Colonel Jalland thanked the National Park for supplying the stone for the repairs.

The Chairman suggested that there had been more reported incidents than the previous year and thanked Col Jalland for providing the information. Kevin Bishop indicated that only incidents/complaints had been reported and not compliments and suggested that in future compliments should also be reported.

Questions:

A question was raised covering whether or not the local community could be used to assist with managing fires should they break out on the MoD estate. Nigel Sharpe explained that if the fire was on MOD land the Department could not allow commoners to attend to put the fires out.

ITEM 4 – MID TERM REVIEW (INCLUDING IRMP AND SURVEY REPORTS)

6. Col Jalland explained that in the previous year the third Working Group meeting had re-instated in order to deliberately drive forward the work towards the Mid Term review. This had led to the re-invigoration of the Review Matrix of which the Steering Group had seen the latest copy. The Matrix had continued to be used to ensure the important monitoring requirement and indeed, after the Safe Place to Train on Dartmoor, it continued to be the top priority. All members of the DWG had been fully engaged in overseeing and contributing to the matrix and Col Jalland thanked them for their efforts and support. The pertinent points were as follows:

- a. **Breeding Bird Survey.** It was proposed that a breeding bird survey was undertaken in the spring 2018. The MOD ecologist responsible was working with National Park ecologist and RSPB to scope the survey. Peter Harper noted that the original intention was that two such surveys would be completed by the mid-point but that now only one was proposed
- b. **SSSI.** Col Jalland understood that Natural England had built up their Dartmoor Team and as such would be able to take forward the Standards Monitoring Programme.
- c. **Biodiversity Action Plan Species.** The main focus for the coming year was to be the Breeding Bird Survey previously mentioned. This would be included in the bid for Conservation Stewardship funding in FY2018/19.
- d. **Peatland Partnership Project.** The MoD had contributed £3000 towards the Peatland Partnership this last year, with the funding contributing to a Peatlands Bibliography compiled by Cornwall Archaeological Unit. The Partnership team were intending to bid for DEFRA funding to undertake peatland restoration at 3 sites, including Hangingstone within the Range Danger Area and Rattlebrook on the edge of the Range Danger Area. Depending upon the success of the bid, the MoD is investigating the possibility of providing helicopter support to transport materials to site. Peter Harper thanked the MoD for their support for the bid and stressed the importance of the UXO clearance.
- e. **Water Quality.** Nigel Sharpe had met with the Environment Agency and gone through the Water Framework Directive annual monitoring results with them. There were no records of military use causing adverse impacts on water quality.
- f. **Archaeology.** A survey of the Cramber archaeology had been undertaken last winter / spring. There was no evidence of any damage caused by military activity, and a general improvement had been identified since the previous survey in 2013. Surveys of Ringmoor and Merrivale were to be undertaken over the coming winter / spring and copies of the report would be sent to landowners and the National Park in due course.

g. **Public Access.** Col Jalland reported that the MoD had made a contribution towards the National Park survey undertaken this summer which had included a number of questions that would be useful to better understanding the public perception of military use. Analysis of the results from the National Park is awaited.

h. **Compliment and Complaints.** The process for this had reviewed earlier in the year and a new complaints form developed and distributed in order to improve the monitoring of complaints. Overall it was considered that this was working well.

i. **Ten Tors.** This would be included in the Monitoring Matrix as it was considered to play a large part in the military element on the Moor and provided income to the local community, engagement with local youth organisations and positive public relations and media opportunities for Dartmoor.

j. **Additional Monitoring Sources.** The Commoners were being better engaged with in order to obtain more information reference Farming Futures in support of the monitoring.

Col Jalland suggested that the work of the Working Group in support of the work towards the Mid Term Review had been of much benefit to the overall stewardship of the Moor. The past year had seen more collaboration and working together to obtain better results.

Peter Harper offered a vote of thanks to Col Tim Jalland and Nigel Sharpe for the hard work that had been put in. He suggested that it would be appreciated if any key findings that came from the review would be brought forward to the DSG to discuss and find solutions.

Question:

- Kevin Bishop asked whether those archaeological surveys that were behind schedule, Ringmoor and others, would be completed. Nigel Sharpe confirmed that it was intended to catch up with the programme. The next survey would be before the end of the financial year.

ITEM 5 – USAGE STATISTICS

7. Col d’Apice explained that the training figures were going up and looking at the man training days was a useful overall summary. Live firing remained at similar rates, perhaps reflecting that the majority of user units were locally-based and tended to conduct field firing either as part of a training syllabus or as regular steady-state training. Overall usage including dry training had increased in 2017 compared with 2016. This was assessed to be due to increased numbers of troops based in the UK, continued pressure on the MoD’s training estate elsewhere, and greater awareness of the unique characteristics of Dartmoor.

Example: Dartmoor Training Area:

2016 - Okehampton: 20,464 man training days. That was 20,000 people days training on the moor. The first 9 months of 2017 saw 28,000, a large increase from previous years. This was

the same across Merrivale and Willsworthy. Cramber and Ringmoor remained about the same. Salisbury Plain Training Area was seeing increased use by vehicle for mobile and armoured training. Therefore those training on foot were being moved to other areas. This is likely to increase.

Questions:

- Kevin Bishop asked if there was a breakdown between live and dry firing training? Col d'Apice explained that the figures were not readily available but dry firing training had increased. Live firing training had not changed and that simulation training might have an impact on these.
- Kevin Bishop suggested that figures had been provided on a regular basis but considered that this had not been the case for 4/5 years. He asked if there was a way that the missing information could be provided. Col d'Apice would investigate.
- A question was raised regarding the improved mobile and Wi-Fi coverage. Colonel Jalland confirmed that mobile coverage on the eastern side of the Moor had improved and that other areas were being looked into.
- Kevin Bishop wished to know what percentage of training was being carried out by the Royal Marines. Col d'Apice indicated that about 50% of users were from the Royal Marines, the remainder for the Field Army and cadet forces.

ITEM 6 – TEN TORS

8. Col d'Apice informed the meeting that the new Director of Ten Tors was Col Andrew Dawes; unfortunately he was unavailable to attend the DSG. He indicated that the 2017 Ten Tors had passed without serious incident with the weather once again being kind to the participants. It had been notable as being the 40th anniversary of the Jubilee Challenge. It also saw the raising of £1822 towards the DNPA's Donate to Dartmoor appeal. He thanks all those from the national park who had helped. Col d'Apice indicated that the Ten Tors Team was working towards increasing participants' broader awareness of Dartmoor, primarily through a competition open to all those training for the event. The competition would cover areas such as archaeology, the environment, agriculture, geography and meteorology. He informed the meeting that the Dartmoor Commoners' Association to brief Team Managers, which had taken place in October, had been well received. Team Managers, when applying for Ten Tors online, were now expected to tick a box should they not wish to donate toward Dartmoor. The next major milestone will be the 60th Anniversary of Ten Tors in 2020 for which planning had already started. Planning for 2018 / 2019 was well underway. Col d'Apice asked for VIP nominations as soon as possible.

The Chairman asked that the DSG give their thanks to Peter Bates for all the hard work he had put into Ten Tors with many youngsters and the local community benefitting from his enthusiasm. The Chairman also thanked the Commoners Council for its contribution to the team manager's brief.

Question:

- Kevin Bishop asked whether the research Peter Bates had commissioned from Oxford Brookes University was yet available. Col d'Apice confirmed that the work has been done but, until it has been reviewed and published, it was not available for public consumption.

ITEM 7 – ANY OTHER BUSINESS

9. **Biomass Boilers.** Peter Harper suggested that the MoD should investigate the possibility of accessing grants from the Environmental Agency with a view to taking forward the introduction of biomass boilers onto the Defence Estate. Col Jalland informed the meeting that all options were open to review under improved commercialisation activities. However, this would not be a speedy process in the current climate.

10. **Monitoring.** It was suggested that the vegetation on the moor had been changing over time and what steps were being taken to monitor these changes. David Marino indicated that he had been looking into the matter and had come to the conclusion that some areas had changed but did not consider it too serious but required monitoring. Col d'Apice suggested that the training estate has not identified any impacts from the changing climate.

ITEM 8 – DATE OF NEXT MEETING

11. The next meeting will take place on Wednesday 14th November 2018.

12. There being no other business the meeting closed at 1215hrs. David Incoll thanked all for their attendance.