

DARTMOOR STEERING GROUP

**Tenth Annual Report of the
Dartmoor Steering Group
to the Secretaries of State
for Environment and Defence**

April 1991

TENTH ANNUAL REPORT OF THE DARTMOOR STEERING GROUP

INTRODUCTION

1. The ninth Annual Report was submitted to the Secretaries of State for Defence and the Environment in October 1989, and covered the twenty-second and the twenty-third meetings of the Group. Since then, three further meetings have been held: the twenty-fourth at Okehampton Camp on 24 October 1989, the twenty-fifth at County Hall, Exeter on 6 April 1990 and the twenty-sixth on 26 October 1990 at Stonehouse Barracks, Plymouth. A statement was issued to the press after each meeting.
2. Sir Peter Stallard KCMG CVO MBE, Chairman of the Group since its inception on 27 September 1978, completed his tenure following the twenty-fourth meeting and was succeeded by me at the twenty-fifth meeting. A farewell luncheon given by the Chairman of Devon County Council, Councillor McGahey, and attended by all Members of the Group was held at County Hall, Exeter on 6 April 1990.
3. The Working Party has also held 3 meetings and we are grateful for the continued support afforded to the Group. Indeed, my predecessor congratulated the Working Party on the excellent work it had carried out for the Group. In accordance with agreed procedure, in April 1990, the nominee of GOC SWDIST took over the Chairmanship of the Working Party from the National Park Officer until 1992 when the latter will resume the Chairmanship.
4. In general some steady progress was achieved during the period of this report in reconciling the requirements of military training, conservation and public access. As a newcomer, I am impressed by the serious and business like attitude but at the same time friendly approach

of those who contribute to our task in both the Working Party and the Steering Group.

WILLSWORTHY CAMP

5. The military proposal to replace Willsworthy Camp at Higher Beardon Farm has continued to feature in our discussions. The Group heard that following the Non-Statutory Public Local Inquiry held in March 1989, the Secretary of State for the Environment had upheld the appeal against the National Park Authority's refusal of the MOD's Circular 18/84 application to replace the camp as proposed. We heard that the MOD will shortly be submitting details of the proposed camp structure to the National Park Authority for approval prior to preliminary roadworks being carried out this year and the construction of the camp following in 1992.

DUCHY LICENCE

6. The Group was informed that the Duchy of Cornwall had decided, in principle, to renew the 7 year licence for military training on Okehampton and Merrivale ranges when the current licence expires on 29 September 1991. It was reported that the Duchy had invited representations from interested bodies on the conditions of the new licence. Negotiations between the Duchy and the MOD on the terms of the new licence are in progress.

ENVIRONMENTAL BASELINE

7. The Nature Conservancy Council raised the question of funding the second resurvey of the Environmental Baseline established in 1984 and first resurveyed in 1987. The Steering Group, on the advice of the

National Conservancy Council, had agreed that the second and subsequent resurveys should be carried out at intervals of 5 years rather than 3 years as originally envisaged. Hence the second resurvey should be carried out in 1992.

8. The Nature Conservancy Council told the Group that the second resurvey should be more extensive than the first resurvey, would take 4 times as long and cost 4 times as much - about £8,000. The Nature Conservancy Council felt it was unlikely to be able to contribute its share of the cost and proposed that the MOD should pay 75% and the National Park 25%.

9. Following discussions between the National Park and the Nature Conservancy Council concerning the scale of the resurvey envisaged, the Group is to hear at its next meeting proposals to reduce the scale of the second resurvey and for phasing costs.

YES TOR FLAG

10. A proposal by the National Park for the removal of the red danger warning flag from Yes Tor on the Okehampton Range because it dominated the moorland scene, and to replace it by less conspicuous flags at Fordsland Ledge and Longstone Hill, was considered by the military authorities. The Group heard that public safety would not be impaired by implementing the proposal and while some members could see little, if any, advantage in the proliferation of warning flags, the Group accepted the proposal.

11. The military authorities will seek the necessary changes to the Byelaws in order that the proposal can be implemented.

TRAINING ON DARTMOOR VIDEO

12. The Group viewed a recently made video which is to be shown to all military personnel before commencing training on Dartmoor. Members welcomed this military initiative which would help to minimise the environmental effects of military training.

MILITARY ARTIFACTS

13. The removal of seven military artifacts which are no longer required for training purposes began in 1987 with the removal of a Grenade Range at Willsworthy after which the site was restored to moorland. The Group heard that a disused Observation Post (No 14) was removed and the site restored in 1989.

W A Burkinshaw

COL. J S FORREST

Secretaries

SIR ANTHONY BARROWCLOUGH QC

Chairman