

DARTMOOR STEERING GROUP

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

December 1994

THIRTEENTH ANNUAL REPORT OF THE DARTMOOR STEERING GROUP

INTRODUCTION

1. The Twelfth Annual Report to Ministers of the Dartmoor Steering Group was submitted to the Secretaries of State for Environment and Defence in December 1993 and covered the thirtieth, thirty first and thirty second meetings of the Group. Since then 2 further meetings have been held: the thirty third at County Hall, Exeter on 20 April 1994 and the thirty fourth at Okehampton Camp on 19 October 1994. A statement was issued to the Press after each meeting.
2. The Working Party has held 2 meetings since the last Report and we are grateful for the continued support afforded to the Steering Group. The Working Party has carried out excellent work in furtherance of the Group's principal task, namely, of achieving the best possible reconciliation of the requirements of military training, conservation and public access. The Dartmoor National Park Officer chaired the Working Party until March 1994 when in accordance with agreed procedure the Chairmanship was resumed by the nominee of the General Officer Commanding Southern District.
3. The period covered by this Report has been one of consolidation. The objectives aimed at improved conservation measures and greater public access which were reported on in the eleventh and twelfth Reports of the Steering Groups are now firmly established in the work programme of the Working Party. The Steering Group has noted how many of the original projects are now nearing completion whilst new projects within the overall framework are being identified.

REVIEW OF CONSERVATION AND RECREATION OBJECTIVES

4. Removal of Redundant Military Artifacts. The programme initiated in 1993 has continued in 1994 with the final 4 structures being removed. After the successful conclusion of the removal phase, effort has been directed towards tidying up a number of sites. Much of this work has been carried out by the Territorial Army with assistance from the Dartmoor National Park Authority for vegetation and fencing schemes. It is anticipated that this will be ongoing as further projects are identified.
5. Prevention of Civilian Use of Unauthorised Tracks. Following consultation with the Commoners, all of the tracks identified by the Dartmoor National Park Authority have been blocked off in the prescribed manner. The effect of these measures in reducing vehicular penetration onto the Moor will continue to be monitored by the military/National Park authorities.
6. Restoration of Unnecessary Tracks to Moorland. The restoration of 4 tracks identified in 1993 is now in hand and the necessary barriers/boulders to prevent access have been erected to allow regeneration. In some cases the levelling of ruts and re-seeding has been necessary.
7. Improvement in the Appearance and Standard of Maintenance of Military Infrastructure. Two initiatives have been undertaken:

- a. A full survey of all signs placed by the Ministry of Defence within the Dartmoor National Park has been carried out by the Defence Lands Service. Those considered superfluous or redundant will be removed. Those considered essential will be replaced in a style complementary to other signs on Dartmoor.
 - b. 2 'look-out' huts have been replaced and 2 further huts will be replaced in 1995.
8. Improving Public Knowledge and Awareness of Military Use. The system for notifying the public of any late changes to the firing programme has been improved by the establishment of a telephone 'hot line'. This measure has received very favourable response.
9. Increasing Public Access. Steady progress is being made to implement the decision to release Watn Tor on Okehampton Range and Great Mis Tor, Roos Tor and White Tor on Merrivale Range from the range Danger Area. Planning permission for the construction of new 'look out' huts on White Tor and Great Mis Tor was granted and construction is now almost complete. The preparation of draft 'model' Byelaws for the training estate in the United Kingdom has been delayed and in view of this delay the Steering Group endorsed a proposal by Defence Lands Service that the existing Byelaws for Okehampton and Merrivale Ranges should be amended as an interim measure. It is anticipated that public access to the areas withdrawn from the Danger Area will be effective from 1 September 1995 subject to formal ratification of the amended byelaws which now have to be published.
10. Great progress has been made and continues to be made in support of these objectives which greatly improve public access and conservation without military training being adversely affected.

WILLSWORTHY CAMP

11. Preliminary roadworks in preparation for the construction of a new camp at Higher Beardon were completed in 1993 and work started on the new camp in June 1994. Despite some initial teething problems the project is now back on course with an anticipated completion date of 1 May 1995. Removal of the existing camp will take place within 6 months of completion of the new camp.

ROBOROUGH DOWN

12. It was agreed in 1992 that following the renewal of the licence to train on Cramber Tor for a further 9 years, the military authorities would surrender their training rights on the 820 acres of Roborough Down. After a century of use, military training on Roborough Down ceased on 30 September 1994.

DARTMOOR ENVIRONMENTALLY SENSITIVE AREA (ESA)

13. Dartmoor ESA was announced in March 1994. Indications to date suggest that though military training is unlikely to prejudice ESA applications, benefit will be gained by continuing the current discussions with the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and

Fisheries. The military authorities will continue to monitor the movement of livestock resulting from range clearing activities.

VISIT TO DARTMOOR BY CZECH ECOLOGISTS

14. A group of ecologists from Palachy University, Czech Republic visited Dartmoor to examine techniques used in the restoration of land damaged by military activity; they had been tasked with the restoration of large training areas used by the former Warsaw Pact forces. The selection of Dartmoor by this group was further evidence of the close liaison that takes place between the military authorities and the Dartmoor National Park over conservation issues.

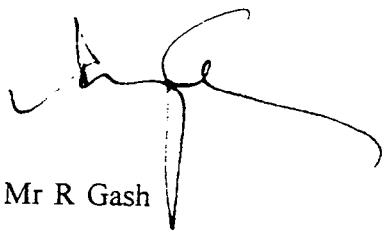
COMPOSITION OF THE DARTMOOR STEERING GROUP

15. The reorganisation of the Armed Forces on the Dartmoor Steering Group will be reflected in future representation by the Army. The division of Southern District into 3rd (UK) Division based at Bulford and 4th Division based at Aldershot requires new senior representation; the General Officer Commanding 3rd (UK) Division will be the senior Army representative. Military representation for the Joint Secretariat will be provided by Headquarters Devon and Cornwall Training Areas.

16. The passage of the Environment Bill, which will establish a new free standing National Park Authority for Dartmoor, may also affect representation on the Steering Group. The Steering Group will report further on this issue later in the year.

FREQUENCY OF MEETINGS

17. The Terms of Reference of the Dartmoor Steering Group state that it is to, "meet as often as required....." Our practice to date has been to convene the Group bi-annually. In view of the progress currently being achieved the Steering Group at its last meeting agreed to an annual meeting though they reserved the right to convene extra meetings if issues so demanded. The Working Party will however continue to meet bi-annually.

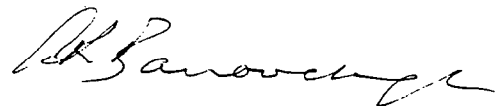


Mr R Gash



Lieut Colonel (Retired) CN Fraser

Joint Secretaries



Sir Anthony Barrowclough QC

Chairman