

# MINUTES OF THE 48<sup>th</sup> MEETING OF THE DARTMOOR STEERING GROUP

WEDNESDAY 8 OCTOBER 2008

Present:

Richard Thomas	Chairman
Nigel Hoskin	Chairman, Dartmoor National Park Authority
Christine Marsh	Member, Dartmoor National Park Authority
Maurice Retallick	Member, Dartmoor National Park Authority
Ian Mercer	Chairman, Dartmoor Commoners' Council
Roger Halliday	Duchy of Cornwall
Caroline Bullock	Natural England
Phil McMahon	English Heritage
Karen O'Donnell	Government Office for the South West
Brig Bill Dunham	Comdt CTCRM
Brig Jolyon Jackson	Comd HQ 43 (Wx) Bde
David Olney	DG Ops Defence Estates
Kevin Bishop	Chief Executive, Dartmoor National Park Authority and Joint Secretary
Lt Col James Porter	Comd DTE South West and Joint Secretary

In attendance:

Lt Col (Retd) Tony Clark	Commandant DTA
Lt Col Paul Norrington-Davies	Chairman SMTOD Project
Maj Hamish Miln	Secretary SMTOD Project
John Loch	Defence Estates
Rob Steemson	Dartmoor National Park Authority
Penny Bailey	Dartmoor National Park Authority

## 1. Chairman's Opening Remarks

The Chairman welcomed Members to CTC RM Lympstone, thanked Brigadier Dunham for his hospitality, and welcomed him to his first Dartmoor Steering Group (DSG) meeting, together with Mr McMahon from English Heritage. It was noted that this was Brigadier Jackson's last meeting and it was requested that the Minutes record the thanks of the DSG Members to Brigadier Jackson for his work. This was agreed unanimously.

The Joint Secretaries informed the members of the DSG that the Twentieth Annual Report had been submitted to the Ministry of Defence (MOD) and Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra). The Chairman thanked the Joint Secretaries for their work in producing the Annual Report and instructed them to make it available to the public via the Dartmoor Training Area (DTA) and Dartmoor National Park Authority (DNPA) websites with immediate effect.

## **2. Minutes of the 47<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Dartmoor Steering Group held on 16 January 2008 (DSG 48(1))**

It was noted that these had been agreed by circulation.

## **3. Matters arising from the minutes not covered elsewhere on the agenda**

*Mr Hoskin* referred to Item 6 – Sustainable Military Training on Dartmoor (SMToD). He observed that when the DSG last met there was no agreement on whether the Environmental Appraisal (EA) was an appropriate basis for licence renewal. He drew attention to the Minutes of the 47<sup>th</sup> meeting, which showed that Item 6 was not closed to allow for further work. Despite the best endeavours of the Chairman and all interested parties, complete accord had not been possible, and, while committed to looking forward rather than backwards, he saw it as fundamentally important that closure was brought to the debate about SMToD (Item 6 of the January meeting) and the final outcome recorded.

He noted that the MOD believed they had answered in full the two tests set by Ministers and were now in a position to renegotiate the Duchy licence. He felt that such a decision was for Ministers to make as they had set the tests but that it was important to record that the DSG had failed to achieve unanimity on all points.

He stated that all of the organisations represented on the DSG have a legitimate interest in the future of the training area. He also noted that there were a number of shared concerns about the process and substance. The SMToD exercise may well be ‘water under the bridge’, but there remained pertinent questions relating to the longer term expectations, and the means to establish a truly independent process of impact assessment, consideration of delivery options and a robust review process to assess, over time, the balance between military need and National Park Purposes.

He was keen to see the good working relationships from which Dartmoor has benefited continuing into the future but felt it was worth noting that those relationships and the benefits secured emanated from an independent inquiry.

*The Chairman* advised that he would reflect on this under Item 7 of the agenda.

## **4. Minutes of the Dartmoor Working Party Meetings held on 29 February and 9 September 2009**

Lt Col Porter, as Chairman of the Dartmoor Working Party (DWP) reported the following progress and current activity:

- Field Portaloo – successful trials have been carried out and more field portalooos are to be purchased.
- Annual Reports – approval to publish previous Annual DSG Reports on the internet via the DTA website was sought. There were no technical difficulties

and no concerns regarding privacy as the Annual Reports had already been published by their placement in the House of Commons Library. Members unanimously agreed to the proposal.

- Public Information Scheme – the Scheme has now been updated with regard to terminology, posts, website information etc and approval was sought for the Scheme to be sent to the Public Information Commissioner. It was agreed that Members would be given a period of seven days in which to consider the Scheme and respond. Should no response be received the Chairman DWP would send the revised Scheme to the Public Information Commissioner.
- Holming Beam Hut, Merrivale – members were advised that the hut structure had another 10 years of life. However, it was an eyesore and funding had now been agreed to replace it with a new building in a different location in order to reduce the visual impact. It was noted that planning permission would be required in order to move the hut and the views of DNPA and the Duchy of Cornwall were requested. *Mr Halliday* and *Mr Hoskin* welcomed the announcement that funding was available. *Mr Hoskin* added that any planning application would have to be considered by DNPA on its merits and he could not comment further.
- *The Chairman* asked for information regarding Dartmoor Commoners' Council (DCC) representation on the DWP. *Lt Col Porter* advised that there is now representation of the DCC at DWP meetings. *Dr Bishop* noted that the change in membership of the DWP was reported in the latest DSG Annual Report. Following discussion it was agreed that up to two representatives of the Dartmoor Commoners' Council would become Members of the DWP. Action: Lead Chairman DWP is to write to Ministers informing them of this change in membership.
- *Mr Retallick* requested an up-date on fire training for Landmarc staff and whether there was funding available within current budgets for the purchase of the equipment referred to in the DWP minutes. *Lt Col Porter* reported that Northumberland Fire and Rescue Service are undertaking the training and it was hoped that supervisors will be trained in November 2008, with wardens being trained in early 2009. He confirmed that Landmarc have funding for Personal Protective Equipment available in this financial year.

## 5. Proposed DWP Work Programme

*The Chairman* reminded members that at its 47<sup>th</sup> meeting the DSG had tasked the DWP with producing a list of outstanding issues and aspirations to be addressed and resolved through the mechanism of the DSG and DWP where possible. The document DSG 48(4) (circulated to members) builds on this work to present a set of objectives, based on outstanding issues and aspirations, for the DWP and DSG to take forward in the form of a more detailed work programme.

*Lt Col Porter* reported that there had been two meetings of the DWP since the DSG last met. At the February 2008 meeting, as directed by DSG, a list of outstanding

issues and aspirations was drawn up with a view to seeking resolution where possible. This list was then taken out of committee by Dr Bishop, Mr Loch and Lt Col (Retd) Clark as a DWP sub-group and taken forward into a List of Objectives. Subject to comment and endorsement of the concept by DSG members, the objectives would then be developed into a work programme for the DWP with key milestones (including reports to the DSG) and links to other initiatives (eg the National Park Management Plan).

*Lt Col Porter* stated that to undertake this work the DWP had agreed to increase the frequency of its meetings to up to four times a year with the dates chosen both to best enable a response to work from the DSG and to meet in June in order to focus on Ten Tors. He also indicated that the DWP would consider setting up 'task groups' where appropriate to complete some of the work.

The Chairman invited discussion at this point:

*Professor Mercer* stated that there ought to be an item included regarding Ten Tors as it is likely that this document will be relied upon to monitor the situation in the future.

*Lt Col Porter* reminded members that Ten Tors is a standing item on the DWP agenda and had been excluded from the list for this reason.

*Mr Olney* advised that the paper now being considered by the DSG related specifically to the outstanding issues arising from the MOD's Sustainable Military Training on Dartmoor (SMTOD) exercise. He would be content for Ten Tors to appear as a standing item for discussion but this would need to be within the context of the DWP, not this list.

*Mr Hoskin* welcomed the objectives list and looked forward to considering a more detailed work programme outlining when the DSG would receive progress reports for discussion and, hopefully, agreement.

*Mrs Marsh* requested clarification regarding social and economic benefits and the specific phrase in the statement by Defence Food Services Team that "MOD has an annual requirement for between 500-700 tonnes of lamb/mutton and on average approximately 13% is of British origin". *Lt Col Porter* said that he was unable to answer this but would endeavour to obtain an explanation/clarification for the DSG. He added that DWP had already formed a Local Procurement Task Group that was discussing this issue. *Mrs Marsh* further requested that DTA be used as a pilot or action research project to explore the development of sustainable supply chains for food, and other goods and services. This was supported by Professor Mercer who noted the similarities between the two statements that had been tabled and the wording in the Environmental Appraisal (EA).

*Dr Bishop* thanked Lt Col (Retd) Clark, Mr Loch, and Mr Stratton for their work in this area and explained that with DSG support, the Local Procurement Task Group hoped to explore the implications of some of the phrases in the statement and identify the real opportunities and potential barriers to the development of sustainable supply

chains. David Olney advised that he would speak to Mr Tim Fletcher (Chief of Corporate Services in Defence Equipment and Support) and report back to the DWP.

*Brig Jackson* suggested that there may be a case for the South West Regional Development Agency (SWRDA) and/or Government Office South West (GOSW) to be represented on the Task Group; and suggested that GOSW become involved in order to extend and open up the debate. *Ms O'Donnell* said that she would take this back to consider an appropriate level of involvement.

*The Chairman* reviewed the discussion and put forward the following proposals:

- Recommend to DWP that they alter the title of Paper 48(4) to read 'Current Issues and Aspirations'.
- Note that Ten Tors is a standing item on DWP and thus not covered by Paper 48(4).
- DSG welcome and endorse DSG Paper 48(4) and task the DWP to press on to turn this work into an action plan, with a clear timetable and milestones for reporting progress to the DSG.
- The Local Procurement Task Group be encouraged to widen its thinking and liaise with GOSW.
- Note that the DWP proposes to meet up to four times a year and establish specific task groups as appropriate to undertake the work

All members agreed with these proposals.

## **6 Ten Tors**

*Brig Jackson* briefed the meeting prior to opening this item up for discussion. He reported:

Pre Ten Tors Training - Following the adoption of the new guidelines to limit training on the north moor, particularly during the rare bird breeding season (1 March onwards), an average of 63 groups out of a possible 400 trained each weekend on the north moor but, due to the ban on training over the public holiday weekends, a surge occurred over the weekends either side of the public holidays, taking the numbers on these weekends to over 100 groups. Some of the groups walked on both the north and south moor but there was no significant increase in activity on the south moor. Schools and clubs had made considerable efforts to train elsewhere

Monitoring arrangements consisted of a cadet training team and a Staff Officer on the moor to support the police in responding to any incident, meeting team managers to discuss their weekend programmes, conducting checks on route planning, possible overcrowding of camp sites, dress, equipment and car parking arrangements and emergency planning.

MOD had not been made aware of any adverse criticism of this year's training, apart from six teams who walked through the rare bird nesting area from Fordsland Ford to Dinger Tor during the event itself. All of those concerned had received a letter!

Ten Tors 2008 - 400 teams took part, 351 of them completing on time. 87 Special Needs organisations entered the Jubilee Challenge. Many families and friends turned out to welcome the teams home and this generated some very positive PR for Ten Tors and for Dartmoor.

The Annual Post-Exercise Meeting - At the previous DSG on 17 January 2008 it was agreed that the DCC, Natural England, and DNPA would be involved in a post-exercise meeting to review and learn from the experience. However, when it was realised that the DCC was to become a new member of the DWP, where Ten Tors had always been an agenda item, it was proposed and agreed, that the DWP would provide the appropriate framework for the annual meeting referred to in the 47<sup>th</sup> meeting of the DSG, and therefore a separate meeting was not convened.

Raising Training Standards - Following the death of Charlotte Shaw during training in 2007, Brigadier Jackson's staff, with guidance from HSE officials and Devon County Council staff reviewed the minimum standards of leadership and experience required by the adult Team Managers. These have now been published and are linked to new 'Conditions of Entry' with guidance on competency and the principles of the team selection process. Team selection will be based on a traffic light system using four factors – location of school/club; type of team; competency of team manager, group leader and assistants; and past performance. A sponsor's declaration personally signed by the Head Teacher would be required certifying that team managers and their group leaders are appropriately experienced to assess risks, manage the training group and are competent to train and supervise Ten Tors teams overnight on Dartmoor. A representative of all participating organisations must attend the mandatory Ten Tors Briefing Weekend and, for those not familiar with Dartmoor, a familiarisation walk led by Dartmoor Rescue Group.

The briefing weekend will, with the support of DNPA staff, focus team managers on safety as well as their environmental responsibility in caring for Dartmoor's ecology whilst training.

Review of the Brigade Mounting Instruction – A comprehensive re-write of the Mounting Instruction is in progress and he thanked Mr Steemson and Mr Brooker from DNPA for their input. He added that a new risk assessment is available and evacuation plans have been re-structured with the involvement of local police. The Ten Tors Charter and Rules have been updated and revised for 2009. They now contain comprehensive guidance on the mandatory briefing weekend and training for the event and have been published on the Ten Tors website.

*Brig Jackson* stated that as this would be his last attendance at a meeting of the DSG, and after three years as Director of Ten Tors he would like to thank the DNPA and the DCC for their continued support. Ten Tors has the backing of the Army's most senior officers and significant support from the West Country public. He advised that they are looking forward to the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2010, which will also be the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the cadet movement.

*Mr Hoskin* thanked Brigadier Jackson for his overview and his personal commitment to Ten Tors. He particularly welcomed the statistics on usage of Dartmoor for training purposes as these would enable all parties to start to make evidence-based decisions and hoped that this sort of information could be provided in advance for future meetings. He indicated that the DNPA were willing to work with the MOD to look at how the training process is managed and, in particular, the ban on training on Bank Holiday weekends, but agreed with Brig Jackson that it was important not to make knee-jerk decisions. It was asked if it were still possible to consider changes for the 2009 Ten Tors.

*Brig Jackson* thanked Mr Hoskin for the DNPA's continued support and confirmed that it was still possible for changes to be made to the training programme and information for the 2009 Ten Tors, but only by way of minor amendments ahead of the main review of the event in three years time. He again appealed for fact-based feedback rather than hearsay, so that proper investigation and deduction can take place. He advised members that he would be convening a meeting on 12 November 2008 to agree arrangements for the 2009 Ten Tors and invited DNPA to send a representative.

After discussion about the annual post Ten Tors meeting agreed at the last DSG meeting (with the specific aim of learning lessons), members agreed that:

- this meeting would take place within the framework of the DWP;
- the meeting would be scheduled for June;
- the DCC would be allowed to send an additional two representatives for the Ten Tors agenda item, making a total delegation for this item of four DCC members;
- 43 (Wessex) Brigade would support the agenda item with appropriate information/presence; and
- the meeting would be chaired by one of the Joint Secretaries.

## 7 Licence Renewal

Lt Col Norrington-Davies from the SMTtoD (Sustainable Military Training on Dartmoor) project management team provided the meeting with an update on the current situation with the licence renegotiation process.

**Mitigation Measures.** MOD had accepted all of the mitigation measures proposed in the Environmental Appraisal and the subsequent Addendum. If funding were required it would fall upon Defence Training Estate to make the case. The key mitigation measures had been cross-referenced in the DWP Current Issues and Aspirations List (DSG paper 48(4)). As a result of DSG's deliberations in January 2008, five areas had been identified for further investigation which the MOD is prepared to take forward. The next step was for MOD to seek Ministerial permission to enter formally into negotiations with the Duchy of Cornwall and other landowners to secure a continuation of the licence to train on Dartmoor beyond 2012. He concluded by reviewing two areas of on-going work:

**Information on public access.** A new booklet will be published in 2009 providing information on military use, public access and safety. It will be free of charge in

National Park and other Tourist Information Centres. He thanked DNPA for comments received to-date and confirmed that they would have the opportunity to comment on the final text. Work was also underway to refresh the military display at the High Moorland Visitor Centre and, if required, re-design the 14 interpretation panels located around the edge of the training areas.

***Climate change.*** MOD had committed £10,000 over three years (commencing 2008/09) towards CO<sub>2</sub> management in the training area.

These projects were in addition to an ongoing commitment to the Dartmoor Biodiversity Action Plan and the Operation Wader Project.

The Chairman invited comments from members.

*Mr Olney* explained that Defence Estates will address issues as they arise. He felt it would be useful for future DSG meetings to examine the lessons learned from the current renegotiation process. Also, that Defence Estates would be submitting a note to the relevant MOD Minister, after the DSG meeting, explaining the process for answering the two tests set by Government, and seeking formal permission to renegotiate with the Duchy of Cornwall the licence to train on Dartmoor. The note would invite the MOD Minister to seek the views of his counterpart in Defra.

*The Chairman* thanked Mr Olney for waiting for this meeting before briefing Ministers. He was sympathetic to the idea of a 'lessons learned' process and would like this to be taken forward by the DWP as discussed at the 47<sup>th</sup> meeting of the DSG. Action: DWP.

The Chairman noted that, in relation to Mr Hoskin's concerns (Item 3 above), this update, taken together with the earlier item on DWP Issues and Aspirations, meant that Agenda Item 6 from the 47<sup>th</sup> meeting of the DSG was now formally closed.

*The Chairman* then invited Mr Halliday to up-date members on the Duchy of Cornwall's proposal to divide any future licence into two parts (as outlined at the 47<sup>th</sup> meeting of the DSG).

*Mr Halliday* confirmed that the Duchy of Cornwall is actively looking at dividing any new licence into two parts: Part 1 dealing with contractual issues; Part 2 a requirement to prepare a management plan for the licence area potentially building upon the MOD's Integrated Land Management Plan (ILMP) for the training area and reflecting, where possible, the National Park Management Plan. He stated that it would be inappropriate for the Duchy of Cornwall to make progress on any licence ahead of a Ministerial decision but that the Duchy would consult with key stakeholders whilst respecting the fact that any new licence would be a private matter between themselves and MOD.

The Chairman invited comment.

*Professor Mercer* welcomed the commitment to consult.



*Mr Hoskin* thanked the Duchy of Cornwall for their proposal, the commitment to engage with stakeholders and the emphasis on continued positive management. It was hoped that the management plan would take the form of a management agreement so that there was clarity on liabilities and responsibilities, a clear commitment to action and a mechanism for monitoring progress that could be reported to the DSG/DWP.

## **8. Any Other Business**

*Ms O'Donnell* requested that the meeting note that Defra had only recently received its copy of the Twentieth Annual Report of the DSG as it had been wrongly addressed.

## **9. Date of Next Meeting**

*Mr Hoskin* asked whether, in light of the current work programme and agreed objectives for the DWP, the DSG should meet early in 2009 to receive a progress report from the DWP and agree the detailed work programme.

Following discussion it was agreed that the Joint Secretaries would report to the Chairman immediately after the November 2008 meeting of the DWP as to whether there was a need for the DSG to meet earlier than October 2009. If required, an Extraordinary Meeting would then be scheduled.