

Minutes of the 46th Meeting of the Dartmoor Steering Group held at Okehampton Battle Camp at 1100 hrs on Tuesday 17th January 2007

Members Present:	Mr R Thomas Brigadier A Salmon Brigadier J T Jackson Miss C Bullock Mr P Cloke Mr M Coulson Mr R Halliday Mr N Hoskin Mrs C Marsh Prof I Mercer Mr I Morrison Mr M Retallick	Chairman Commandant Commando Training Centre Royal Marines (CTC RM) Commander 43 (Wessex) Brigade Natural England Government Office South West HQ Defence Estates Duchy of Cornwall Chairman Dartmoor National Park Authority (DNPA) DNPA Chairman Dartmoor Commoners Council English Heritage Vice Chairman DNPA
Joint Secretaries:	Lt Col J K R Porter Dr N Atkinson	Commander Defence Training Estates South West (Comd DTE SW) Chief Executive (National Park Officer) DNPA
Additional/Co-Opted Members:	Lt Col P Norrington-Davies Col (Retd) D S MacFarlane Lt Col (Retd) A H Clark Mr J Loch	HQ DTE (Chmn Sustainable Military Training On Dartmoor (SMTOD) Project Board) SO2 J7 HQ DTE SW Commandant Dartmoor Training Area (DTA) Senior Land Agent HQ DTE SW

Item 1 – Opening Remarks:

1. The Lead Joint Secretary, Lt Col Porter, warmly welcomed the Chairman and Members to Okehampton Battle Camp and thanked Lt Col Tony Clark for hosting the meeting and for providing lunch.
2. The Chairman then expressed his thanks to the host unit and noted that this was the first meeting for Natural England (which has replaced/subsumed English Nature). He directed that the Lead Joint Secretary should write to the Secretaries of State for Defence and the Environment to inform them of the changes in membership of the Steering Group.

Item 2 – Minutes of the 45th Meeting Held on 18 January 2006:

3. An amendment was made to these minutes to reflect the agreement that the Commoners' Council should participate in the 43 (Wessex) Brigade Ten Tors Working Party.
4. The minutes were then agreed and signed by the Chairman and the 2 Joint Secretaries.

Item 3 - Matters Arising from the Minutes not covered elsewhere in the Agenda:

5. These would all be covered under Agenda Items.

Item 4 – Minutes of the Dartmoor Working Party (DWP) Meetings held on 8 March, 12 September and 5 December 2006:

6. Matters discussed:
7. 2005 Range Usage Statistics. The statistical analysis handout prepared by the National Park Authority and based on the HQ DTE SW statistics is attached. Disparity between actual firing and what had been published was due to:
 - a. Bad Weather - visibility below minimum safety distance for observation by range wardens.
 - b. Good Weather - unexpected runs of good visibility enabling units to complete firing schedules earlier than anticipated.
 - c. Unit Cancellations – cancellations made too late to allow an alternative unit to replace the cancelling unit. Mainly due to operational reasons or other important events causing a change of plans (the occurrence of cancellations for trivial reasons had been much reduced).

The chart 'Live Firing on 3 Ranges' (the combined Dartmoor Ranges of Okehampton, Merrivale, and Willsworthy) clearly showed a steady decline in usage from the mid 1950s (when recording began) until the mid 1980s (reduction in the Soviet threat), but usage levels had been 'steady' since then, except during the Foot and Mouth epidemic in 2001. It was noted that currently 38% of the Army is either on or returning from operations, against a target figure for this of 28%. In discussion it was agreed that careful monitoring of range usage continued to be necessary, and that new ways of analysing the statistics would be worth examining. The Chairman directed that the agreed 2005 Range Statistics be approved and adopted. They are attached.

8. Firing Notices Trial. Firing Notices for Dartmoor Ranges are published on the DTA Website and in local newspapers. As a result of a request arising from a previous Steering Group meeting and discussion in the DWP it had been agreed to trial an increase in warning time by publicising firing dates 6 weeks in advance (an increase from 2 weeks). This was intended to improve access to Dartmoor for the public, who would better be able to plan visits in advance. The change has had a negative impact upon military training by reducing the participation of units seeking to use the ranges at 2-6 weeks' notice. However, this impact has been relatively small and manageable. Given the positive public response, the trial has been deemed a success, and the 6 week notice period has now been adopted as standard (subject to overriding operational training needs). The Chairman thanked DTE for its work.
9. Field Portaloo Trial. The 'Tardis' Portaloo's were an anathema to all – unsightly and often left in location for days after the end of exercises. HQ DTE SW has pioneered a new and much less conspicuous 'Field Portaloo' (FP) which is in the middle of a one year trial on Dartmoor. The FP is portable and unobtrusive and should defuse the bad publicity that the 'Tardis' got from the public. The trial is going well and concludes in September 2007. If the trial is successful the 'Tardis' will no longer appear on Dartmoor, except in the most exceptional circumstances.
10. Training Area Marshals (TAMs). Salisbury Plain Training Area have now had two years' experience of TAMs, and found that they have provided an excellent interface with the public and are extra 'eyes and ears' on the training area. For some time the need for two TAMs to work for the Commandant DTA at Okehampton has been recognised within DTE, and endorsed by the Steering Group. Funding problems have now been overcome and recruitment is underway. These uniformed posts will allow better scrutiny of training activity and, hopefully, a reduction in complaints. The two selected candidates will start work soon. They will be involved with access and recreation duties, working alongside DNPA personnel. DNPA suggested they attend DNPA Ranger training in order to improve local knowledge base and effectiveness – an offer gratefully accepted by the Commandant DTA.

11. Holming Beam Hut. Firing and safety on Merrivale Range is controlled from a prefab hut at Holming Beam, near Princetown. The hut is life-expired and an eye-sore. DTE has been trying to obtain funds to demolish the hut and build a more suitable, but still prefabricated hut nearby, hidden in the adjacent strip wood. Funds were provisionally obtained for work in FY 06/07, but completion could not be guaranteed for 31 March 07. As a consequence, funding was withdrawn before the project could begin. A new application for funds for 07/08 has now been made.

Following discussion, it was agreed to keep this issue under review, initially in the DWP.

Item 5 – Sustainable Military Training on Dartmoor (SMTOD):

12. Lt Col Norrington-Davies, Chairman of the SMTOD Project Board in Warminster, made a presentation to the Meeting in which he covered the following points (slides used for presentation are attached):

- A brief recap' covering the EMS Audit findings, the Environmental Studies that had been undertaken, the DTA Management Plan, Military Needs Paper and Military Options Paper.
- Progress in 2006. This included a description of the development of the Environmental Appraisal Scoping Report, its wide circulation and the 2 public meetings held in Tavistock and Okehampton in October.
- Environmental Appraisal (EA). This included a description of the process and the need – in order to demonstrate transparency and coverage of all issues – for Working Groups (WG) to examine environmental issues in depth. These WGs would be MoD – led but would benefit greatly from the involvement of the Statutory Bodies' experts. Invitations had gone out to an inaugural briefing Seminar on 14 Feb at Okehampton Camp.
- Timetable. Dates for the EA process were given, culminating in a 16 week consultation period allowing a full briefing of the DSG in January 2008.

13. Following discussion it was agreed that:

- Statutory Bodies' experts would participate in the WGs without prejudice. They would not engage in negotiation. Issues unresolved during the EA process (of which the WGs are a part) would be reported back to the Steering Group in due course.
- Environmental papers would be monitored by the DWP at its meeting in March 07 (and then in September 07).
- The SMTOD Board would consider how best to ensure that NGOs views were taken into account, and would ensure that WG participants were kept fully informed of all WG activity.
- In conclusion, the Chairman thanked Lt Col Norrington-Davies for his presentation and welcomed its openness. He noted that the EA was an MoD process in which it was reasonable for MoD to seek Statutory Body participation. However, participation by Steering Group Members or their organisations should be on the basis of 'expert and technical level' input, so as to maintain a 'Chinese Wall' between this expert participation and the Steering Group itself.

Item 6 – BV 206 Exercise – July 2003:

14. Lt Col Porter gave a résumé of the background: the exercise in July 2003, when up to 18 BV 206 vehicles traversed North Dartmoor in line astern, causing damage to the ground. Formal walks to check the route in summer 2004 and March 2006 ascertained that while the tracks were still visible in parts, re-growth was visible everywhere, although it may take several more years for the impact to disappear

completely. The matter had been discussed within the DWP where it had been agreed that lessons had been learned and that no further formal monitoring was necessary. DNPA had undertaken to provide a Summary Note – to follow.

15. After a short discussion the meeting confirmed the DWP recommendation that formal monitoring should be discontinued. Item closed.
16. Lt Col Porter stated that further work was being carried out by MoD in relation to the successor, VIKING vehicle. Permission would be needed before VIKING could operate on the moor.

Item 7 – EXERCISE TEN TORS:

17. The Group took note of the following points:

- The 2006 event had been a great success, blessed by good weather. Some 2,400 young people took part in the main event, plus 300 disabled competitors in the Jubilee Challenge. Administration and control had improved, resulting in a tauter event.
- The well-known Event Secretary - Maj Mike Pether RLC – had been awarded a well deserved MBE, recognizing 14 years of dedicated service to EX TEN TORS.
- This year, the Managers' Training Weekend was scheduled for 27/28 Jan 07, with the event itself taking place between 11-13 May 07. Ten Tors remained hugely oversubscribed with many potential teams turned away, but the focus remains firmly on competitors from the South West, even though more young people are applying each year from outside the Region.
- The event continued to be fully supported by the Army's chain of command despite budgetary pressures, as demonstrated by the fact that General Sir Richard Dannatt had acted as Starter for the 2006 event.
- It was intended to re-energise the Ten Tors WG. Issues arising from its deliberations would then be fed into the Steering Group via the DWP.
- There was general approval for the re-energising of the Ten Tors WG which was recognised to be an essential element in the management of Ten Tors and the control of its impact upon Dartmoor. The pre-event training and the impact of Ten Tors on the moor were seen as important matters for the WG to address, alongside discussion of the main event itself.

Item 8 – Public Relations – Freedom of Information Act:

18. Complaints from the Public. Very few complaints had been received, most of these had been minor and all have been dealt with. Examples included: low flying helicopters frightening horses and riders, some instances of members of the public alarmed by dry training and the insufficiently controlled burn by Landmarc at Willsworthy which was harshly criticised, as it should not have been allowed after 01 Apr, the agreed Dartmoor end-of-swaling date. Lessons had been learned in the control of such fires, and there would be no MoD controlled burns after 01 Apr in future.

19. Freedom of Information Act.

Lt Col Porter informed the Meeting that the Steering Group's Public Information Scheme was due for review and had been discussed by the two Joint Secretaries with the Chairman. Following discussion, the Group agreed that the minutes of the Steering Group should be published on both MOD's DTA website and on DNPA's website and that the Public Information Scheme should now be redrafted accordingly.

20. Dartmoor Vision. The DNPA gave an update on the 'Dartmoor Vision' initiative. The long term vision was for a fully grazed moorland landscape to be achieved by 2020. Moorland graziers were important to the scheme, and MoD also had a part to play in this and had made a positive contribution to date.

Item 9 – Annual Report to Secretaries of State:

21. In consequence of an interregnum in the Chairmanship before January 2006, a Report would now be prepared which would cover 2005 and 2006. Subsequent reports will be made annually.

Item 10 – Any Other Business:

22. CNP Publications. This document had only recently been published, and not all members had seen it. It would be discussed in the DWP who would report to a meeting of the Steering Group.
23. Duchy Deputy Bailiff. Lt Col (Retd) David Marino RM had replaced Maj Ian Lamb as the Duchy of Cornwall Deputy Bailiff. Compliments were paid to Maj Lamb's long record of service to Dartmoor. It was agreed that the Chairman would write to Maj Lamb on behalf of the DSG to express the Group's thanks for his work.
24. White Paper on Heritage Legislation. This would be issued in February 2007 and would have some impact upon the stewardship of Dartmoor.

Item 11 – Date and Location of Next Meeting:

25. The next Meeting of the DSG will be on Wednesday 16 January 2008 at HQ DNPA (Parke, Bovey Tracey).

Tabled:

1. 2005 Range Usage Statistics.
2. Sustainable Military Training on Dartmoor Presentation.