

# **MINUTES OF THE 59<sup>TH</sup> MEETING OF THE DARTMOOR STEERING GROUP**

**Thursday 5<sup>th</sup> December 2019**

Held at Okehampton Camp BLD 57 – 1400hrs

## **Present:**

David Incoll	Chairman
Brigadier Simon Stockley	Head of Overseas Training Regional DIO
Chris Gregory	Land Steward Duchy of Cornwall
Dr Kevin Bishop	Chief Executive Dartmoor National Park Authority (DNPA)
Lt Col Tim Jalland	Regional Commander DIO O & SD Trg SW
Nigel Sharpe	Defence Land Agent, DIO Land Management Services
Lt Col David Marino	Deputy Bailiff Duchy of Cornwall
Maj Crispin d'Apice	Training Safety Officer DIO Trg SW
Col Simon Chapman	Head of Commando Training Centre
Peter Harper	Deputy Chair of Dartmoor National Park Authority
Robert Steemson	Community & Land Manager DNPA

## **Apologies:**

Pamela Woods	Chair Dartmoor National Park Authority
Kevin Ball	Devon County Member Okehampton Rural and DNPA

## **ITEM 1 – CHAIRMAN'S OPENING REMARKS**

1.1 The Chairman welcomed all members to the 59<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Dartmoor Steering Group.

## **ITEM 2 – MINUTES OF THE 58<sup>TH</sup> MEETING HELD ON THURSDAY 16<sup>TH</sup> DECEMBER 2018**

2.1 The previous minutes were confirmed by way of circulation.

The Chairman asked if the Oxford University Brookes Study had been completed yet. Crispin D'Apice confirmed that the results are not ready yet as the person who is dealing with this is still working through the numbers.

## **ITEM 3 – BRIGADIER SIMON STOCKLEY**

3.1 Brigadier Stockley explained his role within DIO, saying that UK Trg were the MoD estate experts across the spectrum from technical engineers to land management services and that he was part of the regional delivery element of DIO. This meant that Regional Delivery managed the land estate around the UK and the World. His specific responsibilities meant that he ran both the Overseas and Training Region; he had three operating groups (UK

training) where Colonel Jalland was one of his Training Area Commanders. He also ran all the infrastructure services and all the rural estate management supported by Landmarc. He was responsible for managing 157,000 hectares of MOD owned land and a further 140,000 hectares of leased land, 10,000 assets, listed buildings and monuments etc, on an area spread from Tregantle Fort, Cornwall up to Cape Wrath, Scotland. This equated to 1% of the UK land mass and 6% of the UK SSSI that UK Training administer on behalf of the Nation and the Secretary of State for Defence. He was also responsible for all the overseas infrastructure (on the army's collective training estates) where he managed a further 700,000 hectares of training estate together with infrastructure from Singapore through to North America. He was very conscious of the responsibilities of the Steering Group in managing conservation, training and public access, where his responsibilities also chimed. He stated that he was very much aware of the requirement for the Steering Group to write to ministers on an annual basis and that Anne-Marie Trevelyan MP had been asked to take on the infrastructure portfolio; she had since been replaced by James Heapey MP. Brigadier Stockley advised that DIO was the estate expert advisor to the MoD and therefore any "treat official" correspondence (when a committee wrote to a Minister) meant that the Minister would pass that correspondence to the most appropriate person in Defence to respond. As such he would take responsibility for answering those questions and would be the Steering Group's principal contact for future questions.

### **Questions/Actions/Comments:**

The Chairman thanked Brigadier Stockley for his introduction and explained that there had been great concern that the committee might lose direct reference to Ministers.

Brigadier Stockley explained that he would feed the concern back to the MoD and that by having Ministers attend events like Ten Tors gave them an insight into what was being achieved.

Peter Harper explained that the DNPA was doing a lot of work on peatland restoration and that one of the big challenges was the cost of removing unexploded ordnance. A grant was received by DEFRA for these costs but Mr Harper asked if the MoD could assist in order to help make it more cost effective in the future.

Kevin Bishop explained that there was a specific Ministerial commitment, as part of the license renewal process, for MOD support for peatland restoration. He thanked Crispin D'Apice for his support at a local level and highlighted the need for MOD support for unexploded ordnance clearance as this was a significant cost - potentially doubling the cost of peatland restoration. He asked about the 'polluter pays' principle. Brigadier Stockley indicated that he would ask Colonel Jalland to investigate the possibility of MoD support in the future.

Kevin Bishop reiterated the understanding that the Steering Group continued to report to both Ministers and not to DIO - DIO were a member of the DSG. Ministers might instruct the Brigadier (in his current role) to respond on their behalf but it was essential to ensure the continued independence of the Chair of the Dartmoor Steering Group and the line of direct reporting to DEFRA and MOD at Ministerial level.

## **ITEM 4 – MINUTES OF THE DARTMOOR WORKING PARTY (DWP)**

4.1 Colonel Jalland explained that the DWP had met three times during the past year. The focus remained on the successful achievement of the Mid-Term Review which was due in 2022/23. However, the Group had continued to work collaboratively, to better serve the day to day stewardship of Dartmoor. Colonel Jalland thanked all members of the DWP for their continued help, support and guidance which has served the Moor well.

4.2 He reminded the SG of the on-going work to redirect the public footpath round Okehampton Battle Camp which had originally gone through it. The aim being to improve the security of the camp whilst also benefitting Ten Tors. A consultation period ended on the 7 March, out of which there were 10 comments. Colonel Jalland said the these were still being worked through and hopefully legal advice would be received in the near future. Meanwhile the existing path continued to be used.

4.3 Colonel Jalland said that he had, the previous year, reported that some demolitions, of the older and derelict buildings in Okehampton Camp, were to take place. He confirmed that these would take place before the end of the financial year, with a photographic record having been made. The demolitions would improve camp safety and aesthetics. The work on the landscape of the camp, ha

d also continued but Ash Die-back had meant that some of the plans had been amended to ensure that affected trees had been or would be removed in the near future. (**Afternote:** 26 Feb 20 – funding for the demolitions was not made available as expected)

4.4 Colonel Jalland reported that the Dartmoor Wildfire Partnership had been resurrected to good effect and that the DWP had been very much involved in its work. As a result, the overall Wild Fire planning was better joined up and collaborative to the benefit of the Moor. It had resulted in the decision not to use civilian helicopter support but purchase improved equipment to support ground operations.

4.5 The mapping that had been missing from the Dartmoor Integrated Rural Management Plan had at last been circulated. Colonel Jalland indicated that proper reviews of the Plan would be carried out on an annual basis in order to ensure that improved planning could take place to enable further improvement of collective stewardship.

4.6 Colonel Jalland reported that the MoD had begun planning for the development of some woodland near Willsworthy, to aid training, in consultation with both the National Park Authority and the Forestry Commission.

4.7 He stated that the DWP had continued to monitor and report on incidents and complaints pertaining to training on the Moor. He was pleased to say that the past year had seen no complaints against the military and very few incidents of military debris being reported. He could only put that down to not only the efforts put into better briefings but also the joint working of the Okehampton Team and the National Park Rangers.

4.8 The year had seen further support to the local community in terms of facilitating historical society visits and the Dartmoor Walking Festival. The Okehampton Team had also hosted a visit by the Dartmoor National Park Youth Rangers to provide them with an insight into military training on the Moor.

4.9 In summing up, Colonel Jalland hoped the SG would note the continued excellent collaborative efforts of the DWP in its support of the better stewardship of the Moor as a whole.

#### **Questions/Actions/Comments:**

Woodland planting – is this going to be fenced or tree shelters? Crispin D’Apice explained that the areas were already fenced and that initial discussions with the Forestry Commission and DNPA confirmed that it was not on common land or in SSSI areas.

#### **ITEM 5 – MID-TERM REVIEW**

5.1 Colonel Jalland reported that there had been a continued collaborative approach to the work towards the Mid-Term Review and that he wished to like to thank all stakeholders for their continued support towards this important milestone.

5.2 As a reminder he reminded the DSG that the Conservation Stewardship Fund was a relatively small amount of money which had to be shared across the whole of the UK. Colonel Jalland admitted that Dartmoor had not received as much funding as in past years. However, he considered that a reasonable amount of funding had been received from which the Moor would benefit.

5.3 Funding had been allocated for:

#### **Okehampton Range Archaeological Condition Survey (£10)**

- Part of a 5 yearly rolling programme of surveys of the various training areas forming Dartmoor.
- The Baseline Archaeological Condition Survey was undertaken in 2004, with re-surveys undertaken in 2010 and 2014.
- This survey would take place over the winter/spring when vegetation was at its lowest, making the archaeology easier to inspect and the report would be issued in the Spring to DNPA and the Duchy.

#### **Peatlands Partnership Contribution (£5K)**

- This was a general contribution through DNPA towards the costs of the Peatlands Partnership.

### **Contribution towards the maintenance of Standon Steps Bridge (£2K)**

- Standon Steps Bridge crossed the River Tavy on land adjoining the MoD freehold land at Standon. It was not on MOD land but allowed a permissive path to cross the Tavy and connect into a permissive path on the MOD estate.
- The condition of the bridge had deteriorated, but whilst MoD was not responsible for the maintenance of the bridge, the MoD was willing to make an ex-gratia contribution to DNPA towards the cost of maintaining the bridge in order to enable the link up with the connecting MoD Permissive Path.

### **In-year Bid – Contribution towards replacement of Stile with gate, and drystone wall repairs, on land north of Fernworthy Forest (£4K).**

- The ladder stile was outside the formal training area but was within an area of Dartmoor occasionally used by military personnel for non-tactical training.
- The proposal was to replace the stile with a gate, which would enable military use to pass through quickly, reduce congestion including with the public, and improve less able-bodied access. The dilapidated dry-stone wall alongside the new gate would also be repaired.
- If the bid was successful, MoD would contribute towards DNPA costs, who would undertake the work.

### **Breeding Bird Survey**

- The report of the 2018 Breeding Bird Survey was issued by MoD this year.
- The survey was a comprehensive re-survey of the Training Area using the same methodology as that used in 2006. With the aim of examining changes in bird populations and correlating changes in habitat.
- Skylark and Meadow Pipit were the most abundant species, followed by Carrion Crow and Wheatear.
- The 2018 Survey identified that since 2006 there had been declines in both species and diversity with a total number of birds reduced by 30.5%.
- Severe short-term declines were noted in species such as Wheatear, Whinchat, Reed Bunting, Wren and Red Grouse.
- There had been a decrease in grazing pressure across the survey area and an increase in the height of vegetation.
- However, no significant correlations were identified between bird abundance and changes in habitat.
- No relationships between bird abundance and military use were identified.
- It was concluded that possible reductions in bird population and species may have been due to other factors such as the severe weather in winter/spring 2018.
- CSF allocation £50K in F/Y 18/19

### **Dartmoor Birds Advisory Group**

- The Group had been monitoring (amongst others) Ring Ouzel on Dartmoor.
- MoD land at Tavy Cleave remained the only stronghold on Dartmoor.

- Experimental livestock enclosures were erected 5 years ago in Tavy Cleave, to allow vegetation to grow, and provide cover to encourage Ring Ouzel to nest. Vegetation had grown, but the Ring Ouzel have not nested there.
- The original proposal was to remove the enclosures after 5 years, but it had been agreed to let them remain in place and undertake further studies to try and find out the limitations of Ring Ouzel.
- MoD transported the materials for the Tavy Cleave enclosures to site using helicopters and to the enclosure on West Mill Tor through Landmarc's low ground pressure vehicles.

### **Cramber Ecological Survey**

- The production of this survey was a planning condition relating to the planning consent to continue using Cramber Training Area for military training granted in 2013.
- The original survey was undertaken in 2012 and all sites revisited in 2018/19.
- Levels of military use had not changed between 2012 and 2019. There was little evidence of military training on site.
- The distribution of habitats remained the same in 2019 as in 2012.
- There had been no reports of military damage to habitats on Cramber.
- The Breeding Bird Survey recorded a significant decline in livestock numbers and resultant increase in sward height.
- There was a significant number of recreational users on the site who had a greater potential to damage the site than the military, although their use was mainly on public rights of way.
- Survey undertaken by MoD in-house ecologist.

### **Dartmoor National Park Authority Visitor Survey 2017**

- This survey was undertaken by DNPA in 2017. A contribution towards the costs of £1.25K was made by MoD through CSF that year, and questions relating to public perceptions of the military were included.
- The Survey report was received in October 2019.
- Key findings related to the military were:
  - "A number of visitors were aware of the military presence on Dartmoor with 76% of visitors being aware that military train on Dartmoor. This did not impact on their decision of whether to visit Dartmoor or not, with 99% stating that military use had no influence on their choice of whether to, or where to visit that day".
  - Visitors showed a good understanding of the military presence on Dartmoor with 69% being aware of the areas where military activity may restrict public access to parts of Dartmoor."
  - "64% of visitors knew where they were able to find the information regarding such restrictions. 36% stated that they did not know how to locate this information."

### **Questions/Actions/Comments:**

Byelaw Reviews – Colonel Jalland explained that there were no changes at the moment to the Bye-laws. The team was very small and looking at a 10-year waiting list. The Chairman made the point that Dartmoor had been on the 10-year waiting list for several years and that other opportunities to achieve change could be explored.

Relocation of Lookouts – Crispin D’Apice explained that the lookouts might be relocated when that lookout was to be replaced.

Kevin Bishop asked when the Mid-Term Review would be submitted to Ministers. Colonel Jalland confirmed that he would like a draft produced by 2021.

### **ITEM 6 – USAGE FIGURES**

6.1 Crispin D’Apice handed out copies of these figures and discussed as follows:

- Cancellations notified to the public was at 100%.
- Live Firing – no significant changes.
- Dry Training – A fairly substantial change on dry areas due to the number of trainees.
- Incidents – Military Debris – the vast majority of live items were legacy and there were some empty shells. There had been no great spikes in areas or quantities.
- Fires – CD reported that 3 minor fires had taken place with the fire brigade being called to one at Willsworthy.

### **Questions/Actions/Comments:**

Is the pattern likely to be repeated? Crispin D’Apice explained that most of the units were local but there could be units from other locations that could be sent to train on Dartmoor. Live firing was very steady and could potentially go up.

Fire - Could the area by size be indicated on the report? **ACTION:** Crispin D’Apice was to add this information to future figures. Crispin D’Apice explained that he had taken delivery of 120 fire beaters and had 3 foggers available. There was also a group of farmers that had been trained by the fire service to deal with wildfires.

### **ITEM 7 – TEN TORS**

7.1 **2019:** There had been fewer complaints regarding training and the way people were trained. Ten Tors had refreshed the green card that was issued to all teams and updated to ensure the rules were more clear. The event itself went very well. Ten Tors had increased external engagement and it was deemed lucky to have had a visit from 2 ministers from DEFRA and MoD.

7.2 **2020:** Team Managers brief had been completed. Mapping had been updated and placed the website. 2020 was to be the 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary (Diamond). Ten Tors had put in a bid for a Royal visit.

### **Questions/Actions/Comments:**

Was it possible, regarding special events, that local suppliers could be used? Crispin D'Apice explained that there was a spend limit for official hospitality. Colonel Jalland expressed that it is not something the MoD could do and that permission would be required from his Chain of Command. It was suggested that Ministers be asked to consider exploring the use of local purchasing and supporting the local farming community.

Could a short film for the Dartmoor Visitors Centre about Ten Tors be made? Crispin D'Apice explained that it was the 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary in 2020 and that National Army Media were to support the event and that he would remind the Media Officer about the Anniversary.

### **ITEM 8 – LETTER TO MINISTERS**

8.1 The Chairman confirmed that the subject areas to cover in the letter were to be ordnance/shrapnel, sustainable procurement (local produce) and Bye-laws.

### **ITEM 9 – ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

#### **The Chair left the meeting whilst Members discussed the Term of Office for the Independent Chair**

9.1 Kevin Bishop (as Joint Secretary) explained that the term of office for the current Chair of the Steering Group was due to expire at the end of 2020. Kevin Bishop suggested to the Steering Group that it would be pertinent and advantageous if David Incoll's term of office was extended until the end of 2021 so that he could see the Mid-Term Stock-take through to submission. He also informed the meeting that he had spoken to the current Chair to see if he would be willing to consider an extension to his term of office if Ministers were willing to approve and the Chair had indicated that he would consider such an extension. There was unanimous agreement that the Joint Secretaries should write to Ministers recommending an extension to the Chair's term of office.

#### **The Chair rejoined the meeting for the following discussion**

9.2 Kevin Bishop reiterated that, the offer made to CTCRM in the past to provide an opportunity for injured Royal Marines to visit the National Park as part of a guided walk led by a Ranger or other activity to support their recovery, was still extant.

9.3 Brigadier Stockley thanked everyone for inviting him to remain and explained that he had recently attended the MoD Environmental & Sustainability Awards (known as The Sanctuary Awards) where DIO had been successful in various categories. He considered that there were several projects on Dartmoor that could be pushed towards the awards and ask if Crispin D'Apice could work with some of the stakeholders to put a proposal through for some of the categories.



## **ITEM 10 – DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

10.1 The next meeting will take place on Thursday 10<sup>th</sup> December 2020.

10.2 There being no other business the meeting closed at 1530hrs. The Chairman thanked all for their attendance.