

MINUTES OF THE 49th MEETING OF THE DARTMOOR STEERING GROUP

WEDNESDAY 8th OCTOBER 2009

Present:

Members:

Richard Thomas	Chairman
Bill Hitchins	Chairman, Dartmoor National Park Authority
Christine Marsh	Member, Dartmoor National Park Authority
Nigel Hoskin	Member, Dartmoor National Park Authority
Ian Mercer	Chairman, Dartmoor Commoners' Council
Roger Halliday	Duchy of Cornwall
Caroline Bullock	Natural England
Phil McMahon	English Heritage
Richard Bailey	Government Office for the South West
Brig Bill Dunham	Comdt CTCRM
Brig Steve Hodder	Comd 43 (Wx) Bde
David Olney	COO Defence Estates
Col Mark Waring	Comd DTE

Joint Secretaries:

Lt Col James Porter	Comd DTE South West (Lead Secretary)
Kevin Bishop	Chief Executive, Dartmoor National Park Authority

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

OPENING REMARKS

1. *Lt Col James Porter*, Lead Secretary, thanked Commando Training Centre Royal Marines (CTCRM) for the use of their facilities due to asbestos removal placing the Officers Mess Building out of bounds. He went on to announce that Ministers had approved the re-appointment of Mr Thomas as Chairman for a second term of 3 years from Jan 09.
2. *The Chairman* welcomed Members to Okehampton Battle Camp. Since some Members were present for the first time he asked all 15 to introduce themselves. In particular he welcomed Mr Bill Hitchins, the new Chairman of Dartmoor National Park Authority, and Col Mark Waring, taking over the Defence Estates chair from Mr David Olney.

3. *The Chairman* drew attention to the fact that several longstanding Members/colleagues were appearing for the final time. These included Mr David Olney and Mr John Loch of Defence Estates, Lt Col James Porter, Lt Col Tony Clark and Lt Col Paul Norrington-Davies of Defence Training Estates – with up to 16 years DSG involvement in the case of Lt Col Clark. *The Chairman* thanked those leaving, wished them well and called for a round of applause.

MINUTES OF THE 48TH MEETING HELD ON 08 OCT 08

4. *Lt Col James Porter* reported that the minutes, circulated with the agenda, had been agreed via circulation.

5. He reported 3 matters arising from these minutes:

- a. All DSG Annual Reports have now been published on the DNPA and Dartmoor Training Area website.
- b. The first of the two extra DWP meetings had been held in June and attended by additional DCC delegates in order to discuss Ten Tors.
- c. The new booklet “The Military and Dartmoor” had been published and was widely available around Dartmoor. It had been ‘launched’ by DEFRA Minister Huw Irranca-Davies during his Dartmoor visit. *The Chairman* praised the booklet as an excellent initiative: it had tremendous appeal and he commended everyone concerned in its preparation.

MINUTES OF DWP MEETINGS HELD ON 03 NOV 08, 04 MAR 09, 09 JUN 09, 09 SEP 09

6. *The Chairman* mentioned that the Minutes of the 9th September 2009 DWP meeting were not yet cleared and reminded the meeting that he did not wish to go through the detail of the DWP meetings held since the last DSG, and instead called upon the two secretaries to report on progress.

7. *Lt Col James Porter* introduced the subject of funding issues by stating that the current funding climate within the MOD had caused DTE to warn the 4th March 2009 DWP of the postponement of funding for a wide range of items. He reported that it had been possible, subsequently, to reinstate the more important of these items, but not, unfortunately, the Holming Beam Hut Replacement Project for which Mr Olney had announced funding at the 48th DSG meeting. The Project was currently suspended pending an improvement in the financial position.

8. *Mr David Olney* gave the meeting a general briefing on the state of government departmental budgets. He stated that Defence Estates had been faced by significant cuts and it was unclear if these cuts would be reinstated in future years. Maintenance of essential support to Defence will come under increasing pressure. This meant that the Holming Beam Hut Project was currently unaffordable. *Col Mark Waring* reported that the funds DTE had been planning to spend on SSSI support work (which had been cut) had been restored. The necessary budgetary savings to offset this were being made elsewhere within DTE. *The Chairman* thanked Mr Olney and Col Waring

for their comments and for their efforts to protect MOD spending on Dartmoor despite current constraints.

9. *Dr Kevin Bishop* then introduced the next topic: the DWP Issues and Aspirations Work Plan (the title having been expanded in accordance with direction from the 48th DSG). He made the point that the document was a live one, originating from the current licence renewal process. Issues would be added as they arose, removed as and when they were completed/resolved, or amended. The tabular form of the Work Plan provided an overview of action taken or required, and Dr Bishop did not intend to go through the document line by line, but rather highlight certain areas. He added that the Management Plan associated with the new licence would need to pick up many of the items contained in the Work Plan.

10. *Dr Kevin Bishop* highlighted Local Procurement, stating that following the last DSG meeting, Mr Olney had arranged for the Defence Food Services Group to become engaged. A small team had visited Dartmoor on 14 July 2009 and made a presentation to a wide range of stakeholders, as well as visiting a number of local farms. The meeting (held under Chatham House Rules) had been useful and an offer for Dartmoor farmers to participate in a MOD pilot scheme in the SW had been made. However, the Dartmoor Farmers Association were understood not to be participating for financial reasons and also a lack of control over carcass balance (a requirement of the Prince of Wales marketing initiative that they are involved in). Further discussion followed on the MOD Pay-As-You-Dine scheme, and it was concluded that substantial progress in effecting an increase in MOD purchase of UK produced meat could only come from political influence upon government guidelines. It was understood that the Defence Food Services Group had been due to brief HRH Prince Charles on the subject of local food procurement and the outcome would be of interest to the DSG.

11. *Brig Steve Hodder* mentioned that his Headquarters was working with a company called Avenance. This company always sourced food from within UK if possible. He had asked Avenance to speak to the Dartmoor Farmers Association.

12. In answer to a query by *Mr Bill Hitchins* concerning MOD's review of its long-term need for rural land, *Mr David Olney* described the work that is being undertaken by Defence Estates in order to establish a matching process that will compare existing training land holdings with current training requirements. He stated that this complex piece of work – essentially the development of a high level balance of investment tool – would examine land holdings at the strategic level. It would not be able to match low level demand against local land holdings. He hoped that the process would be fully developed and in use before next October's DSG, but could not make any promises! There was discussion on how useful this process might be to the DSG, and it was concluded that the matching process should provide a valuable picture of the overall Defence training requirement.

13. *Lt Col James Porter* announced that the Intervisibility Study had recently been completed and was currently being examined by DNPA and, subject to planning approval, might allow for a reduction in the number of lookouts on the moor.

14. *Mr Richard Bayley* raised the subject of noise due to military training. *Lt Col James Porter* responded by stating that, while some noise was inevitable from firing or from helicopters (which were essential for the conduct of military training), every effort was made to mitigate the effects of noise which was, in any case, monitored to ensure it remained within legal limits. He added that all complaints were carefully investigated and were open to discussion by the DWP.

15. *Lt Col James Porter* updated the meeting on fire training for Landmarc employees. This training – much delayed – would definitely happen during November. It was to be conducted by Northumberland Fire and Rescue Service: national leader in wildfire management. The training would enable Landmarc staff to contain fire locally or assist the fire service.

16. *Mr Roger Halliday* described developments with the Loop Road. Two closure points had been created, preventing access to the southern part of the loop. Temporary openings would be made for special events.

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT PUBLICATION SCHEME

17. *Lt Col James Porter* informed the meeting that the Publication Scheme had been recast in order to fit into the Commissioner's templated format. Otherwise it was essentially the same document that the Group had agreed last October. *Mr Richard Bayly* questioned two bullet points (resolved to his satisfaction outside the meeting). *The Chairman* ruled that if no further comments were received within 2 weeks the new Publication Scheme would be accepted as agreed. Afternote: There being no further comments received, the tabled document becomes the current DSG Publication Scheme.

TEN TORS

18. *Brigadier Steve Hodder* thanked DNPA staff, DCC Youth Department, DRG, Commoners and all who had helped in making this year's event a great success. He described how the Team Managers' Briefing Weekend had been well attended and thanked the DNPA in particular for their vital support. The event itself had been blessed by fine weather and 394 teams had completed the event out of 400 starting. In addition 264 children with disabilities took part in the Jubilee Challenge, and the support from families and friends of the participants had broken all records on the Sunday.

19. *Brigadier Steve Hodder* then looked forward to Ten Tors 2010. This is the 50th Anniversary event and it was hoped there would be a VVIP starter, and that the number '50' would be inscribed on the medals. It was intended to invite a selection of veterans to take part. There would also be awards to those who have assisted the event over the years. New guidance was being issued in January to cover environmental issues and the training phase. He finished by informing the meeting that the Charlotte Shaw Inquest was due to commence on 7th December 2009 in Exeter.

20. *The Chairman* congratulated Brigadier Hodder and all concerned for a very successful event. He then called for discussion, and Mr Bill Hitchins raised the question of insurance for teams. *Brigadier Steve Hodder* explained that his staff were

still looking into the matter and would liaise with DNPA staff over it. *Professor Ian Mercer* noted that the fire caused by a team earlier this year had been dealt with and the land had recovered well; however the main problem seemed to be with training rather than the main event. *Brigadier Steve Hodder* accepted this and assured the meeting that his Headquarters put considerable effort into monitoring the training with patrols and provided a duty officer for each training weekend. *Mrs Christine Marsh* enquired about a particular team which apparently had a member who was unsuited to the event. *Brigadier Steve Hodder* responded by reminding the meeting that responsibility for team preparation and suitability lay with Team Managers – but that these managers had all been carefully instructed on their responsibilities and there was little more that could be done. *Colonel Mark Waring* informed the meeting that Lt Col Clark had been extended in post in order to aid continuity next year. *Brigadier Steve Hodder* reported that Lt Col Mellor had been granted an extension in post for the same reason. *The Chairman* concluded this item by stating that this had been a good report, and hoped that Ten Tors 2010 might be just as successful. Afternote: The Director of Ten Tors has informed the Secretary of the DSG that all schools and youth clubs who have submitted entry forms for the 2010 event have confirmed that they hold Third Party insurance cover.

LICENCE RENEWAL

21. *Mr Roger Halliday* was asked to update the meeting on progress with the current licence renewal process. He explained that following Ministerial approval for a new Licence, the Duchy had consulted widely, commencing with DNPA. He was finalising a formal submission which would soon be submitted to the Duchy Council. If approved by the Council this submission would be worked up as a legal draft after which he would consult widely once more. He further explained how the licence was likely to follow the format of the previous licence in many ways, but be different in some important areas. He described how there would be a private Part One and a public Part Two. Part Two would set out obligations for MOD and require a Management Plan (currently being developed). He felt that the formal submission would be ready within a fortnight, with a full legal draft ready by Christmas.

22. *The Chairman* felt that the two part approach was sensible. *Mr Bill Hitchins* wondered what opportunity DSG members might have for comment on the Management Plan/Part Two of the Licence. *Mr Roger Halliday* stated that the document could not be subject to approval/veto by the DSG but that Members (individually or collectively) would get an opportunity to comment. Part Two of the Licence would explain the rules and guidelines that the Duchy expected to be contained within the Management Plan. He expected to confirm through consultation that the guidelines were correct.

23. *The Chairman* thanked Mr Halliday for his report. He agreed that the DSG had no role in formally agreeing or approving the new Licence but hoped that Members would be given an opportunity to comment on/contribute to the Management Plan. He looked forward to a further update by Mr Halliday.

24. *Lt Col James Porter* then conducted a presentation that outlined the progress made by the DWP on lessons learned during the current licence renewal process. He explained that the work is ongoing within the DWP, and that lessons will continue to

be drawn as the current process continued to unfurl. He sought confirmation from the meeting that the DWP's work was along the right lines.

25. In discussion, *Mr David Olney* welcomed the work done by the DWP. He cautioned against becoming mired in detail as this work was to assist our successors in some 20 years' time. He accepted that differences would probably not be reconciled. *Mr Richard Bayly* wondered if the current process might have relevance elsewhere in UK during the next few years. *Col Mark Waring* agreed to consider this, although he pointed out that the vast majority of DTE land was MOD owned, and not licensed as on Dartmoor. *Mr Bill Hitchins* suggested that the Chairman should bring together comments on the lessons learned. *The Chairman* felt that the DWP should be allowed to continue its work: he believed the DSG could commend the DWP for the work done thus far, note the results and encourage the work to be taken forward diligently.

26. *Mr Nigel Hoskin* welcomed an open approach but hoped the work would not leave questions unanswered. He hoped it would be of day-to-day value and also applicable at the mid-point stock take. He also stressed the fundamental importance to the success of future military training on Dartmoor of adequate funding for MOD's commitments under the Management Plan, and hoped that, notwithstanding well recognised budgetary constraints, confirmation that this point is accepted would be forthcoming. *Dr Kevin Bishop* suggested that he write to stakeholders to obtain their contribution to the lessons learned, and that these would be used by the DWP to assist its work. *The Chairman* agreed that this was a good idea.

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

27. *Lt Col James Porter* stated that the joint ministerial visit to Dartmoor took place on 30th July with Huw Irranca-Davies of Defra. Unfortunately Kevan Jones of MOD was unable to be present. However, the visit went well as did the visit by the Shadow Defra minister, Richard Benyon on 17th September.

DATE AND LOCATION OF NEXT MEETING

28. It was proposed and accepted that the next meeting of the DSG will be held on Wednesday 6th October 2010 at Parke.

There being no other business, the meeting concluded at 1230 hrs.