

# From the Chairman of the Dartmoor Steering Group

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27th March 2015

Lord de Mauley  
Parliamentary Under Secretary of  
State for Natural Environment  
and Science  
Defra  
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17 Smith Square  
LONDON  
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Anna Soubry MP  
Parliamentary Under Secretary  
of State and Minister for  
Defence Personnel, Welfare and  
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MOD Main Building  
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SW1A 2HB

Dear Ministers

As the Independent Chairman of the Dartmoor Steering Group, I have pleasure in submitting this Annual Review letter.

It is established that this letter is a public document and the Joint Secretaries to the Steering Group will be placing a copy on the website of the Dartmoor National Park Authority.

I would also request that you kindly arrange for a copy to be placed on the gov.uk website together with the Minutes of the Steering Group.

I am very pleased to report that all the members of the Steering Group continue to view the existence of the Group as a crucial, cost effective, mechanism to help reconcile different interests and facilitate effective partnership working on issues that arise from the military use of Dartmoor for training.

Below I have set out the substantial issues discussed at our recent Meeting that I feel is my duty to bring to your kind attention.

## **1. HOLMING BEAM HUT**

At the Meeting a representative from the Defence Infrastructure Organisation (DIO) explained that, due to funding pressures, and consequential reviews of delivery programmes, there was no funding available (for at least two years) to complete the replacement of the Holming Beam Hut.

This message was in stark contrast to the previous reassurances provided by the predecessor bodies to DIO. Indeed, in my 2014 letter, I reported that Architects appointed by HRH the Prince of Wales, were engaged in designing the replacement Hut and discussions had taken place with the relevant authorities. The non-military parties represented on the Steering Group expressed disappointment, and a measure of significant annoyance, at this unexpected development. From their perspective this development breaks clear assurances provided to the Steering group that money had been allocated to the Holming Beam Hut project. DIO have advised that the Holming Beam Hut project could be included in a wider 'investment strategy' for the Training Area but there is no clarity about resources for such an initiative. The review includes developing a Footprint Strategy that will identify those military training areas that would continue to be the core sites for the future.

The National Park Authority had long argued that a replacement hut, in a less intrusive location, remained a priority because of landscape, safety, general visual intrusion and the state of the current hut. Nothing has changed in terms of justification since the proposal was first mooted some ten years ago.

Considerable time had been spent in developing the project and preparatory work carried out by the Duchy of Cornwall as landowner. At previous meetings of the Steering Group unequivocal assurances had been given on two occasions that funding for the project was in place. It was the desire of the Meeting to provide a reaffirmation of support for the project, and a formal vote resulted in unanimous support for DIO to continue with the agreed project for a replacement hut, in the less visually intrusive location that had been agreed. I hope that Ministers will be able to support this project.

## **2. REVIEW OF MOD BYELAWS**

The Meeting received an update on the MOD Byelaws Review and the Inter-Visibility Study Progress Report. The Inter-Visibility Study is a commitment made under the Licence to undertake a review of the range infrastructure (look-outs, flags etc) to ascertain whether this infrastructure is in an appropriate location in terms of public safety (ie the public can see it as they approach the Range Danger Areas and look outs can see the public approaching) and landscape impact. A number of site visit days to systematically review the infrastructure across the Merrivale, Okehampton and Willsworthy Ranges have taken place. This survey is continuing, but work completed to-date has led to the identification of some potential improvements, including: relocation/removal of some flags, relocation of some lookouts to improve the view along the boundaries which also has the benefit of removing them from skylines.

The Review is also identifying possible improvements to the signage used for the byelaws. Any potential changes will have to go through the MOD range safety process and the licences would have to be signed off for range use. Once proposed changes have been put forward the proposal would need to fit within the new processes within the Byelaws Reviews. Dartmoor is not listed in the top fifty for review, with nuclear sites, US visitor sites and other, more secure sites, a higher priority. Not all of the potential changes will require a change in the byelaws but any changes will have a financial implication. Each item will be scored and prioritised individually. It was suggested that the Inter-Visibility Study should be completed in total before byelaw changes are sought as a pole move may not require a change, but the effect on another area may.

### 3. PROCUREMENT

The National Park Authority expressed their gratitude to the MoD's Joint Secretary for his assistance in organising a workshop on procurement. Particular importance was attached to the presentations from the MOD and Landmarc Support Services (the Defence Training Estate Service Provider) which had demonstrated the potential to develop a proactive project looking at supply chain integration. A key action is the proposed workshop between MOD, their prime contractors and representatives of local businesses to explore the opportunity for supply chain integration and to develop the potential of working with the Heart of the South West Local Enterprise Partnership. The Steering Group welcomed this initiative outcome which accords with wider Government strategies and looks forward to positive outcomes being achieved. I hope that Ministers will lend their support to such an initiative as it clearly follows the lead set by the Government's 'Plan for Public Procurement' (2014).

### 4. TEN TORS

I am pleased to report that the 2014 edition of this prestigious event was rated a successful "Operation" but that categorisation means that no funding is in place beyond 2015 and a review into options for the future management of the event is planned. This year's event is planned for the weekend of 9/10 May, which, I appreciate, will be a very busy period for Parliamentarians but nevertheless, your presence at the start of the Ten Tors would be a tremendous boost to all the participants, and much appreciated by their families and supporters.

The challenges facing all the parties involved in the work and activities considered by the Steering Group are not diminishing but all involved in its work are committed to it, so as to ensure the positive contribution the Group makes to Dartmoor continues to be achieved.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in purple ink that reads "dincoll". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping underline that loops back under the first part of the name.

David Incoll  
**Independent Chairman**  
**Dartmoor Steering Group**