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→ Annual Report

DARTMOOR STEERING GROUP

Ninth Annual Report

of the

Dartmoor Steering Group

to the

Secretaries of State for Environment and Defence

October 1989

NINTH ANNUAL REPORT OF THE DARTMOOR STEERING GROUP

INTRODUCTION

1. The Eighth Annual Report was submitted to the Secretaries of State for Defence and the Environment in March 1988, and covered the twentieth and twenty first meetings of the Group. Since then we have held two further meetings: the twenty second at Stonehouse Barracks, Plymouth on 15 March 1988 and the twenty third at County Hall, Exeter on 25 October 1988. A statement was issued to the press after each meeting.
2. The Working Party has held three meetings and we are grateful for the continued support afforded to the Group. In accordance with agreed procedures, in March 1988 the National Park Officer took over the Chairmanship of the Working Party from the nominee of GOC South West District until 1990, when the latter will assume the Chairmanship again.
3. In general some steady progress was achieved during the period of this report, in further reducing the impact of military training on the National Park. I am heartened at the friendly, cooperative and businesslike attitude of those who contribute to our task both in the Working Party and the Steering Group.
4. The Group's second meeting marked the completion of ten years of consultation and we took the opportunity to review the necessity for holding two meetings a year which had been the practice. The Group agreed that under normal circumstances one meeting a year would suffice, but that additional meetings could be called if considered necessary.

WILLSWORTHY CAMP

5. The most important topic in the Steering Group has continued to be the military proposal to replace Willsworthy Camp at Higher Beardon Farm near Lydford. Following the National Park Authority's rejection of the Ministry of Defence's outline planning application, the Authority asked the Secretary of State for the Environment to call a Public Inquiry into the Higher Beardon proposal. The Group was informed that a Non-Statutory Public Local Inquiry was to be held opening at Lydford on 7 March 1989. The outcome is awaited with great interest.

ENVIRONMENTAL BASELINE

6. The Environmental Baseline Report, prepared in 1984, called for resurvey of the four one hectare plots established in the Crater Zone every three years. The first resurvey was carried out in the summer of 1987 and the Group heard a report of the results from the Nature Conservancy Council representative. The report was encouraging and showed that some craters had disappeared, some had become shallower, wider and better drained, and that no more craters had been detected.
7. The Group heard that whereas the next resurvey should be carried out in 1990, the Nature Conservancy Council considered that a three year interval was too short and the group agreed to the next resurvey being conducted in 1992, after a five year interval.
8. A good example of the cooperation between the Nature Conservancy Council, the Park Authority and the Military concerns the Environmental Baseline. Vandals had persistently removed the corner markers of the four Crater Zone plots, thus severely complicating the monitoring

process. The Nature Conservancy Council and the Park Authority, with the approval of the Duchy, determined that the most effective and acceptable way of overcoming this problem was to mark the corners of the plots with large boulders. The Military Authorities located suitable boulders and, in a joint operation a Royal Navy helicopter, exercising on the Moor, lifted and placed the boulders in position.

A GUIDE FOR WALKERS

9. Considerable progress has been made in the preparation of a leaflet, which will be available to the public, entitled "Dartmoor Military Ranges and Training Areas - A Guide for Walkers". At our last meeting it was envisaged that the leaflet would be published in early 1989, but in the event it was published in August 1989.

W A BURKINSHAW

COL. J S FORREST
Secretaries

SIR PETER STALLARD KCMG CVO MBE
Chairman