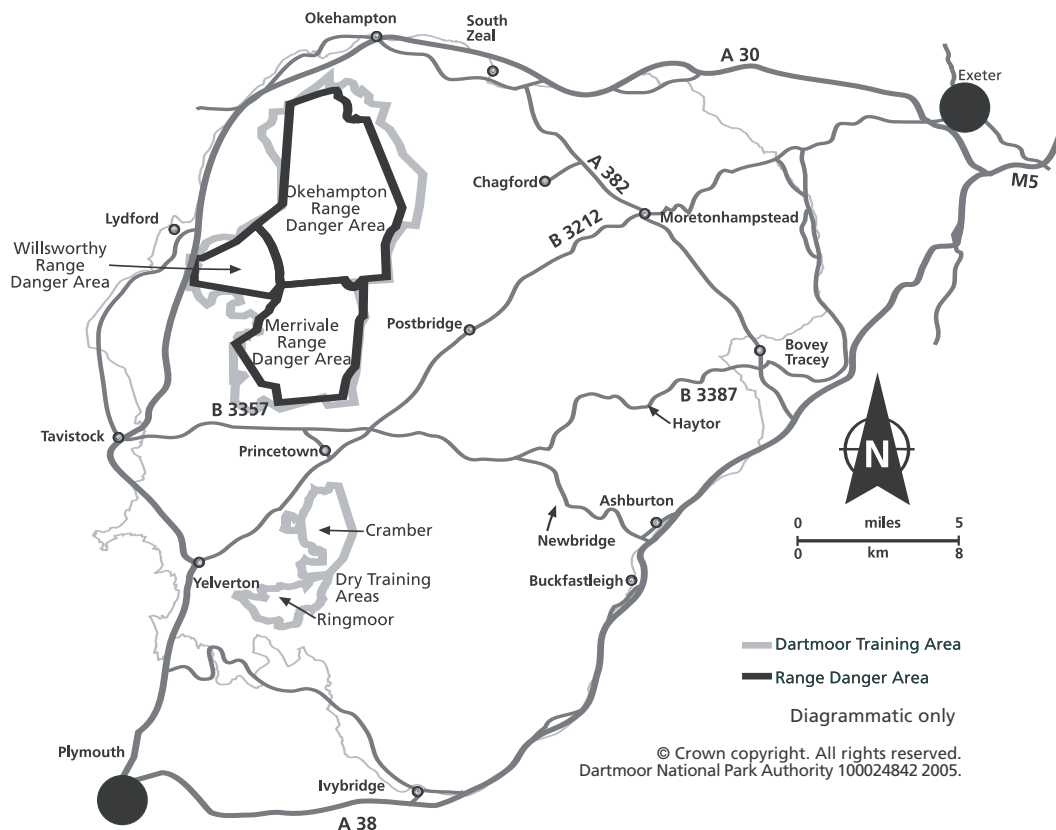


# Dartmoor and its military use:

## 2005 status



### Dartmoor - Designated Military Training Areas



Dartmoor has provided an important and challenging environment for military training for about two hundred years. Training began during the early 1800s with a marked increase during the Crimean War (1854-1856). Artillery training started in 1875 on moorland south of Okehampton owned by the Duchy of Cornwall; a permanent camp was built 20 years later. Since then, the size of military land holdings on Dartmoor has fluctuated according to need. With the beginning of the Second World War, in 1939, nearly all of Dartmoor's open country was used intensively for tactical exercises, many of which involved the use of live ammunition. After the War a smaller area was required. Dartmoor was designated a National Park in 1951. Today, Dartmoor continues to contribute to the preparedness of Britain's Armed Forces, especially those based in the south west of England.

### Current military activity

The Ministry of Defence (MoD) holds land on behalf of the Nation to enable its Armed Forces to achieve and maintain the required national defence capability. On Dartmoor, the Armed Forces train on 12,006 ha made up of freehold, leasehold and licensed land. This is about 12.5% of the total National Park area (95,311 ha), and about 25% of Dartmoor's open country.

Dartmoor is used by the military for a broad spectrum of light force training to practice for high intensity operations through to low level joint operations such as military assistance to people struck by disaster. Light forces mostly move on foot. However, vehicles are used for command and control, fire support and logistics. Helicopters and parachutes may be used to give increased reach and mobility.

The moor's terrain, climate and isolation all provide a challenging environment to teach and practice individual skills, including navigation, fitness, survival, self-reliance, fieldcraft, weapon marksmanship and first aid. Resource, initiative and leadership can also be developed often using adventurous training activities such as climbing, canoeing, hill walking and riding. These individual skills are developed through tactical training which progresses through crew and team exercises up to the occasional brigade operations involving thousands of personnel. Live fire tactical training takes place using live ammunition against targets and helps to develop confidence in weapons and colleagues. Dry tactical training, which allows for two-sided exercises, is also conducted using blank ammunition and pyrotechnics to represent the noise and friction of battle.

Parts of the three Training Areas on the north moor are used for live firing: Okehampton, Willsworthy and Merrivale. These Range Danger Areas are marked on up to date Ordnance Survey Outdoor Leisure Maps with red triangles. When the land is not being used for live firing it is used for individual skills, adventurous training and dry tactical training. The Armed Forces also carry out training, except live fire tactical training, on Cramber and Ringmoor Training Areas, both on the south moor.

The Dartmoor Training Area is primarily used by Royal Marines and other light forces based in the south west of England including territorial reserve forces and their cadet organisations. However, in the same way that they need to train in terrain and climate not found near their home base, so other units come to tackle Dartmoor's challenges.

Projectiles fired within Okehampton, Willsworthy and Merrivale Range Danger Areas include rifle and machine gun rounds, a small amount of light mortar fire and occasional heavy mortar fire. Artillery is limited to firing smoke, illuminating or practice shells. A small arms round can travel 4,000 metres and allowance has to be made for ricochets in planning live fire tactical training.

## Public access and safety

The *Dartmoor Commons Act, 1985* allows public access on foot and horseback over all unenclosed common land on Dartmoor, and the *Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000*

provides additional access opportunities on open country. The public has access rights over 47,000 ha of the National Park and this total includes the Dartmoor Training Area's Range Danger Areas when live firing is not taking place.

The MoD gives public safety the highest priority. Military Standing Orders and briefings emphasise that military users must care for the National Park and, because they share Dartmoor, they must be considerate to other users.

For safety reasons, MoD Byelaws limit public access to the Range Danger Areas when live firing is programmed. At all other times, public access is unrestricted by military activities. The noises that may be heard during dry tactical training are blanks and pyrotechnics, and are of no danger to the public. If a dry tactical exercise is expected to cause significant inconvenience, details are given on the firing notice and sentries are posted to give warning to other users.

The boundaries of the three Range Danger Areas, all on north Dartmoor, are indicated on some popular maps and are shown on the MoD /Dartmoor National Park Authority joint publication *Dartmoor Military Ranges and Training Areas – A Guide to Walkers and Riders*, which is available from local Information Centres. On the ground, the boundaries are marked by a series of red and white posts with warning notices. When wishing to walk in these areas, firing times must be checked and warning signals heeded.

The guaranteed public access periods, which amount in any one year to 245 days on Okehampton, 90 days on Willsworthy and 195 days on Merrivale, are shown in the publication *Dartmoor Military Ranges and Training Areas – A Guide to Walkers and Riders*, in the National Park Authority's *Dartmoor Visitor* publication, and on the Dartmoor Training Area's web site [www.dartmoor-ranges.co.uk](http://www.dartmoor-ranges.co.uk) Once detailed programming is complete, the firing programme which makes available additional public access is published online at [www.dartmoor-ranges.co.uk](http://www.dartmoor-ranges.co.uk)

Copies of the firing programme are displayed at local Information Centres and some public meeting places. The firing notice is published in local newspapers and is available on Freephone 0800 4 58 48 68. If cancellations occur, the web site, the National Park

Authority's Information Centres and the freephone are updated. BBC Radio Devon announces the firing programme each day.

Warning signals (red flags by day and red lamps by night) indicate that live firing is taking place and that it is unsafe and unlawful to enter that Range Danger Area. The warning signals are hoisted on prominent physical features and not necessarily on the Range boundaries. Particular care must be taken to check the warning signals at night or in poor visibility.

If the red flags are not hoisted by 0900 hours from April to September inclusive, and by 1000 hours from October to March inclusive, no live firing will take place that day. Local radio and Dartmoor National Park Information Centres are informed of cancellations as soon as they occur. Cancellations are also posted on the web site [www.dartmoor-ranges.co.uk](http://www.dartmoor-ranges.co.uk)

## Suspicious objects

Dartmoor has been used for military training since the 1800s. Although the military checks regularly for debris, members of the public are advised not to touch any suspicious objects but to mark the area, note the location and inform the police. Telephone 08452 777444.

## The National Park and military activities

Dartmoor National Park is one of a family of National Parks in Britain and part of a wider network of protected areas within Europe and worldwide. The British National Parks, including Dartmoor, are classified as Category V Protected Landscapes by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature:

Category V Protected Landscape/Seascape:  
protected area managed mainly for landscape/seascape conservation and recreation.

Area of land where the interaction of people and nature over time has produced an area of distinct character with significant aesthetic, ecological and/or cultural value, and often with high biological diversity. Safeguarding the integrity of this traditional interaction is vital to the protection, maintenance and evolution of such an area.

## National Park purposes

Dartmoor became a National Park in 1951. The twin purposes of National Park designation (first established under the 1949 *National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act* and amended by the *Environment Act 1995*) are:

**to conserve and enhance the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage, and**

**to promote opportunities for the understanding and enjoyment of the National Parks' special qualities by the public.**

The 1995 Act also places a general duty on all relevant authorities, including other public bodies, to have regard to these purposes when coming to decisions or carrying out their activities relating to or affecting land within National Parks. Relevant authorities are expected to be able to demonstrate that they have fulfilled this duty (Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions, *Circular 12/96, Environment Act 1995, Part III, National Parks S.19*).

National Parks in Britain are living and working communities with many of the characteristic qualities that give them their appeal being as much the result of human activity as of natural forces. It is in the interests of the conservation of these qualities that the 1995 Act states that, in pursuing National Park purposes, National Park Authorities should:

**seek to foster the economic and social well-being of local communities (within the National Park) by working closely with the agencies and local authorities responsible for these matters, but without incurring significant expenditure.**

The Government expects National Park Authorities to take this duty forward in ways that are compatible with their pursuit of National Park purposes and with the need for appropriate economic development.

## Government policy

Government *Circular 12/96 Environment Act 1995, Part III National Parks*, states:

'Parts of some National Parks have a long tradition of defence use which pre-dates the designation of the Parks by many years.

While the Government accepts these existing uses will continue into the foreseeable future, it is nevertheless committed to ensuring that new, renewed or intensified use of land in the National Parks for defence purposes should be subject to formal consultation with the National Park Authorities and the Countryside Agency and to an environmental impact assessment, and should be tested against any provisions set out in planning policy guidance. It acknowledges however, that there can be conflicts between defence use and Park purposes, but believes these will be best resolved through co-operation with the National Park Authorities. The Ministry of Defence will continue to give a high priority to conservation.'

Thus, the Government recognises the need for military training in some National Parks and the potential for conflicts between Defence use and National Park purposes. However, it stresses that the best resolution of these conflicts is through co-operation. It also goes on to reflect the important contribution of Defence use to the local social and economic well-being of National Park communities.

## The impact of military activities on National Park purposes

Military training, including live firing, has taken place on Dartmoor for over 200 years. Since 1951 Dartmoor has been a National Park. Some aspects of training have or continue to cause concern. These include the limitations that live firing places on public access opportunities, the visual intrusion of military look-outs, warning flags and notices, impact damage (although this has been greatly reduced since the firing of high explosive artillery shells has ceased), MoD and public vehicle access use of military roads and tracks, noise disturbance from firing and low flying, and potential impacts on wildlife and archaeological features. All of these can effect the enjoyment of Dartmoor's special qualities. The MoD also has positive impacts on Dartmoor. It works closely with the National Park Authority, landowners and other bodies to understand the moor and to conserve it and, as an integral part of the Dartmoor community, it contributes to the social and economic activities of the area.

## National Park policies and objectives: military activity

In May 2001 the Dartmoor National Park Authority published the *Dartmoor National Park Management Plan* which takes a long term view and sets out a vision for Dartmoor. That *moorland is free from live firing* is included in the vision.

The preparation of the Management Plan involved a consultation process with partners and the general public. Regarding the issue of live firing on Dartmoor there was a significant polarity of views. 52% of respondents were in support of the cessation of live firing. 1% of the total number of respondents thought that all military training (live, dry and adventurous) should be removed. However, 48% of respondents did not object to live firing on Dartmoor. The consultation survey also showed a difference of opinion between residents/non-residents, with a higher percentage of non-residents opposed to live firing.

### Reasons given for supporting live firing

- ◆ national security
- ◆ conservation related benefits
- ◆ employment/local economic benefits
- ◆ part of the tradition of Dartmoor

### Reasons given for stopping live firing

- ◆ fundamental conflict of purpose
- ◆ increase public access to land
- ◆ noise pollution
- ◆ damage caused/military litter
- ◆ removal of eyesores
- ◆ maintain and enhance the special qualities of Dartmoor
- ◆ enhance visitor experience

The overall objectives for military activity, stated in the Dartmoor National Park Management Plan, are:

- ◆ to retain the principle of ultimate withdrawal of military use damaging to National Park purposes on Dartmoor, as soon as this can be achieved consistent with the nation's defence needs;
- to maximise access and conservation opportunities through joint working;
- and to minimise damage to the fabric of Dartmoor, its special qualities and their enjoyment by the public.

To help achieve these objectives:

- ◆ major investment in new facilities or the licensing of further land for military use will be subjected to the most rigorous examination and only granted where it can be demonstrated that there is an overriding national need that cannot be met in any other way;
- ◆ through the work of the Dartmoor Steering Group and Working Party (see opposite) current training will be harmonised with the needs of conservation and public access, military infrastructure will be sympathetically related to the landscape, untoward impact or damage will be restored, and the parties will work to secure other objectives of the Management Plan on military training land.

The Management Plan also sets out five year priorities for military activity in the National Park:

- ◆ maintain effective liaison and joint working practice with the MoD through the Dartmoor Steering Group and Working Party;
- ◆ reduce the visual impact of military facilities and paraphernalia;
- ◆ pursue National Park purposes through effective contribution to the Willsworthy Conservation Group (since 2005 this is the Dartmoor Military Conservation Group);
- ◆ seek to increase days available for public access to live firing ranges in line with Government objectives for access to open country;
- ◆ ensure that conservation objectives for moorland are aided, and not set back, by military training activity.

The National Park Management Plan is currently being reviewed and new objectives and five year priorities with regard to military activity may emerge.

## Working together

The last public local inquiry into the continued use of Dartmoor by the MoD for training purposes was held in December 1975 and May 1976. In the resultant Sharp Report (1977)

Lady Sharp, in her conclusions, states:

'I accept that military training and a national park are discordant, incongruous and inconsistent; but I cannot accept that they are incapable of living together since it is clear that in this country national parks and military training may have to co-exist.'

Her findings did influence the Government to establish the Dartmoor Steering Group – the liaison machinery between the National Park Authority and the MoD. It is against this background that much, but obviously not all, of the conflict of interests between National Park status and military training have been and continue to be reconciled.

## Dartmoor Steering Group and Working Party

Lady Sharp's findings influenced Government to establish the Dartmoor Steering Group. This is the liaison machinery that for over 25 years has existed 'to seek to reconcile the interests of military training in the Dartmoor National Park with conservation and public access'. The Steering Group reports annually to the Secretaries of State for Defence, and for the Environment.

An independent chairman is appointed to the Group which, in addition to National Park Authority and MoD members, is also attended by representatives from the Countryside Agency, Dartmoor Commoners' Council, the Duchy of Cornwall, English Nature, English Heritage and the Government Office for the South West.

The Steering Group is supported in practical terms by the Dartmoor Working Party, an officer team chaired jointly by the Dartmoor National Park Officer and the Commander Army Training Estate South West. The Working Party records and addresses complaints, instigates conservation and access projects, oversees environmental monitoring, and undertakes any tasks required by the Steering Group. Whilst fundamental conflict of principles may remain, this formal liaison machinery has a strong record in reconciling the interests of the Services and other users of the National Park. It has also engendered a very positive and good working relationship between the two main parties.

In September 1991, the licence granted to the MoD by the Duchy of Cornwall was renewed for 21 years. This was accompanied by a set of measures designed to improve public access and reduce the adverse environmental effects of military training. These included an increase in guaranteed public access to the northern moor including the highest points of Yes Tor and High Willhays and agreement to cease artillery high explosive fire from September 1998.

Further positive initiatives have taken place since then including moving the Range Danger Area boundary to give greater access to Merrivale, and to Cut Hill and Fur Tor, the removal of redundant structures and buildings, and the relocation of dry tactical training from the most popular public areas. Publicity and signing measures have been agreed which reduce the overall visual impact of military activity whilst more effectively conveying safety information to the public.

The National Park Authority has made inputs into a complete review of the MoD Standing Orders that govern training on Dartmoor and it exchanges information on conservation matters with MoD personnel. The National Park Authority is also a partner on the Dartmoor Military Conservation Group that addresses conservation issues.

In 1999 the MoD published its Integrated Land Management Plan (ILMP) for Willsworthy. The ILMP process seeks to harmonise military training, environmental and other objectives and sets out a mechanism to address any areas of conflict. The National Park Authority has had an input into drafting the ILMP and assists with its implementation.

The MoD recognises its responsibility to support the National Park's purposes. In 2001 the Secretary of State for Defence published *In Trust and on Trust*, the strategy for the national Defence Estate. The Strategy includes objectives for the training estate and specific objectives for military activities in National Parks. In addition, in 2005 the MoD and the Association of National Park Authorities signed a joint declaration of intent, which aims to set a framework for maintaining and enhancing working relationships between the MoD and National Park Authorities (see opposite).

In 2002 a Dartmoor Training Area Environmental Management System was published providing an analysis of the MoD's social and environmental responsibilities to Dartmoor. Meeting International Standard ISO 14001, and compiled with the assistance of the National Park Authority and other statutory bodies, it analyses the environmental impacts of military activities, examines existing controls and, where necessary, proposes additional controls. The requirements for data collection and interpretation are listed, and a system of internal and external audits set out.

A broader, revised Integrated Land Management Plan that sets out a work programme to both mitigate impacts and make positive contributions to the National Park will support the Environmental Management System.

Over the course of time, some military structures, such as some look-outs and target railways, have become valued as historic features in their own right and their conservation, as part of Dartmoor's cultural heritage, is being actively pursued.

### **Association of National Park Authorities and MoD: Declaration of Intent**

Dartmoor is not the only National Park in Britain where military activities take place - for example, live firing takes place in Northumberland National Park (Otterburn Training Area covers 23,500 hectares, or 23% of the National Park), in the Pembrokeshire Coast National Park, and on part of the Peak District National Park. Adventurous training occurs in all Britain's National Parks.

In 2005 the Association of National Park Authorities and the MoD confirmed a Declaration of Intent, which sets a framework for maintaining and enhancing working relationships between the two parties at national level, and relates to all areas subject to military training rights within the National Parks.

The declaration encourages mutual respect, consultation and co-operation in order to achieve the best practicable integration of military requirements and National Park purposes. A Joint Liaison Committee presides over the commitments made by both parties, separately and jointly, in respect of practical management, the processing of development proposals, the provision of advice and public information, and environmental and access enhancement. On Dartmoor, these commitments are delivered effectively through both the Dartmoor Steering Group and the Dartmoor Working Party.

In conclusion, the standing liaison arrangements between the Dartmoor National Park Authority and the MoD are a highly effective joint mechanism for resolving differences associated with the potential incompatibility of some military activities with National Park purposes. The Authority also holds regular forums with user interests and landowner representatives. All these arrangements help the Authority and MoD to work together positively to secure maximum opportunity for both public access and conservation. Members of the National

Park Authority also closely scrutinise the impacts (general and specific) of military activity on Dartmoor and, as the planning authority for the National Park, the Authority will raise objections for the use of additional areas of land for military training, or for new military buildings or structures where such proposals would be damaging to the wildlife, natural beauty, cultural heritage or the quiet enjoyment of the National Park. Whilst working within this framework, the National Park Authority retains the principle of ultimate withdrawal of military use where this is damaging to National Park purposes.

## History

Dartmoor possesses a long history of, and evidence for, activities associated with defence and military training needs.

### Selected dates in the history of military activity on Dartmoor

- 1st millennium BC** ..... Prehistoric earthworks and defensive sites such as Brentor, Cranbrook Castle and Wooston Castle were in existence particularly on the fringes of Dartmoor. These sites were likely to have served wider cultural needs than just defence.
- 9th/10th centuries AD** ..... King Alfred is believed to have established a fortified town at Lydford. Lydford was raided by Vikings in AD 997. Several castles were established around the fringes of Dartmoor within fifty years of the Norman Conquest including Okehampton – the largest castle in Devon.
- 16th century** ..... Villagers were required by law to train in archery, such as on the village green in Widecombe-in-the-Moor.
- 1640s** ..... English Civil War hostilities and battles took place in the Dartmoor area.
- early 1800s** ..... The first modern recorded use of Dartmoor by the Army took place at Hemerdon and Roborough during the Napoleonic Wars (1805-1818). One of the consequences of these Wars was the building of Dartmoor Prison. American prisoners joined those from France after the War of 1812. Moretonhampstead, Okehampton and Tavistock housed parole prisoners of war. Volunteer units, formed in most towns and villages to defend against revolution in Europe and French invasion, trained locally and gathered for annual training mostly at Haytor.
- 1853** ..... Formation manoeuvres and training took place on Dartmoor during the Crimean War.
- By the 1860s** ..... Firing ranges were established for troops on Butterdon Hill (in about 1860) near Harford, and at about the same time at Hart Tor in the Meavy valley near Princetown, at Tavistock, in the Skaigh valley near Belstone, and alongside the castle in Okehampton. Shrapnel artillery rounds trialled near Postbridge.
- August 1873** ..... National manoeuvres involving 12,000 men and 2,100 horses were held on south west and central Dartmoor (Ringmoor and Yennadon area).
- 1875** ..... Government decided to conduct regular artillery training on land licensed from the Duchy of Cornwall.
- Late 19th century** ..... Splinter-proof observation posts (OPs) were built on northern Dartmoor, mostly out of traditional materials. Seven (out of 21) still survive. Okehampton military sidings built, saving troops the ride from the Exeter railhead. Boer trench system constructed to trial bombardment techniques.
- 1893-95** ..... Okehampton Camp constructed in Okehampton Park on land held on a 999 year lease.

- 1908-1912** ..... The War Department acquired the freehold and rights of common of some 1,215 ha (3,000 acres) at Willsworthy. Rifle ranges and field firing area with target bunkers and target tramways built.
- 1914-18** ..... First World War.
- 1919** ..... Artillery training continued over a large area of north Dartmoor including Yes Tor and High Willhays. Increased use of vehicles to tow and re-supply the guns.
- 1939-45** ..... The Second World War brought renewed activity to Dartmoor in terms of training for frontline troops but also for the defensive home front. Most of moorland Dartmoor was used in some way for military training purposes. Many archaeological features survive from this period, such as the Rippon Tor rifle range, with its monumental brick butts. Concrete foundations at Beatland Corner near Wotter are either for an early warning system mast or possibly for anti-aircraft guns. More subtle are training trenches and engineer works, such as on Mardon Down near Moretonhampstead, where they are very extensive, and near King's Barrow above Grimspound. An American field hospital was built on Plasterdown near Tavistock. The American 4th and 29th Divisions trained extensively over Dartmoor. Harrowbeer Aerodrome, between Yelverton and Crapstone, was built in 1941. Public inquiry into military use of Dartmoor.
- 1951** ..... Dartmoor designated a National Park. Inquiry into military uses of Ringmoor South.
- 1956** ..... Training, including tanks, in preparation for Suez campaign. Defence Lands Committee (Nugent Report) published. Training areas on Dartmoor reduced by two square miles (5.18sq km).
- December 1975/** ..... Public inquiry into the continued use of Dartmoor.
- May 1976** ..... Government Statement on the non-statutory Inquiry by the Baroness Sharp into the Continued Use of Dartmoor for Military Training (Cmnd.6837) published. This proposed the setting up of the Dartmoor Steering Committee and Working Party and that training be transferred from Ringmoor South to Cramber Tor.
- 1980** ..... Ringmoor South military training licence over 473ha (1,168 acres) not renewed by the National Trust. Cramber Tor dry training permission on 500ha (1,235 acres) granted for five years.
- 1983** ..... Willsworthy military ranges planning application for modernisation granted by the Secretary of State for the Environment, contrary to a National Park Authority case that the investment was unjustified. Duchy of Cornwall renewed military training licence over 9,355ha (23,116 acres) for 21 years on 29 September. Use of Roborough Down Training Area ceased on 1 October.
- 2003** ..... Cramber Tor - dry training permission renewed until 2013.
- 2005** ..... Association of National Park Authorities and the MoD sign a Declaration of Intent with regard to military training in National Parks.

*The Dartmoor National Park Authority acknowledges the assistance given by the MoD in the preparation of this 2005 status. This overview only aims to provide some general information, up to date as at the date of publication. Whilst every care has been taken to ensure accuracy, the overview is not intended to be a definitive statement of the law or policy. Dartmoor National Park Authority and the Ministry of Defence cannot accept any responsibility for information that is found to be inaccurate, misleading, or out of date; nor for any loss or damage arising from the use of information in this overview.*

**Useful links for further information:**

- Other factsheets:**
- Military on Dartmoor
  - Land Use Issues
- Other information:**
- *Military on Dartmoor*  
www.dartmoorsociety.com
  - *Military Training and National Parks: a Conflict of Principle*  
(dated August 2003)  
www.cnp.org.uk
  - Dartmoor Training Area firing programme or Armed Forces' interest in Dartmoor  
www.dartmoor-ranges.co.uk or contact Commandant,  
Dartmoor Training Area, Okehampton Camp, Okehampton  
EX20 1QP Tel: (01837) 650010

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