

Report of the Director of Countryside, Community and Visitor Services

Subject: Defence Training Estate – Ranger Annual Report 2021

Purpose of Report

To provide Members with an update on the partnership work between the Defence Infrastructure Organisation, Natural Resources Wales and Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority.

Background

The Castlemartin Ranger Service monitors and manages the special features of the Military Ranges of South Pembrokeshire and safeguards public access to them. Since 2003 the service has been provided through a unique partnership between the Ministry of Defence (MoD) through the Defence Infrastructure Organisation (DIO), Natural Resources Wales (NRW) and Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority (PCNPA). The partners have a long history of working together dating back over 30 years to manage the impact of recreational activity on species of conservation importance.

The significant achievement of the partnership is in support of the rural land management plan for the Ranges, a key requirement of which is the employment of a Ranger and Seasonal Assistant to manage the interface between recreation, nature conservation and military use. The Rangers ensure that recreational activity has minimal impact on cliff nesting birds and other notable species such as seals through an effective series of agreed seasonal climbing restrictions, management of the public access network and provision of other access opportunities. The Rangers are closely involved in monitoring the conservation features of the scheduled sites on the MoD Ranges, liaising with user groups, both civilian and military, and ensuring that sustainable public access is achieved whenever possible, in balance with military requirements.

Members will find the Annual Report 2021 appended to this report and the Castlemartin Ranger will present this at the meeting.

Financial considerations

The service costs in the region of £38,000 per year and the partnership agreement was renewed for a further three years from April 2019 with 50% of the costs provided by the DIO through its Conservation Stewardship Fund, 30% by PCNPA who employs the Ranger and Seasonal Assistant and the remaining 20% provided by NRW.

Conclusion

The unique partnership between the Defence Infrastructure Organisation (DIO), Natural Resources Wales (NRW) and Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority (PCNPA) remains pivotal to managing the interface between recreation, nature conservation and military use of key sites within the National Park.

2021 proved to be an exceptional year for visitor numbers with Pembrokeshire attracting large numbers of 'staycationers' unable to holiday abroad, in addition to our usual tourism numbers. Many visitors were drawn to the military ranges and the wonderful recreation opportunities they have to offer and the car parks and coast were extremely busy throughout the summer and autumn seasons.

Covid restrictions have required us to continue to meet with partners and stakeholders online and gave rise to a trial of online briefings for Range West access.

In addition, exercise Iron Storm which took place over four weeks in September and October required considerable input from the Rangers in providing environmental data and evidence to support decision making and planning for this exercise.

Despite the above challenges, the relationship between the key stakeholders remains extremely positive and we are grateful, as an Authority, for the continued support (both financial and non-financial) from both the Defence Infrastructure Organisation and Natural Resources Wales that underpins our work on the ground.

RECOMMENDATION:

Members are asked to note the report.

*(For further information, please contact James Parkin
jamesp@pembrokeshirecoast.org.uk or Lynne Houlston
lynneh@pembrokeshirecoast.org.uk)*

Defence Training Estate Ranger Annual Report 2021



By Lynne Houlston

A partnership between:



**Cyfoeth
Naturiol
Cymru
Natural
Resources
Wales**



**Defence
Infrastructure
Organisation**



**Parc Cenedlaethol Arfordir Penfro
Pembrokeshire Coast National Park**

Summary

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I'd like to thank our Castlemartin Ranger Lynne and her Assistant Graham for another year of hard work in often trying circumstances. I hope that you enjoy reading Lynne's Annual Report.

Libby Taylor, Ranger Service Manager, Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority

1.0 Introduction

Welcome to the 18th Pembrokeshire Ranges Annual Ranger Report which will cover the year 2021.

The main event for 2021 was the large scale exercise – Iron Storm. This had a huge impact on Castlemartin Range and caused an increase in work for myself from the provision of data to the monitoring of seals and pups.

1.1 Funding

This post is funded by DIO (Defence Infrastructure Organisation) 50%, PCNPA (Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority) 30% and NRW (Natural Resources Wales) 20%. Due to C19 restrictions we held our partnership work programme meetings on-line in January and April.

1.2 Seasonal Assistant

I have worked part-time, 26 hours per week, since returning from maternity leave in 2012. The remaining funding for the post has been used since then to employ a seasonal assistant to help with the provision of information to visitors, carrying out practical tasks, surveying flora and fauna and monitoring bird nesting restrictions. Graham Clarke returned for his 9th year in 2021.

Front cover photograph: A seal pup on Hobbyhorse Bay

Abbreviations

ARC – Amphibian and Reptile Conservation

BBCT – Bumblebee Conservation Trust

BMC – British Mountaineering Council

CCC – Cambrian Caving Council

CRT – Castlemartin Range Trail

CSF – Conservation Stewardship Fund (DIO funding scheme for projects)

DIO – Defence Infrastructure Organisation (formerly Defence Estates)

DTSO – Deputy Training Safety Officer

LSS – Landmarc Support Services

MGS – Military Guard Service

MOD – Ministry of Defence

NRW – Natural Resources Wales (formerly Countryside Council for Wales)

NT – National Trust

PCC – Pembrokeshire County Council

PCNPA – Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority

QMSI – Quarter Master Sergeant Instructor

SSSI – Site of Special Scientific Interest

TSM – Training Safety Marshall

WAG – Welsh Assembly Government

WWBIC – West Wales Biodiversity Information Centre

2.0 Information and Interpretation

2.1 Noticeboards

Graham and I were responsible for maintaining and updating 3 noticeboards which are located within Castlemartin Range at St Govan's car park (x2) and Stack Rocks car park (x1). We also placed information within the Pembrokeshire County Council (PCC) noticeboards at Broadhaven South car park and Stackpole Quay car park, both on neighbouring National Trust land (NT). We provided information on climbing restrictions, tide times and 'What to see....' in the local area as well as new posters produced due to C19.

The front of one of the noticeboards at St Govan's rotted and collapsed and was replaced by the National Park wardens.

2.2 Leaflets

The Castlemartin Range Public Information Leaflet (PIL) and the Annual Climbing Restriction Leaflet were distributed from dispensers in St Govan's and Stack Rocks car parks. 2765 PIL's were taken throughout the year, 1362 more than in 2020 and 211 more than in 2019. 58% of the leaflets were taken from the Stack Rocks leaflet box. All 1000 Climbing Leaflets produced had been taken by the end of August 2021.

2.3 Red Information Folder

As Graham and I used separate vehicles due to C19 restrictions, I provided a folder of relevant, up to date information for Graham to refer too when working. It included forms to complete on leaflet numbers plus climbing restriction details, the drone code and relevant grid references and telephone numbers.

Graham and I were unable to use a 'hand-over' book to write down our daily activities so we emailed each other with relevant information, updates, issues and wildlife sightings.

2.4 Filming Requests

- The production team for 'His Dark Materials' filmed at St Govan's Chapel across a whole weekend. This took months of planning, discussions, site visits and being present over the weekend to answer queries and ensure everything ran smoothly. There were over 100 crew and actors as well as catering trailers, large equipment trailers, toilets, changing areas and security.



- A filming request was received from the BBC to film on St Govan's headland. This was denied due to the presence of nesting chough.
- Channel 4 wanted to film a remote beach clean-up for a series called 'Epic Wales' which was about people and places in Wales. I organised a clean-up of Frainslake Beach with the help of Major Poole and invited National Park volunteers and military staff to assist. Major Poole and I were interviewed and the program was shown across the UK in August.
- The locations manager for 'Whirlwind', SDTA Productions phoned to discuss filming the cliffs using a helicopter. I confirmed that it had to be outside of bird nesting season. In August they filmed from within a helicopter as it flew directly at the cliffs. This was to be used in a film involving an aeroplane that narrowly made it over the cliffs to land.
- A request was received by the National Park for a photo shoot at Stack Rocks. Due to firing access wasn't available on the dates they required but they were able to film at St Govan's Chapel.
- A request was received from BBC Studios to film a 'challenge' series with 'Foxy' of 'SAS who dares wins'. Various locations were viewed and discussed at both Castlemartin and Penally Ranges but nothing came of it in the end.
- 'Burberry' requested access for a photo shoot at Stack Rocks using a drone. Use of a drone was denied so they changed location to the Green Bridge of Wales. Major Poole denied this request due to military training.

2.5 Stack Rocks Interpretation Panels

I worked with the NP Graphics Team to produce two replacement interpretation panels for Stack Rocks. I provided updated wording and new photographs.

2.6 Short videos

I produced a couple of short videos for the NP's YouTube page. One clip was about the birds on Stack Rocks the other contained wildlife footage captured by a Trail Camera.

2.7 Antisocial Behaviour

I took photographs of antisocial behavior for the NP's Communications Team; such as overnight parking, rubbish, fires etc. One photograph was of 13 golf balls I collected around and within St Govan's Chapel.

2.8 Requests for Information

I received numerous requests for information and advice including; the scattering of ashes on the Range, available access, the location of Pilgrim's Field, details of guided walks, 'Babaloobies' plus a complaint about cows near Stack Rocks.

A local man contacted me about the species of apple trees in Brownslade Orchard with regard to taking cuttings for grafting to create a new Orchard.

2.9 ESteam

ESteam is a group for adults with learning difficulties based in military buildings in Warren. I was asked to visit them to discuss future conservation projects they hoped to carry out.

2.10 PCNPA Staff Newsletters

I produced a couple of articles for publication within the NP staff newsletters.

2.11 Wooden signs

The wooden signs at the entrance to the car parks and directing visitors to St Govan's Chapel were re-stained and all the lettering painted.

One rotten wooden sign was fixed and replaced.

2.12 Beach Signage

I was asked to check and comment on the current beach signage provided within my area.

2.13 Lamphey School

The Class 6 teacher from Lamphey Primary School asked me to give her pupils a presentation on Climate Change. I covered COP26, how climate change is affecting Pembrokeshire, the changes I have seen through my work and what changes we can all make to help combat it. I wrote a poem as part of the presentation which can be found below.

Enough is Enough

I am the moon and stars at night,
I am the sun that shines so bright.

I am the rain, the wind, the snow,
I am the grass and trees that grow.

I am the worms that keep the soil healthy,
Where you plant seeds, getting all filthy.

I am the bees pollinating the flowers,
Providing your food in the sun and the showers.

I am the air that you all breathe in,
The scents you smell, the warmth within.

But pollution and carbon are making life tough,
The world is hotter, the seas high and rough,
It's time we said 'enough is enough'!

I am nature and your planet Earth,
Let's fight together for all that we're worth.

3.0 Access and Recreation Management

3.1 Annual Meeting

The Annual Access and Recreation meeting was held on-line on 20th October. It was attended by 11 members representing PCNPA, DIO, Visit Pembrokeshire, British Horse Society and British Mountaineering Council (BMC).

I provided the secretariat role for this meeting as well as giving updates on relevant access issues.

DIO provided an update on the use of Castlemartin Range for training, as well as predictions for 2022. There was then the opportunity for all recreational users and other members to ask questions, raise concerns or make comments.

3.2 Access to Castlemartin Range

3.2.1. Range East

The public can access the car parks, the coast path and the land to the seaward side of it across Range East at all non-firing times.

3.2.1.1. Range East accessibility 2021

I monitored how often, and which part of, Range East was available to the public throughout 2021; Stack Rocks to St Govan's and/or St Govan's to Broadhaven South. The data is shown below:

Range East Accessibility 2020

Month	No. of days in month	No. of 'week' days	No. of weekend days & bank hols	No. of days St Govan's to BHS was open (closed)	No. of days Stack Rocks to St Govan's was open (closed)	No. of days St Govan's to BHS was open (closed) in 2020 Lockdown dates not included
Jan	31	21	10	31 (0)	15 (16)	30 (1)
Feb	28	20	8	23 (5)	10 (18)	28 (1)
March	31	23	8	25 (6)	11 (20)	19 (4)
April	30	20	10	30 (0)	15 (15)	0 (30)
May	31	19	12	23 (8)	14 (17)	0 (31)
June	30	22	8	25 (5)	10 (20)	1 (0)
July	31	22	9	29 (2)	15 (16)	27 (4)
August	31	21	10	31 (0)	31 (0)	31 (0)
Sept	30	22	8	15 (15)	13 (17)	16 (14)
Oct	31	21	10	21 (10)	14 (17)	11 (20)
Nov	30	22	8	28 (2)	9 (21)	30 (0)
Dec	31	21	10	31 (0)	23 (8)	31 (0)
Totals	365	254	111	312 (53)	180 (185)	224 (44)

The MoD can fire 44 weeks per year therefore public access should be available for 8 weeks or 40 week days.

Stack Rocks to St Govan's was open on $(180 - 111) = 69$ week days in 2021
 Stack Rocks to St Govan's was open on $(133 - 80) = 53$ week days in 2020
 Stack Rocks to St Govan's was open on $(178 - 112) = 66$ week days in 2019
 Stack Rocks to St Govan's was open on $(184 - 112) = 72$ week days in 2018
 Stack Rocks to St Govan's was open on $(181 - 113) = 68$ week days in 2017
 Stack Rocks to St Govan's was open on $(177 - 113) = 64$ week days in 2016

These figures show that access between Stack Rocks and St Govan's was similar to years 2016 – 2019. 2020 figures were low due to lockdown.

St Govan's to Broadhaven South was open 312/365 days = 85% in 2021
 St Govan's to Broadhaven South was open 224/268 days = 84% in 2020
 St Govan's to Broadhaven South was open 276/365 days = 76% in 2019
 St Govan's to Broadhaven South was open 312/365 days = 85% in 2018
 St Govan's to Broadhaven South was open 296/365 days = 81% in 2017
 St Govan's to Broadhaven South was open 304/366 days = 83% in 2016

Access to the St Govan's headland in 2021 was similar to previous years

3.2.1.2 Car Park Numbers

The number of vehicles in the St Govan's and Stack Rocks car parks was counted on busy days as it provided an indication of how many visitors were on the Range.

Figures for St Govan's carpark

01 05 21	14.30	63	Sunny, cool, some cloud
02 05 21	14.30	99	Sunny, cool. BH Sunday
29 05 21	14.30	99	Sunny, cool breeze
30 05 21	14.30	134	Sunny, cool breeze
31 05 21	14.00	104	Sunny
28 08 21		119	Sunny, warm
29 08 21		109	Sunny, warm
30 08 21		104	Cool, cloudy

90 to 100 vehicles equates to a very busy day with the car park at, or over, capacity. The highest number of vehicles ever recorded previously was 159 on 30th August 2020.

Figures for Stack Rocks car park

01 05 21	14.30	32	Sunny, cool, some cloud
02 05 21	14.30	41	Sunny, cool
29 05 21	14.30	47	Sunny, cool breeze
30 05 21	14.30	62	Sunny, cool breeze
31 05 21	14.30	61	Sunny
28 08 21		60	Sunny, warm
29 08 21		67	Sunny, warm
30 08 21		73	Cool, cloudy

30+ vehicles equates to a busy car park at Stack Rocks. The highest number of vehicles previously recorded was 57 which was on Easter Sunday 2015 and 16th April 2017. This was easily beaten by 73 on 30th August 2021.

3.2.1.3 People Counter

A people counter was installed in a gateway near St Govan's car park in December 2005. In June 2013 the device was changed from a pressure pad to a heat sensor to try and record a more accurate number of visitors following alterations to the gate. In 2021 the counter recorded the busiest April, May, June, July and August since records began in 2005. August was the busiest month having over double the number of visitors than the second busiest month – April. The busiest day was 30th May.

Saturday (27%) and Sunday (26%) were the busiest days due to the access available and recorded 53% of visitors.

3.2.2. Range West Access

Range West can be accessed by climbers, surfers, fishermen and cavers at all non-firing times on condition that they have received an annual Military Health and Safety Briefing. The PCNPA is also permitted to lead guided walks and minibus tours across Range West.

3.2.2.1. Range West Briefings

Due to Covid 19 restrictions the 'briefing' went virtual with the presentation being hosted on the PCNPA website. Recreational users were requested to watch the presentation then print off, complete, sign and hand in the Recreational Access User Form to Security on their first visit. Users were then able to fish, surf, climb or cave on Range West throughout 2021. The number of passes available per day was increased to 50.

I updated and rearranged the briefing and sent it to NP's Communications Team. I informed the Military Guard Service about the new on-line briefing and provided them with updated briefing notes and maps to hand out. I also produced flyers with the link to the on-line briefing.

Unfortunately there were some issues with bird-watchers trying to gain access and it was obvious, when some recreational users signed on, they had not watched the presentation. One gentleman was seen handing out the Recreational User Forms for a group of climbers to fill in leaning on their cars. The TSO checked users had their passes throughout August and on one day asked at least 20 climbers to leave the Range. He said throughout the month he asked 60-70 climbers to leave in total. There were also issues with climbers climbing within restricted areas.

Due to the issues reported above it was agreed that briefings would return to 'face to face' ones to ensure all users had listened and read the required information. As all 2021 briefings ended on 31st December two 2022 briefings were held in December 2021. The presentation was amended and briefing notes produced ahead of the return to 'face to face' briefings.

3.2.2.2. Briefed Users

The number of recreational users that used the on-line briefing system in 2021 and attended briefings in recent years are shown below:

	2021 – on-line	2020	2019	2018	2017	2016	2015	2014
Climbers	467	18	213	171	308	179	211	245
Fishermen & Surfers	120	33	122	114	129	68	109	142
Cavers	5	4	7	6	3	9	15	X
	592	55	342	291	440	256	335	387

The virtual briefing had a tremendous impact on recreational user numbers on Range West with a dramatic increase in climbers being briefed.

3.2.2.3 Recreational user figures for Range West throughout 2021

The highest number of recreational users in each activity is shaded in blue.

Month	No of fishermen	No of surfers	No of climbers	Walkers	Caving	Total of all users	
January	0	0	0	0	0	0	Lockdown
February	0	0	0	0	0	0	Lockdown
March	1	3	0	0	0	4	Access from 27th March
April	13	30	41	5	0	89	
May	19	48	135	42	5	249	
June	22	49	117	56	1	245	
July	33	15	38	43	0	129	
August	35	53	494	58	0	640	
September	3	12	28	13	0	56	No access 13th Sept - 7th Oct due to Iron Storm
October	4	13	6	24	0	47	
November	2	19	0	10	0	31	
December	3	29	0	0	0	32	
Totals 2021	135	271	859	251	6	1522	

2021 figures

Highest number of fishermen on one day = 7 (29th May)

Highest number of surfers on one day = 23 (26th August)

Highest number of climbers on one day = 57 (30th May)

Highest number of recreational users on one day = 90 (30th May – 21 x surfing, 57 x climbing, 12 x guided walk)

Some annual figures from previous years for comparison. The highest annual totals are shaded in green.

	No of fishermen	No of surfers	No of climbers	No of walkers	No of cavers	Total of all users
Totals 2021	135	271	859	251	6	1522
Total 2020	75	27	14	90	6	212
Total 2019	143	119	370	493	9	1134
Total 2018	174	140	230	322	16	882
Total 2017	184	82	363	418	7	1054
Total 2016	111	38	230	367(27)	4	750
Total 2015	155	22	329	401 (26)	6	913
Total 2014	146	24	405	347		922
Total 2013	178	54	264	271		767
Totals 2012	189	32	181	324		726
Totals 2011	167	147	143	367 (26)		824
Totals 2010	206	101	138	393 (22)		838
Totals 2009	209	98	185	494		986
Totals 2008	271	118	211	375 (25)		977
Totals 2007	374	149	154	393 (27)		1070

The tables show that 2021 saw a record number of users on Range West but a huge increase in surfers and climbers especially. More climbers visited Range West in August 2021 than in any previous year. This was due to the ease of the on-line briefing.

3.3 Pembrokeshire Ranges Conservation Group (PRCG) & Rural Steering Group (RSG)

I suggested the need for a RSG as one hadn't been held in twelve months. We met virtually on 24th February and 13 members attended representing DIO, PCNPA, DAT and CADW.

A PRCG has not been held since 2017.

3.4 Car parks

The car parks at St Govan's and Stack Rocks are checked on a regular basis. Any litter is collected and any vandalism or issues dealt with. August was particularly bad for rubbish with human faeces, vomit and lots of bags of dog waste needing to be collected.

We had a record number of 48 vehicles parked overnight in or near the car parks between March and October. All users were woken up and asked to use neighbouring camp sites and their registration details were passed on to PCC.

Some of the large rocks marking the coach park at St Govan's were moved, probably by a vehicle. Graham and I managed to return them to their original location using an iron bar and iron rod to roll them on.

3.5 Castlemartin Range Trail (CRT)

I was successful in obtaining CSF funding for the management of the Trail, including vegetation management and the maintenance of signs and gates, by Landmarc.

In January I met with contractors on site to discuss the new fencing and ditching work required on the CRT. The work was carried out straight away.

One of the Interpretation Panel frames had rotted which Landmarc kindly fixed. I also supplied them with a new way-marker to replace a rotten one. There were also issues with missing wire links marking the route of the CRT, rotten posts and overhanging branches as well as a lack of cutting within gateways.

The entire route was walked in May and October. All the gates, way markers, signs, culverts and fingerposts were checked along with the surface and vegetation. The findings were added to a spreadsheet; a copy of which was sent to DIO's Senior Access Officer and DIO's Land Agent with a copy given to Landmarc. All tasks requiring the trimming of vegetation or replacement of logos were carried out by myself or Graham.

I retrieved the data from the user counter in June to find that the vegetation had triggered the counter 24,000 times on one day! I then ensured that either I or Graham cut the vegetation in the gateway on a regular basis. All the data up to November 2021 was sent to Linetop, the production company, for analysis.

In September walkers left the trail at Chapel Farm and walked to Brownslade which was within the firing area. New, large signs were attached to the gate where the walkers had left the route.

The CRT is now marked as The National Trail on Ordnance Survey Maps.

3.6 St Govan's Information Trail

The Information Trail is a series of eight posts displaying discs providing information about specific locations on St Govan's headland. The discs were checked and cleaned every month and the washers were greased to ensure the top disc swung easily on top of the lower one. Unfortunately 3 of the discs were broken and needed to be replaced during the year.

3.7 Belay Stakes

Colonel Pope was concerned about the installation of new belay stakes on the range and land owner's liability. I contacted the BMC who sent a response, checked by their legal team, confirming that climbers climbed at their own risk and that DIO would not be responsible for any failure in the stakes.

3.8 Horse Enclosure

At the Annual Access and Recreation meeting a lady, representing the British Horse Society, asked for a horse enclosure to be installed within Stack Rocks car park for riders using the National Trail. It was discussed within PCNPA and agreed that the car park was too small and the use too infrequent to warrant an enclosure just for horses. I contacted the lady and advised her of this but also confirmed that if the BHS was organising an official ride across Castlemartin Major Poole would be happy to allow the trailers to be parked on the Range. He also agreed to leave the gates to the Spectator Area below Warren Tower to be left unlocked so riders could use the car park throughout the year. I then received a request for a mounting block and a hitching rail within the Spectator Area and, after discussions with Major Poole, I confirmed that this was possible but BHS would have to pay Landmarc to install the equipment.

3.9 Guided Walk Leaders

I provided the PCNPA guided walk leaders with up to date information on the Range to assist with their walks. This included details on individual species, places to avoid due to erosion and historic information. I also received a list of questions regarding specific locations on the new circular walk they would be using, which I responded too.

3.10 The BMC's 'Respect the Rock'

In 2020 the BMC, DIO's Senior Access Officer and I had discussed the production of a short informative film clip about Castlemartin as a climbing area in order to promote best practice. However, due to C19 this was postponed. It was agreed to organise this in 2021, however the BMC confirmed the date at the very last minute and only sent the script through the day before filming when I requested it. I checked the script and added wording on dogs and livestock. I was sent a link to the clip, once produced, on which to comment on.

3.11 Templeton Range

I visited Templeton on 6 occasions between March and July to survey Yellowhammers but also used them as an opportunity to check signs, gates and PROW's. Any issues were reported to Major Smith.

3.12 Penally Range

In January 2021 Colonel Pope requested information about the diverted path to Tenby South Beach. I looked through old photographs and emails to obtain dates and information and once this had been confirmed by PCNPA I sent the details to Col Pope.

I photographed and reported damaged signs along the National Trail and was informed horses were responsible.

I photographed the fencing and gabions along Tenby South Beach, installed to prevent erosion, as I was concerned about the broken posts and how damaged, sharp and rusty the metal work was. I reported this to DIO who looked into the issue and confirmed that the responsibility was with Tenby Golf Club.

3.13 Countryside Stewardship Fund (CSF) Project from 2020/2021

Due to C19 restrictions my Film II project 'Castlemartin – a story of Wildlife, Weapons and Welsh Mountain Sheep' was delayed in production. During 2021 Dave Welton and I completed the interviews and recorded the audio in English before editing the final version. The film has been duplicated onto a small number of DVD's. Unfortunately due to C19 restrictions I have been unable to play the film to a public audience.

The NP Communications Team advised that I needed to complete a Welsh version of the Film, so in December Dave and I travelled to North Pembrokeshire to record the audio in Welsh.

Dave is currently adding the Welsh subtitles and I have downloaded the English version in order to add English subtitles to it. Hopefully both versions will be completed in early 2022 and be available on the NP Facebook page.

3.14 Countryside Stewardship Fund (CSF) Bids 2021/2022

I was successful in receiving ongoing funding for the following projects:

- CRT Management (see section 3.5),
- Vegetation management around the historic farmsteads – to cut paths around the farmsteads to allow the members of public on PCNPA led guided walks access to these areas
- Public Information Leaflet - A re-print was made of the Castlemartin PIL.

I also received funding for an additional one off project which is detailed below.

- A new interpretation panel at the Spectator Range which overlooks Castlemartin.

I worked with the NP Graphics Team to produce a new panel for visitors to the Spectator Range to enjoy. I provided the wording and some new photographs and it was arranged and produced by Graphics before being translated and finally installed in December by the NP wardens.

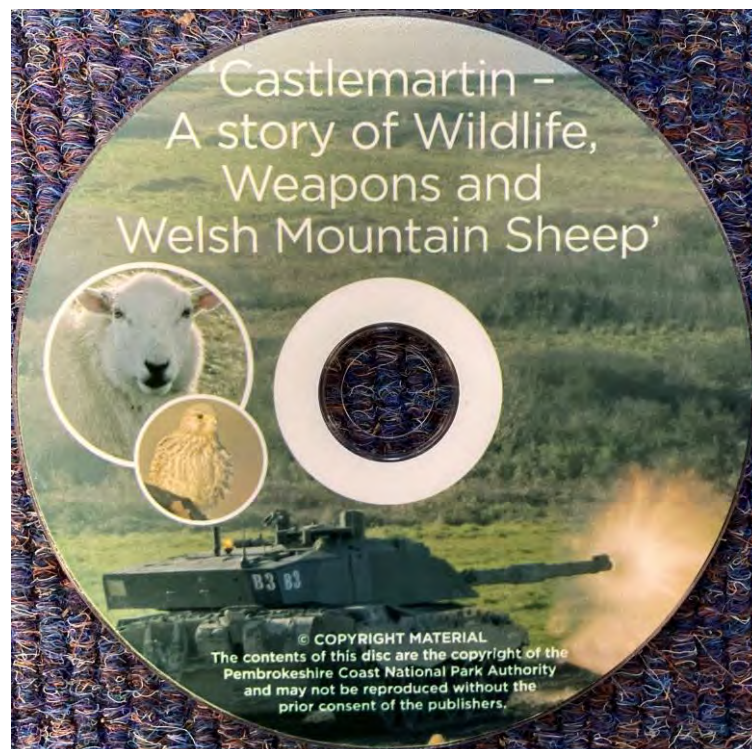
3.15 Countryside Stewardship Fund bids 2022/2023

I have requested funding for the following ongoing projects:

- CRT management and vegetation management around the historic farmsteads
- A re-print of the PIL

I have also requested funding for seal rescue equipment to assist in the rescue of seal pups that become trapped by rocks due to the tidal movement.

Film II disc



4.0 Recreational Activities

I worked closely with visitors and recreational participants to ensure all information and advice was accurate, to ensure activities would not impact on the Range and to promote access.

4.1 Climbing

Climbing is a very popular recreational activity in Pembrokeshire and especially across Castlemartin Range, where the south facing cliffs provide opportunities for every grade of climber.

4.1.1. Annual Climbing Meeting

This meeting was held virtually on 15th November and was attended by 7 people including representatives from the British Mountaineering Council (BMC), Pembrokeshire Climbing Club, PCNPA and NRW. I provided the secretarial role as well as updates on the climbing restrictions, infringements and bird nesting success.

4.1.2. Climbing on Range East

There were 16 restrictions across Range East, including one permanent one to protect visitors to St Govan's Chapel. Two additional restrictions were created during the spring; one was to restrict access to Flimston Bay to protect a pair of nesting oystercatchers and the 2nd was to protect a pair of chough at Mewsford Point. I achieved this by creating and installing cliff-top notices and updating the noticeboards.

All the restrictions, except the permanent one were used by nesting birds. The pair of chough at Mewsford Point gave up nesting early in the season.

I produced an additional sign to protect the birds on the Green Bridge of Wales as a man walked across and threw stones at the birds. A member of the public reported him to me and I located and spoke with him.

The restriction pots were all checked and those requiring it were re-painted ahead of the climbing season. New leaflets and posters were produced advertising the location of each restriction and the climbs affected. The posters were updated regularly throughout the season to ensure the information was accurate.

There was one known climbing infringement on Range East in 2021 and that was at the Green Bridge of Wales. Graham spoke to the climbers responsible.

Preparations for the 2022 climbing season are underway.

4.1.3. Climbing on Range West

There were 9 restrictions across Range West, all for nesting birds. A pair of chough started to nest build in Linney Head West gully but failed early in the season.

I produced new restriction maps which were to be distributed by the MGS when climbers signed onto Range West. The maps were updated regularly throughout the season.

There were a number of infringements on Range West due to climbers – at Arch Zawn and Mount Sion during bird nesting season and within Hobbyhorse Bay during seal pupping season. This number sounds small compared with the number of climbers that visited the Range but those were the ones actually caught by myself and Graham on the limited days we visited the sites.

4.2 Fishing and Surfing

Members of the public are allowed to access Frainslake Beach on Range West for the purposes of surfing and fishing after attending a Military Safety Briefing. Due to the briefing being on-line the number of surfers briefed and the number visiting the Range increased (see section 3.2.2.3.). The number of anglers was average with other years.

In 2021 no recreational users lost their passes.

4.3 Caving

In 2015 it was agreed that cavers could access Ogof Gofan on Range East by applying for permission via the Cambrian Caving Council (CCC). I booked the groups in, issued permits and collated any feedback. In 2021 there were 3 visits and a total of 11 people visited the cave. In 2020 there were 3 visits, 12 people and in 2019 there were 12 visits, 33 people.

A couple of responses received following visits to the cave were:

- Many thanks again, wonderful cave.
- Very nice place. Thanks for arranging the permits.

It was also agreed in 2015 that cavers could visit Range West to look for potential locations which they would like to explore. In 2021 5 cavers visited Range West (6 in 2020, and 9 in 2019). No one requested permission to explore any of the caves further than the entrance.

4.4 Visits to Castlemartin

- I met with a lecturer from Swansea University and one of the NP's Education Officers to tour Castlemartin Range West with a view to a visit in the future.
- I led a guided walk around Range West for a local group of 8 who had started walking the coast due to Covid.



5.0 Archaeology

5.1 'No Digging Signs'

Early in 2018 35 'No Digging' signs were installed across the Range to protect Scheduled Ancient Monuments (SAM's). They were excessive, intrusive and soon began to move when cattle rubbed against them. I also thought that they contradicted the Range's ruling of 'No Digging anywhere'. I asked DIO's Archaeologist to look at the signs with regard to reducing the number and changing the design to the 'Star of David' – a sign known to troops to mean an area to avoid due to archaeological sensitivity

A new SOR (Statement of Requirement) was produced by DIO's Archaeologist in June 2021 and LSS visited the sites with a contractor in December but unfortunately the work still has not been carried out.

5.2 SAM star

I emailed the LSS helpdesk to report a broken Scheduled Ancient Monument marker star.

5.3 Pricaston

I raised my concerns about the supporting beams and roof at the RSG in February. Richard Brooks offered to look at funding the work through the CSF. In August Black Mountain Archaeology visited the site to remove and replace the timber supports.

5.4 St Govan's Chapel

Large bright yellow graffiti wording was sprayed on the 'Bell Rock' next to St Govan's Chapel and within the Scheduled site. I obtained permission from archaeologists to treat it with special eco-friendly spray. I treated the graffiti twice and spent hours scrubbing it with a toothbrush which resulted in much paler and illegible wording. I photographed the area before and after treatment and sent the photos to NP's Archaeologist. I also reported the incident to the police. A second lot of graffiti was found approx. 50m west of the Chapel at a later date but it was the same large, yellow lettering and saying similar wording. This too was treated and scrubbed.

5.5 Brownslade Barrow

I visited Brownslade Barrow, an area previously fenced to keep badgers out, to find the gate flat on the ground and evidence of sheep and badgers within the enclosure. I reported the issue to DIO's archaeologist and to the LSS Helpdesk in July 2021 but it has still not been resolved.

6.0 Conservation and Monitoring

I was involved with monitoring a wide variety of species of flora and fauna. I also provided updates and reports at the relevant meetings.

6.1 Conservation Meetings

We held a virtual meeting on 16th March and I provided the Secretarial role as well as providing information and data on relevant topics. A second meeting was organised but was cancelled twice and not rearranged.

6.2 Flora and fauna

I monitored or assisted in the monitoring of the following species:

- Chough – 13 pairs of chough nested; 1 pair didn't settle and 2 failed. The successful 10 nest sites fledged 23 chicks
- Seabird colonies - the colonies were monitored to ensure the restrictions were accurate
- Kittiwakes – no birds were seen nesting on the Stacks this year
- Peregrine – a pair of peregrines nested and fledged chicks
- Oystercatchers – 1 pair nested within Flimston Bay
- Green Winged orchid – 503 orchids counted. No 'white' green winged orchids were recorded.
- Hen Harrier – saw a female bird at Brownslade
- Spawn – checked a number of ponds for frog and toad spawn and recorded findings
- Bee orchids – photographed and GPS'd locations
- Marsh Helleborine – photographed and GPS'd locations
- *Nebria Complanata* – check Frainslake Beach for beetles; one black one and one nymph recorded

6.3 Sea Kale

Castlemartin range has the only population of sea kale in the County. The sea kale was protected by electric fencing throughout August to prevent it being eaten by cows. The kale produced flowers and berries and new shoots were recorded, photographed and GPS'd.

6.4 Barn Owls

I installed a motion wildlife camera to monitor a barn owl nest on Range West. Unfortunately I set it to record videos rather than photographs so the SD card was full by February. In August, 3 dead young barn owls were reported on the ground. I installed a second camera outside the building and recorded footage of the barn owls still taking food inside. Hopefully, therefore, the owls fledged additional chicks.

I checked a second owl box and heard an owl inside and saw lots of pellets below. Unfortunately the box was taken over by jackdaws and they nested and raised their chicks.

The box near Flimston had rotted due to the corrugated roof blowing off the building. There was no evidence of owls under the chimney in the farmhouse either.

6.5 Seals

Due to Exercise Iron Storm and the concern that the seals and pups may be disturbed by the noise I monitored the seals and pups a lot more than previous years.

I produced notices asking climbers to avoid the bays and installed them at Stack Rocks as normal. Unfortunately climbers were reported climbing on the stack within Hobbyhorse Bay in August so signs were installed on either side of the bay there too. A sign was also placed at Flimston Bay saying there

was no access to the beach due to seal pups. However, due to the presence of ropes and footprints on the beach we blocked access using a plank of wood and removed the ropes.

I met with DIO staff from Warminster and was asked to produce a weekly report on how many pups were born/lost and report any issues. The seals on Stack Rocks East Bay and Hobbyhorse Bay were being monitored via live camera feeds by St Andrews University throughout Iron Storm. Noise monitors were also installed at these two bays and around the perimeter of the Range.

There were 77 seal pups recorded as born across the Range and 20 were known to have died. This resulted in a 74% success rate. The number of pups born increased slightly on 2020 figures (2020 = 71 born, 20 lost, 72% success) but the cameras show that the seals did notice the increase in noise at times. My main concern was with Hobbyhorse Bay; the first pup was born 25 days later than in 2020 (12th August 2020, 6th September 2021) and the number born was almost 50% less (29 in 2020, 15 in 2021). Seals were seen on the beach at the beginning of August so my initial thought would be that the number of climbers in the area throughout the month had a detrimental effect on pupping. Although Iron Storm was seen to affect the seals the noise was loud on a couple of occasions only and for a very short period of time.

6.6 Fires

Fires start accidentally on the Range when the hot tracer rounds within the ammunition land on dry vegetation. Each fire is GPS'd and plotted on QGIS.

- 10 fires were mapped and GPS's in 2021; 9 on Range West, 1 on Range East
- 84,922m² of vegetation was burnt
- 6 of the 10 fires occurred in June
- The largest fire was 39,541m² and occurred in grid square west 9195

I was asked by a member of the Conservation Team in which months the fires occurred, so I produced the following tables:

Number of fires per month on Range West and Range East
2005 – 2020

	West. No of fires	East. No of fires	West. Total m2	East. Total m2
January	0	3	0	44697
February	12	3	191046.1	8578.8
March	46	9	1357209.4	28353.2
April	25	3	331325.4	31683
May	2	1	21676	16660
June	47	9	435777.77	22658.5
July	60	4	537697.4	12310.5
August	3	0	39797	0
September	7	0	40846.9	0
October	2	2	6426	2031.65
November	3	1	13566.2	599.3
December	3	0	125468	0
	210	35	3,100,836.17	167,571.95

6.7 Brownslade Orchard

The young apple trees were pruned in January and strimmed around in early August. Due to stormy conditions and frost only one of the original trees and none of the young ones had apples on them. Unfortunately the wardens mowed one of the trees and I lost one to the weather so there are only 33 young trees now.

6.8 Merrion Meadow and Hedgerow

The flower species within the meadow were surveyed in early August prior to the vegetation being cut and removed.

6.9 Native Welsh Bee

In April 2021 Robert Jones once again contacted me with regard to bringing his bees to Castlemartin. I organised a range briefing which he attended and then sent him details of when he could access the Range. I didn't hear from him again with regard to bringing his bees down.

6.10 Beach Cleans

I helped to organise a clean-up of Frainslake Beach in May. See section 2.4. Due to Covid restrictions the number of volunteers had to be limited to 10 but an incredible amount of rubbish was removed.

6.13 Trail Camera

I used the trail camera to capture footage of wildlife on the Range. I filmed barn owls, foxes, badgers, mice, rats and otters as well as lots of footage of jackdaws, sheep, soldiers and the Major on his motorbike!

I installed the camera at Winter Pitts between 5th and 14th December 2020 and 8th and 15th January 2021 and captured lots of wildlife footage. I installed the camera in the same location between 9th and 25th September 2021, during Iron Storm, and had no footage of wildlife.

6.14 Natur am Byth

I attended an on-line meeting with DIO, NRW and Bumblebee Conservation Trust to discuss progress with the Natur am Byth project.

6.15 Wild Asparagus

I located, photographed and GPS'd the asparagus plots in June 2021. In August I recorded berries on one plant and managed to locate two of the original clumps that I had not previously recorded. I input all the information in to a report and sent it to a member of the Conservation Group that represents the Botanical Society.

6.16 Penally - Scrub, Bracken, Moles and Fencing

I discussed the management of bracken at Penally with the NP's South Warden Manager. It was agreed to roll it rather than cut it this year. Unfortunately when the bracken was tall enough to roll the team were too busy with other projects.

In April I visited Penally to check on fencing I had been informed had been replaced. I found that it had not been fixed and reported this to Major Smith.

I had a phone call from the tenant farmer concerned about the work taking place in the Cors. I explained what was being done and the tenant spoke to the contractors directly to ensure the vegetation they were removing wasn't composted in large piles on good grassland.

The tenant also contacted me due to issues with moles. I confirmed the management situation with DIO and replied.

In December I was asked for my thoughts on scrub management for 2022 by DIO's ecologist. I discussed the issue with the tenant before visiting and photographing the site. I mapped the areas requiring management and emailed it through.

6.17 Orchids

- Penally orchids – I installed stakes around the orchids to protect them from being mown.
- Manorbier Orchids – I counted 108 pyramidal orchids at the end of June.

6.18 Photographic Vegetation Monitoring

An annual photographic survey was carried out at Manorbier Range in March. 360 degrees of photographs were taken from set locations to show how the vegetation has been managed.

6.19 Yellowhammers at Templeton Range

I met Clare Flynn (BBCT and resident of Templeton Village) and Clive Hurford (Ex-Countryside Council for Wales) on site to discuss the monitoring of yellowhammers. Yellowhammers had once been a popular bird in Pembrokeshire but numbers had dwindled significantly and they wanted to assess if Templeton was the last stronghold for the birds and if there was a viable population. Clare produced maps of the routes we had to survey each month between April and July. I went an additional time prior to the survey starting as I hadn't surveyed yellowhammers before and wanted to try and recognise their call. During each visit I would photograph and GPS locations of the birds and their habitat and afterwards I would complete relevant forms as well as write my own report detailing the entire visit. I was fortunate to hear and see yellowhammers on each visit.

6.20 West Wales Biodiversity Information Centre

I sent quite a few wildlife records to WWBIC.

Photograph of the Sea Kale berries



7.0 Estate Management

7.1 Iron Storm 2021

Exercise Iron Storm was to be possibly the largest land based exercise conducted at Castlemartin with military vehicles crossing across the entire Range. I provided photographs of the targetry and wooden buildings used in previous CALFEX's during the planning stage of Iron Storm.

I was shown a presentation on Iron Storm and what would happen in each week. I was asked to help make the presentation more 'civilian worded' rather than full of military terms. I asked about public access on numerous occasions to ensure I was able to advise visitors and locals. I informed the BMC, Cambrian Caving Council and the National Park's Events Officer about the closure of Range West for four weeks.

Due to concerns from NRW about disturbance to the seals during pupping I was asked to produce a map for DIO's ecologist showing where the seal pups were born across the Range. I also supplied data on the number of pups born in 2017 when Exercise Gaelic Marauder had taken place. I was also asked to produce a table showing how many seals were born in each bay, each year. I was asked for the heights of the cliffs at Hobbyhorse Bay and Stack Rocks East as well as to take and supply photographs of these two bays. I also sent through my annual recording forms for each year since 2004. I advised DIO that I sent my seal pup data to NRW's SAC Officer who collated all the data for Pembrokeshire.

Major Poole organised a public meeting to inform local residents about the exercise and I delivered leaflets to each household in my village. I attended the public meeting in order to listen to concerns raised. 16 people attended the meeting. On the completion of Iron Storm Major Poole held a second meeting along with Colonel Pope to feedback on how the exercise had gone and collect any feedback from residents. Only 4 people attended. The main issues were the closure of the Range at the weekend and the lack of information about this.

I was informed about the installation of cameras and noise monitors to record and monitor the seals throughout the exercise and was asked to photograph the location of the seal pups on the beaches and note any unusual disturbance. I provided advice on the best location for the cameras and spoke to the lady at St Andrew's University in Fife about the pups and seals. She sent through photographs of different females for me to help identify.

Due to issues with members of the public mixing with the military vehicles the Range had to be closed on one Sunday and an entire weekend. I asked PCNPA's Communications Department to advertise the closures through their social media channels. I also contacted PCC to advise their local bus driver that the car parks would be closed.

I monitored the seals and pups 4 times a week throughout Iron Storm and produced weekly reports for DIO. I was asked for my thoughts on the pupping season prior to DIO's meeting with NRW's marine specialists in November.

I collected 100's of glow sticks and lots of fins left along the coastal track after the exercise.

Planning is underway for two Iron Storms in 2022.

7.2 Livestock

I assisted ewes that were stuck on their backs and returned escapee lambs to their fields.

7.3 Orienteering Course

I was involved with numerous discussions and emails about the creation of an orienteering course at Castlemartin and the renovation of the one at Templeton. Nothing became of it.

7.4 Ordnance

I photographed and took the grid reference of ordnance found within the public accessible areas of the Range. I collected lots of fins, empty shell casings and parachutes.

7.5 Silage bales

I spoke to DIO on a number of occasions in order to have the old, rotting silage bales moved from near Flimston Chapel.

7.6 Hayston Lane

I received a complaint from a local resident about vehicles driving up Hayston Lane using their Sat Navs and thinking they could access the Green Bridge of Wales. I contacted the Range's Access and Security Officer who had been dealing with the issue with Google. The access information had been updated for walkers but not for cyclists. PCC also installed new directional signs.

7.7 Training on Public Land

I had a number of discussions with the new TOPL Officer about using land within the National Park for adventurous activities.

7.8 Trespassers

There were a number of incidents with trespassers on the Range or Camp which I reported to MGS and range staff.

7.9 Drone User

We had two issues where drone users thought they had permission to fly a drone on the Range. I sent the information to Major Poole, and DIO's Senior Access Officer who forwarded it onto the Access and Security Officer.

7.10 Seed Collection

I was involved in email discussions about the collection of wild flower seed as a '3rd Party Income Generation' activity.

7.11 Near Misses

Due to three incidents in two weeks involving people camping overnight on the Range before firing was due to start, I asked DIO Communications Team to produce 'tweets' warning people not to camp on Military land.

7.12 St Govan's Lookout

I was informed about the work required to repair the supporting wall near St Govan's Lookout and was asked my advice about public access, re-seeding and fencing the area.

7.13 Queries from Soldiers

If I am at work before any of the Core Staff I will often receive queries from soldiers about access, keys etc.

7.14 Maintenance Issues

I reported damaged signs, fences and gates on the range.

8.0 Ongoing Projects

- Monitor available access to Range East – see section 3.2.1.1
- St Govan's people counter – see section 3.2.1.3
- Observe and monitor users across Castlemartin – see sections 4.1, 4.2 & 4.3
- Monitor recreational users to Range West – see section 3.2.2.3
- Record overnight parking and camping – see section 3.4
- Castlemartin Range Trail management and monitoring – see section 3.5
- CSF funded project 'Film II' – see section 3.13
- Countryside Stewardship Fund bids – see sections 3.15
- Record caving visitors to Ogof Gofan – see section 4.3
- Monitor flora and fauna – see section 6.2, 6.3 & 6.5
- Barn Owl project – see section 6.4
- GPS Fires – see section 6.6
- Brownslade Orchard management and monitoring – see section 6.7
- Merrion Meadow and hedgerow maintenance and monitoring – see section 6.8
- Beach cleans – see section 6.10
- Vegetation Photographic Surveys – see section 6.18

9.0 Ranger Role

9.1 Expenditure Forms

I had to complete relevant forms and provide details on-line each month that I used my National Park credit card.

9.2 Administration

I completed weekly timesheets for PCNPA detailing the mileage travelled, hours worked and work carried out.

9.3 Unlicensed camp sites

A local campsite had entered into an agreement with a local Camping Organisation rather than go for planning permission. I read the information on the usability allowed on the site and checked their website as to what they were promoting. I also took numerous photographs and sent them to PCNPA's Planning Department.

9.4 Supervision of seasonal assistant

I was responsible for the day to day management of Graham; including the provision of accurate information, advising on access restrictions and providing projects to carry out. I also organised a mobile phone, e-mail address and tools.

9.5 Ranger and Staff meetings

I attended the virtual Ranger meetings when possible and provided updates on my projects. I also attended the NP staff meeting in December.

9.6 Vehicle

The Outlander is coping well with the majority of the Range terrain although care is needed on a number of the rougher tracks. I had to organise a MOT and service and replace the windscreen wipers. I had to have a slow-puncture fixed on Graham's hire vehicle.

I took a hybrid Rav 4 for a test drive across Range West. It handled the terrain well but was not classed as a commercial vehicle.

9.7 Welcome Visitor Video

PCNPA wanted short videos about the roles of staff and special qualities of the National Park for the new Welcome Visitor staff. I created a powerpoint presentation about my role and the special aspects of the range and was filmed via Lifesize.

9.8 Photoshoot

All NP Rangers attended a photoshoot showing the places they worked. I was photographed near Stack Rocks and the Green Bridge of Wales.

9.9 QGIS

I have had to attend a number of training sessions in order to learn how to use the NP's mapping system QGIS.

9.7 Training Courses/Webinars

I attended the following training courses/webinars:

- Education webinar
- Webinar on Industrial Heritage organized by Pembrokeshire Coastal Forum
- WWBIC recorders forum
- Eagle reintroduction
- NP Values workshop
- Welsh Landscapes for rare bees
- Waxcap webinar
- Pembrokeshire Nature Partnership

10.0 Summary

2021 was a very busy year with record numbers of visitors and with Exercise Iron Storm taking place. The highlights for me included monitoring the yellowhammers at Templeton, watching Film II for the first time, the new Interpretation Panel at the Spectator Range and being involved with 'His Dark Materials' at St Govan's Chapel.