

DIO Longmoor Military Bylaws

Note of meeting between the Defence Infrastructure Organisation (South East Estate) and Liss, Greatham and Whitehill Parish Councils 18th November 2021

This note reflects the views of the representatives from Liss Parish Council. It has not been agreed with others present.

Present: Keith Budden, Sheila Baldwin, Roger Hargreaves (RAH) - Liss Parish Council
Andrew Crick - Greatham Parish Council
Two representatives - Whitehill Parish Council

Lt. Col. "Dickie" Bishop, Comd SE
Col (retd) Roger Owen, D/Comd SE
Lt. Col. (retd) Mark Ludlow, TSO SyPA
Dean Howard, DTSO SyPA
and others

The purpose of the meeting was to hear from the DIO about the review by the MOD of the bylaws which cover Army training areas in the South East and possible changes which could result.

Lt. Col "Dickie" Bishop and Col. Roger Owen outlined the nature of the training areas and how they are used by the Army, the background to the 1976 bylaws and the reasons for a review. It was emphasised that there is no general public right of access at present but access is permitted when the land is not in use by the MOD.

Although a review has been announced it appears that it will be many months before any proposed changes to the bylaws emerge. As Col. Bishop pointed out, reviewing bylaws for training land in places such as Bordon and Longmoor is unlikely to be at the top of a list of current issues to be dealt with by the MOD. Also, it is proposed to look at the management of the training areas around Aldershot and in north Surrey first before the areas at Bordon and Longmoor and this will push any proposals for Longmoor even further into the future. However, it has the advantage that we can see the proposals for the Aldershot area first.

Several reasons were given for reviewing the by-laws, including the fact that they are drafted with archaic language which in places is ambiguous, definitions of prohibited activities needed updating, and that the accompanying maps are unclear and out of date (for example, including land which the MOD no longer owns). One reason for the review is to provide a better tool for managing access onto MOD land. This reflects that the land receives a large number of unauthorised intrusions of various types but also the DOI pointed out that since 1976 attitudes had changed, with a general growth in the recreational use of land, including dog walking and also the increase in off road cycling. They said that they needed to find ways of accommodating such activities. They were also clearly conscious of the importance of SSSIs and the SPA on their land which also needed to be managed.

There was a clear recognition that the position at Longmoor is very different from areas in north Hampshire and Surrey where there is more intensive use of land by the Army and also

a greater surrounding population and therefore more conflicts to manage. The MOD also had to consider the role of land at Longmoor as contributing to the National Park.

It appeared that there was no hard information at present on what may be proposed. Nevertheless, the impression given by those sitting around the table was that they were more concerned about greater clarity and discipline in the use of MOD land, such as picking up dog mess, rather than restricting public access. We should certainly not expect further restriction on access as an inevitable consequence of the review.

We did discuss better communication about closures and restrictions on public use. The Army showed us an example of a long term programme for the use of their land further north which they were trying out for publication on their website which showed the days the land was available to the public (the vast majority). We also discussed what information they provided to the Parish Council and we offered to look how that could be enhanced and how we could help disseminate information.

It was agreed to meet again in 6 months time.

RAH
November 2021