

GUILDFORD JOINT COMMITTEE

Chairman: Cllr John Rigg, Guildford Borough Council

Mr Graham Dalton
Chief Executive
Defence infrastructure Organisation
Kingston Rd
Sutton Coldfield
B75 7RL

26 April 2021

Dear Mr Dalton

Public access to Ash Ranges

The issue of public access to the Ash Ranges site was discussed by Guildford Joint Committee at its meeting on 17th March 2021. The committee, which is made up of members from both Surrey County Council and Guildford Borough Council, was very clear in its recognition of the importance to the residents of having full access to the extensive green space at Ash Ranges and in its wish to see the full site (including the Ash Ranges Firing Complex and the Range Danger Area) re-opened to the public for recreational use.

It was also made clear during the discussion at the meeting that the sudden change introduced without warning in April last year, closing the ARFC permanently and as a result making it harder to reach other areas of the RDA that do remain open, had not been adequately explained to residents and was made without consultation.

Residents have been especially frustrated over the last 12 months when the instructions from central government have been to restrict their travel and take their exercise locally. The closure of the ARFC during this period has made it much harder for them to find suitable outdoor spaces; this is particularly the case for those with impaired mobility, for whom the ARFC provides a perfect area with its good quality tracks and flat surface.

It is disappointing to hear that conversations so far between the MOD, Parish Council, local MP and residents have failed to resolve this matter, and that the Parish Council is now having to use Freedom of Information requests to receive the details behind the decision to close the ranges.

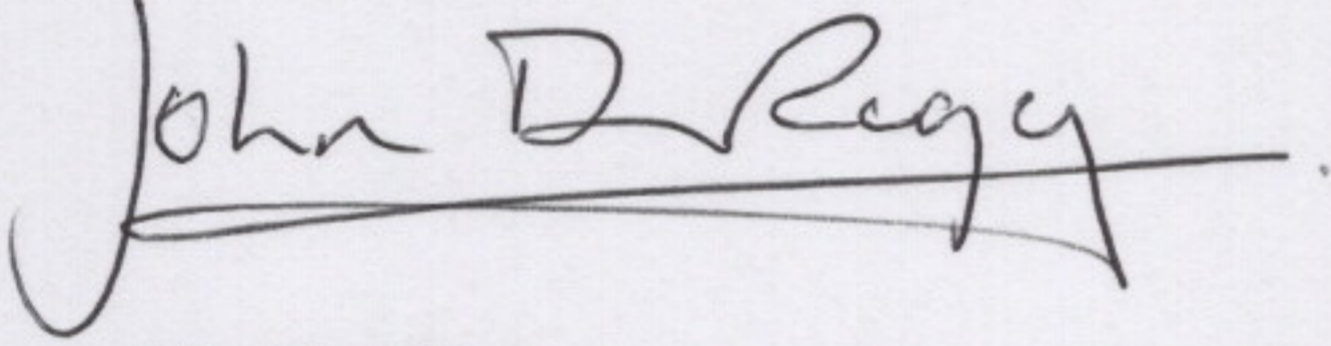
I understand that the MOD is the landowner of the site and is acting within the local byelaws. I understand, as well, the need to maintain a training facility and to close areas to the public on firing days. What I and the other Joint Committee members are keen to see is a greater appreciation by the MOD of the importance of this land to the residents and a greater willingness to enter into open, active and collaborative discussions with their them and their representatives to arrive at a mutually acceptable outcome.

I would appreciate it if you could give me your assurance that you will engage positively with the local residents and elected members to discuss the issues as they apply to both sides

and to arrive at a satisfactory outcome as quickly as possible that will allow both residents to enjoy full access to Ash Ranges and the MOD to carry out its training programme.

I look forward to hearing from you on this important matter.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John D. Rigg". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Cllr John Rigg
Chairman

Cc

Cllr Nigel Manning – Chairman Ash Parish Council

Cllr Joss Bigmore – Leader Guildford Borough Council

Cllr Tim Oliver – Leader Surrey County Council

Michael Gove MP

Gregory Yeoman – clerk to Guildford Joint Committee

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