

Dear Minister,

14 June 2021

Re. Closure of The Ash Range Firing Complex. (ARFC)

Thank you for your letter 12 May 2021. As you do not provide an email address for you at MOD, I am sending this letter by post.

I do appreciate the need for MOD to ensure the continued uninterrupted training on Ash Ranges firing Complex (ARFC). What I and the Ash residents are very upset about is the fact that the closure was done without consultation and was a total lockout.

MOD have subsequently changed the reasons for this closure from Vandalism, causing loss of training plus increased maintenance costs and dog faeces in firing pits causing health issues for cadets, to Health and Safety. Health and safety was the latest reason given by Colonel Cook in September 2020, but this has been totally ignored in your letter 12 May 2021 and your previous letter in December 2020.

What I find interesting and confusing is that despite being told that no information existed to prove the loss of training hours and that the costs of vandalism would take excessive time to produce, you have clearly been provided with such specific information for inclusion in your letter, so clearly it must be available.

Much of the continued antagonism with the actions of MOD is that they have continually refused to provide such information, with the affect that a number of more committed campaigners have been able to spread the belief that MOD were lying and actually breaking the law, and were merely removing the access to ARFC from Ash residents as part of a draconian 'land grab' to keep out the 'annoying public'.

I believe that as you have clearly encouraged MOD to produce these factual figures to respond to my letter, it would be a substantial move in the right direction for these background documents and evidence to be released, so as to show that MOD has taken justifiable actions.

I also still believe that for relatively little cost, but with huge amounts of POSITIVE public relations, that a central corridor between two blocks of actual firing ranges, would enable local residents access to flat areas with some roadways enabling easier access for those with disabilities, to enjoy exercise as before.

I know that the local MOD and DIO have looked at the possibility of this 'central corridor, and there is a clear delineation within the ARFC that would allow for this to be done. However, since Whitehall MOD have become involved, the local MOD and DIO now have no remit to undertake further discussions with Ash Parish Council to try and resolve this difficulty, to the benefit of both local residents and MOD. I would much welcome a recommencement of such discussions

As I have asked before, I would be happy to meet with you and our local MP Micheal Gove MP to explore this further, either, face to face, or via a MS Teams or Zoom meeting, as I think this would help in your further understanding of the issue and help to expedite matters to the benefit of all concerned.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely

Councillor Nigel Manning

Chairman

Ash Parish Council

cc. Michael Gove MP