

**GUILDFORD BOROUGH COUNCIL AND
SURREY COUNTY COUNCIL**



**GUILDFORD
BOROUGH**

GUILDFORD JOINT COMMITTEE

DATE: 17 MARCH 2021

SUBJECT: ITEM 7 – PUBLIC WRITTEN QUESTIONS

Question 1: Mr Carl Cookson

Re: Public recreational access to Ash Ranges

Recreational access to the military lands in Ash Vale and across a wider area is under threat. Ash Ranges has been closed since March 2020, restricting the access that our residents have enjoyed for centuries without warning or justification.

The MOD and ministers have previously given the council and residents assurances the lands would be open and available when not in use. Subsequent to those assurances, the Range Complex was closed without any communication to either the public or local councillors. The limited conversations that have been had with the MOD have led to reasons without any substance whilst the 340 acres and 10 miles of informal tracks and trails remains out of reach for the least able in society.

Ash residents are being treated as criminal lawbreakers when all they're doing is use the land for recreation as they have since 1854. Ash's local vicar has stated his intention to be arrested and challenge the closure through the courts if necessary.

Ash Ranges is not a unique case, residents in Hart have fought for restrictions placed on Long Valley, between Church Crookham, Fleet and Aldershot. Additional fencing, without the necessary access gates, were erected, blocking access at all times in an area where residents have also enjoyed local, recreational access. Deepcut has also seen gates locked permanently.

DIO will are ignoring direct political instruction and preventing access at all times without evidence of risk – contrary to the byelaws. From a full survey of 11,000 recreational users, we know the lands are account for 59,000 hours of recreation per week. 24% of respondents use the lands on a daily basis, yet DIO act without due regard or respect for the local community and negatively impact the lives of tens of thousands of residents without consideration or impact assessment.

What assistance and support can this committee, Guildford Borough Council and Surrey County Council offer to our recreational users. Will these councils formally support Ash Parish Council and lobby for the access to be returned when not specifically used for training?

Question 2: Dr Nigel Burke, Guildford Bike User Group

Re: DfT funding for 'mini Holland' infrastructure

In July 2020, the Department for Transport (DfT) published its report "*Gear Change A bold vision for cycling and walking*"¹. They discussed the programme of "mini-Hollands" in London boroughs: "with intensive, transformational spending on their

¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/cycling-and-walking-plan-for-england>

roads and streetscapes to make them, over time, as cycle and pedestrian-friendly as their Dutch equivalents. Segregated lanes were installed on main roads, low-traffic neighbourhoods were put in, and pedestrians were given thousands of metres of extra space.”

On page 19, DfT says “we will choose up to 12 willing non-London local authority areas, to benefit from intensive investment in mini-Holland schemes on the same model. The main focus will be on replacing short car trips. They must be places where cycling is currently low and where there is serious political commitment to dramatic change – not just for cyclists, but for everyone who lives and works there.”

Would the Joint Committee be willing to put forward Guildford Borough as one of these local authorities? The report ‘Cycle Route Assessments²’ commissioned by Guildford Borough Council and published in May 2020 identified a town-wide cycle network, and a number of potential Low Traffic Neighbourhoods, which might form the basis for a mini-Holland approach. The regeneration of Guildford town centre might also benefit from being part of this initiative.

² <https://www.guildford.gov.uk/article/22743/Infrastructure-and-delivery> pp 54-55

www.surreycc.gov.uk/guildford