



Ministry  
of Defence

MINISTRY OF DEFENCE  
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MINISTER OF STATE FOR DEFENCE PROCUREMENT

Our ref: D/Min(DP)/JQ MC2022/02574e  
Your ref: MG18807

26<sup>th</sup> March 2022

*Dear Michael,*

Thank you for your correspondence of 25 February 2022 regarding the work the Department is undertaking to improve public access to Ash Ranges. Further to our visit to the site on 7 October 2021, I am pleased to be able to provide a progress update on the ongoing work to improve access to Ash Ranges.

Both Natural England (NE) and the Forestry Commission have been consulted and have identified no issues with the proposed plans. The work will be conducted in two phases with some concurrent, as well as sequential, activity. MOD officials have been moving ahead with work on Phase 1 already, which has been split into two elements, 1a and 1b.

As you are aware, Ash Ranges is a Site of Special Scientific Interest and a Special Protection Area, and a Habitats Regulation Assessment (HRA) is required prior to any construction works. For Phase 1a, known as the Southern Enclave, an HRA and Environmental Assessment have been conducted. Ground works have begun with the fence route cleared by Explosive Ordnance Clearance (EOC) team. In addition, a detailed Statement of Requirement has been submitted to our Industry Partner; with the sub-contractor selected and materials ordered. Contractors are on site and work is progressing well, Vehicle gate posts, straining posts and braces have been installed with the Chain link fence due to be installed next. It is anticipated this phase of the works will be completed by 31 March 2022.

Phase 1b is the linking fence. EOC work in this area had to be paused due to discovery of underground utilities, plans for which are being sought. The EOC team will be re-tasked to complete once a viable alternative route has been identified. Further work on this phase will follow the completion of the EOC and Phase 1a, but not until after the end of the bird nesting season (circa October 2022). It is anticipated this phase of the works will be completed by 31 March 2023 which marks the start of the bird nesting season.

Finally, Phase 2 is the East / West Route. This route and its fence lines have been identified, approved by NE and was subject to EOC on 17 January 2022. Initial findings show nothing of concern. Work on this aspect will also follow Phase 1a, but not until

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after the end of the bird nesting season (circa October 2022). It is also anticipated this phase of the works will be completed by 31 March 2023.

I will be pleased to provide you with updates as and when I have further information or as work phases complete. Thank you for taking the time to write and I hope this clarifies the Department's position.

*Yours ever*

*Jeremy*

**JEREMY QUIN MP**

*✓*