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## 1. Introduction and executive summary

The Aldershot and District Military Lands Byelaws (1976) govern military and civilian use of approximately 15,000 acres of lands in North East Hampshire, East Hampshire, Surrey and Berkshire. In 2019 the MoD announced that the long delayed byelaws review and the public consultation would take place, due to begin in April 2020. This was later postponed due to public interest with the consultation now expected in late 2020.

A number of local access groups have come together under the Byelaws Review Campaign Team banner to campaign for responsible public access and to address widely held fears that the MoD's recent behaviour (removal of parking provision, fencing, cycling ban, etc) will mean that the revised byelaws will further reduce public access.

It has become clear that without detailed quantitative and qualitative data it is difficult for the local residents' elected representatives to show the social, mental and physical health impacts of fencing and the loss of access to the lands. This survey is intended to provide detailed information to both the MoD and elected officials to allow evidence based policy making.

### How we did the survey

The survey was conducted from mid-July to mid-August with the majority of the responses being received within the first two weeks of the survey launching. The survey was promoted predominately on local Facebook groups and received a total of 10,899 responses.

### Key findings

Land users resided in a total of 18 parliamentary constituencies, with **87% of respondents being from four constituencies - Surrey Heath (3,171), North East Hampshire (2,736), Aldershot (2,472), and South West Surrey (1,093)**. Residents of all ages and genders make use of the land with a gender bias toward female users of 11%. The **average user is likely to be 46 years or older** (61%) of respondents, with the highest single age group being 46-60 at 41% of land users.

The survey found that **land users are most likely to frequent the areas that are closest to their homes**. For example, within GU12 84% of people said they used the recently fenced Ash Ranges area, whereas across the Surrey Heath constituency it was 53%, and across all respondents it was only 32%.

Collectively the respondents used the lands a total of 59,150 hours each week which equates to an **average 5.8 hours per week per respondent**. **79% of the respondents said that they used the lands at least once a week, with 24% using the lands on a daily basis**.

Residents undertake many activities on the lands - the most popular uses are: **walking (86% of respondents), enjoying the outdoors (50%), dog walking (44%), family time (45%), cycling (42%), running (34%), and wildlife watching (30%)**.

**Most respondents are aware of the forthcoming byelaws review. A total of 8,845 residents took the time to write detailed comments about why they value the land so highly**. It is very likely, given the response rate to the survey and the number of respondents that wrote comments, that **the forthcoming byelaws review will receive a very high number of responses**.

### Recommendations

As the survey comments make clear, the local community is passionate and cares deeply about the lands and access. The local communities understand and support the need for military primacy on the land but this

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should not mean that the use of the land by the public for recreation can be circumvented or ignored by the MoD.

A relationship centred on partnership has greater potential benefit, to work together for what are often joint goals and objectives. For such a relationship to function it must be equitable and the new byelaws must reflect the rights and responsibilities of both parties.

### **Enhance Recreational Access for All**

Preserve and enhance the byelaws to protect the right of recreational access when the lands are not in use for military training.

### **Roll Back Access Restrictions**

By rolling back recent access restrictions such as the removal of public access to the Ash Range Complex and the fencing of Long Valley, the MoD can demonstrate that it is a true partner of our local communities. Public consultations on future access changes can provide a route to find ways in which the MoD concerns around vandalism and safety can be addressed without reducing access.

### **Embrace Cycling**

42% of land users are cyclists – the recent marginalisation of responsible cyclists is an intrusion into what is a perfectly valid, beneficial and valuable means of recreation. Restoring parity with walkers will correct a historical anomaly created in the 1976 byelaw review.

### **Political Engagement with the MoD and Local Communities**

It is clear from the survey and recent campaigning that access to the military lands is a key local issue. Local politicians must engage with the MoD to ensure that their constituents' voices are heard and that the benefits to physical and mental health of public use of the land are considered when the revised byelaws are drafted.

## 2. Questions we set out to answer

Prior to the Byelaws Review / #Saveyourwoods Team undertaking this survey there had been no study of how the local populations use the lands covered by Aldershot Military Lands Byelaws 1976. With no detailed quantitative and qualitative data it is difficult for the local residents' elected representatives to show the social, mental and physical health impacts of fencing and the loss of casual access to the lands.

The Defence Infrastructure Organisation (DIO) has shown that it is not prepared to undertake public surveys or consultations into public land use, therefore local resident groups (such as the Byelaws Review / #SaveyourwoodsTeam) have stepped in to assist.

### The key questions

Anecdotally the military lands are used by a large proportion of local residents for a broad variety of activities, ranging from dog walking to cycling. However beyond this broad statement there is very little information – this survey and report aims to resolve this. The key questions that this report seeks to answer are:

- **Who uses the land?**  
Who is the typical land user? Are they young or old? Are they male or female? Where do they live?
- **Which areas of land are used by which groups of residents?**  
Do residents only use the areas of land closest to their homes? Which areas of land does a given MP's constituents most use? Which areas of land are most popular overall?
- **How often do people use the lands?**  
Are people using the lands on a daily basis, or just occasionally? Just for a five minute stroll, or are most people out for hours? What is the total recreational use across the community?
- **What do people use the lands for?**  
Do most people use the land for a single activity? What sorts of activities take place on the lands?
- **Do land users know there is a byelaws review coming up?**  
The delayed byelaws review will change the way that people use the lands – are residents aware? What proportion of them are likely to submit a consultation response?
- **Why do residents value their use of the lands?**  
In their own words, why do people love the lands? Is it the sense of wildness? Is it for their mental health? Or is it just for the chance to get away from it all?

By providing hard data to answer the above questions the Byelaws Review Team hopes that it is possible to demonstrate that whilst there are costs in allowing public access to the military lands, these are outweighed by the public good provided by the same.

## 3. Detailed results for the Surrey Heath constituency

The following results have been constrained to only those postcodes which fall within the Surrey Heath constituency (GU12, GU15, GU16, GU18, GU19, GU20, GU24, SL5).

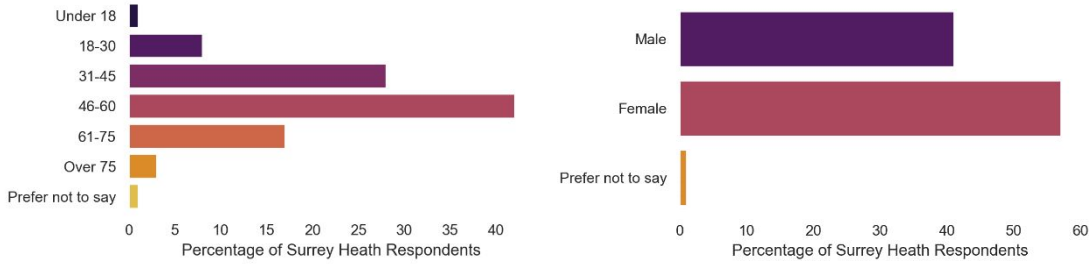
### Who uses the land?

*Who is the typical land user? Are they young or old? Are they male or female? Where do they live?*

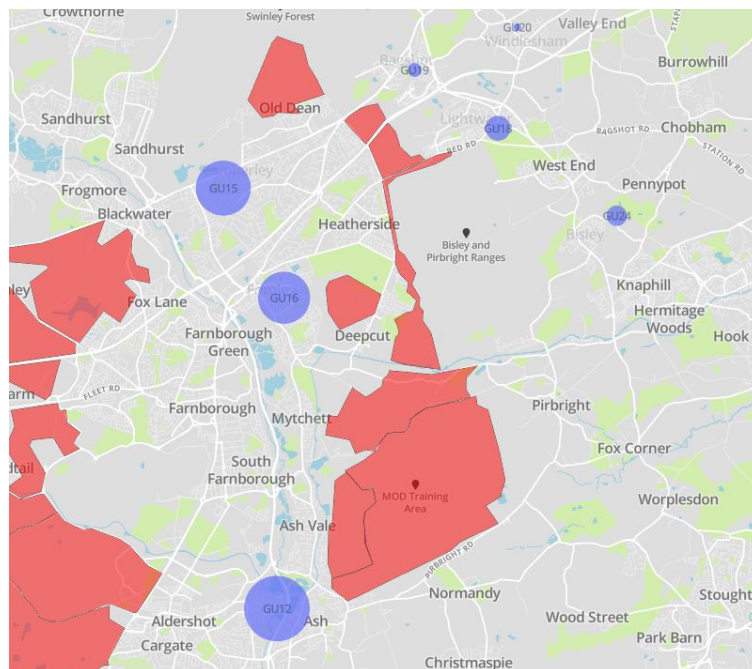
A total of 3,171 out of 10,899 respondents (29% of total respondents) identified themselves as living within the Surrey Heath constituency. As the graphs below show, the largest user age group is 46-60 years old with 42% of respondents belonging to this category. The largest gender category was female, with 57% vs 41% of respondents who identified as male. This respondent gender imbalance is significant as the 2011 national

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census showed the gender balance within the Surrey Heath constituency area to be split 49.6% / 50.4% male to female respectively<sup>1</sup>.



The bubble plot below shows where within the Surrey Heath each respondent resides – the bubbles are sized in proportion to the number of responses. As can be seen the largest group of respondents were from the GU12 postcode sector (1,188 responses) followed by the GU15 (842 responses) and GU16 (756 responses).



**Summary: Over 3,100 people replied from within the Surrey Heath constituency. Surrey Heath land users have particularly strong representation from areas that are constrained by urban areas to the west, meaning that their immediately available green spaces are the military lands (GU12, GU16, and GU15). There is a 16% bias towards land users being female and the average user is likely to be 46 years old or older (59% of respondents).**

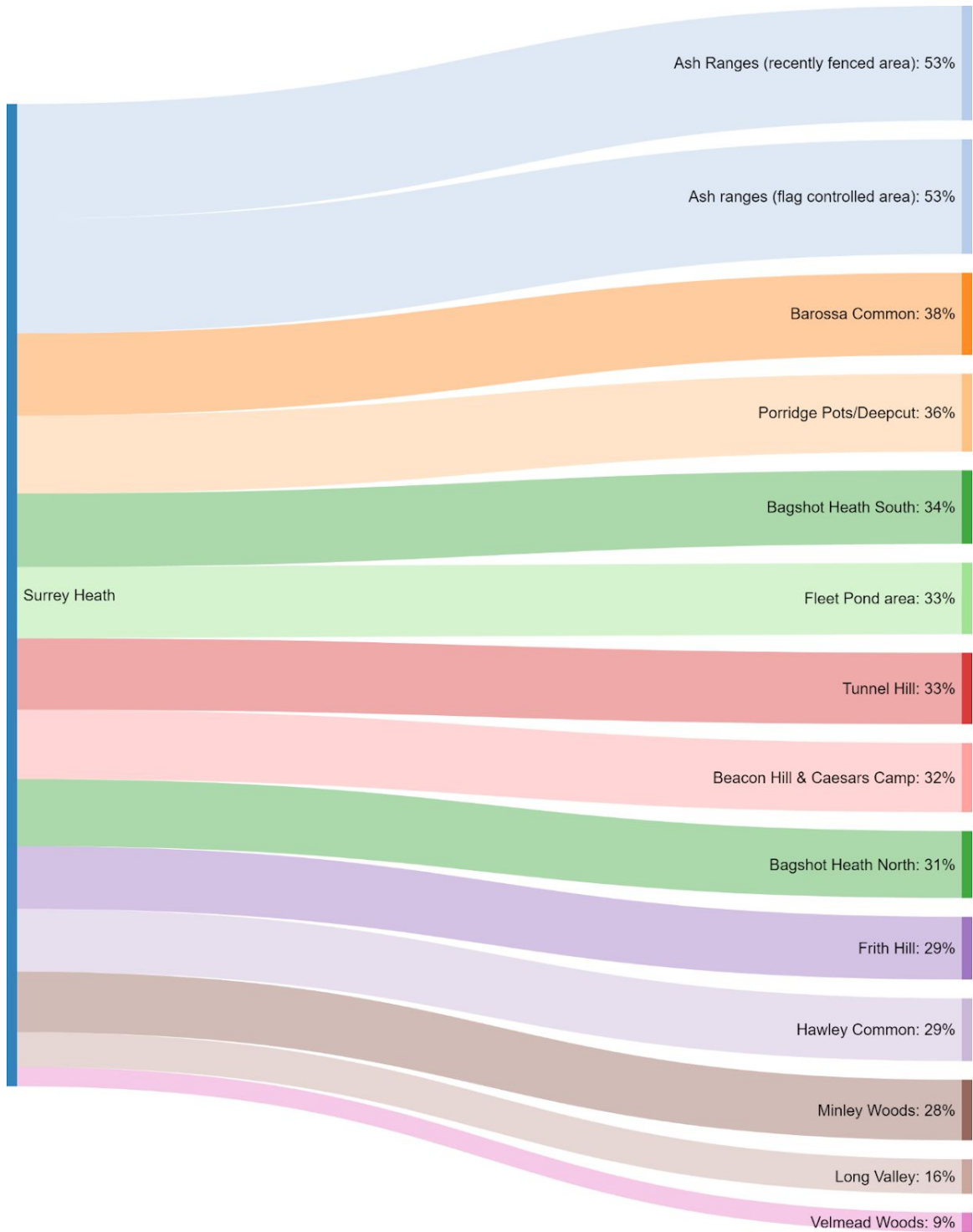
## Which areas of land are used by which groups of residents?

*Which areas of lands are most popular with which residents? Do people favour the lands closest to their homes?*

The Sankey diagram below shows the overall percentage of Surrey Heath residents that use each area of land – note that because respondents could visit more than one area, the percentages add up to more than 100%.

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.nomisweb.co.uk/census/2011/ks101ew>

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The Sankey diagram hides a great deal of variation about where the residents from each postcode making up the Surrey Heath constituency actually visit. The table below shows the most popular destinations for each postcode area – as can be seen residents tend to visit the areas that are closest to their homes.

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	GU12	GU15	GU16	GU18	GU19	GU20	GU24	SL5	Totals
Ash Ranges (recently fenced area)	84	21	50	16	27	26	59	0	53
Ash ranges (flag controlled area)	83	21	51	18	20	21	73	0	53
Barossa Common	9	81	33	50	73	58	22	60	38
Porridge Pots/Deepcut	15	40	57	59	34	37	55	20	36
Bagshot Heath South	8	60	26	89	93	95	32	60	34
Fleet Pond area	37	34	34	14	27	32	15	20	33
Tunnel Hill	29	24	50	19	25	21	63	40	33
Beacon Hill & Caesars Camp	47	23	24	14	27	32	21	20	32
Bagshot Heath North	7	56	23	74	92	95	28	60	31
Frith Hill	9	33	60	21	22	26	24	0	29
Hawley Common	26	36	32	12	25	26	19	60	29
Minley Woods	24	33	31	14	29	26	24	60	28
Long Valley	23	9	14	4	17	11	13	20	16
Velmead Woods	12	7	9	3	7	5	7	0	9

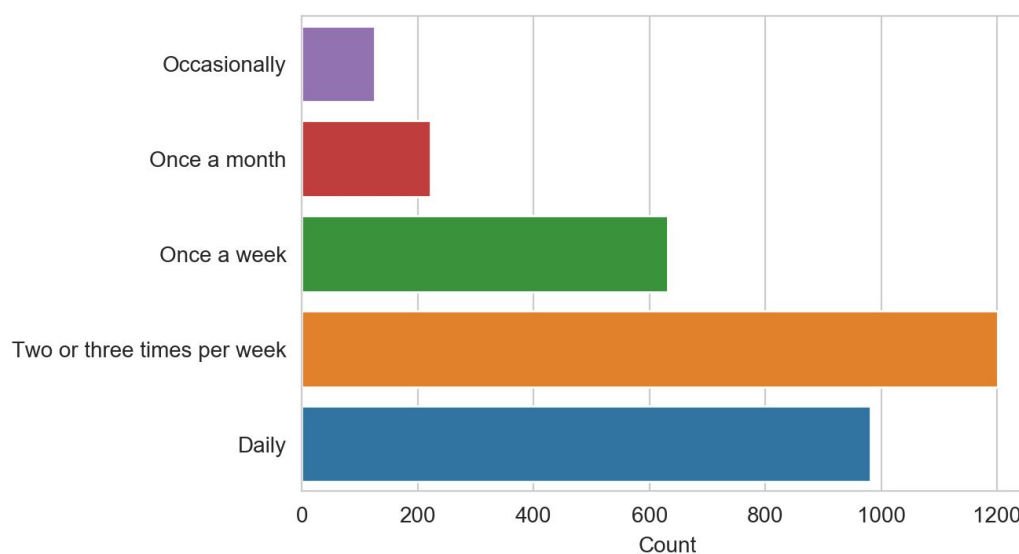
**Summary:** Surrey Heath residents make extensive use of the military lands with the analysis showing that residents favour the areas nearest to where they live. The most popular areas for Surrey Heath residents were: Ash Ranges Range Complex (53% of respondents), Ash Ranges flag controlled area (53%), Barossa Common (38%), Deepcut (36%), Bagshot Heath South (34%), and Tunnel Hill (33%).

The popularity of each area varies considerably by postcode area – for GU12 (roughly the Parish of Ash), 84% of respondents used the Ash Ranges Range Complex but only 9% use Barossa Common, whereas for GU15 81% use Barossa Common but only 21% use the Ash Ranges Range Complex.

### How often do people use the lands?

*Are people using the lands on a daily basis, or just occasionally? Just for a five minute stroll, or are most people out for hours? What is the total recreational use across the community?*

The graph below shows a view of how often the respondents who live in Surrey heath use the lands. As can be seen using the lands two or three times a week is most common, with daily use the next most common.

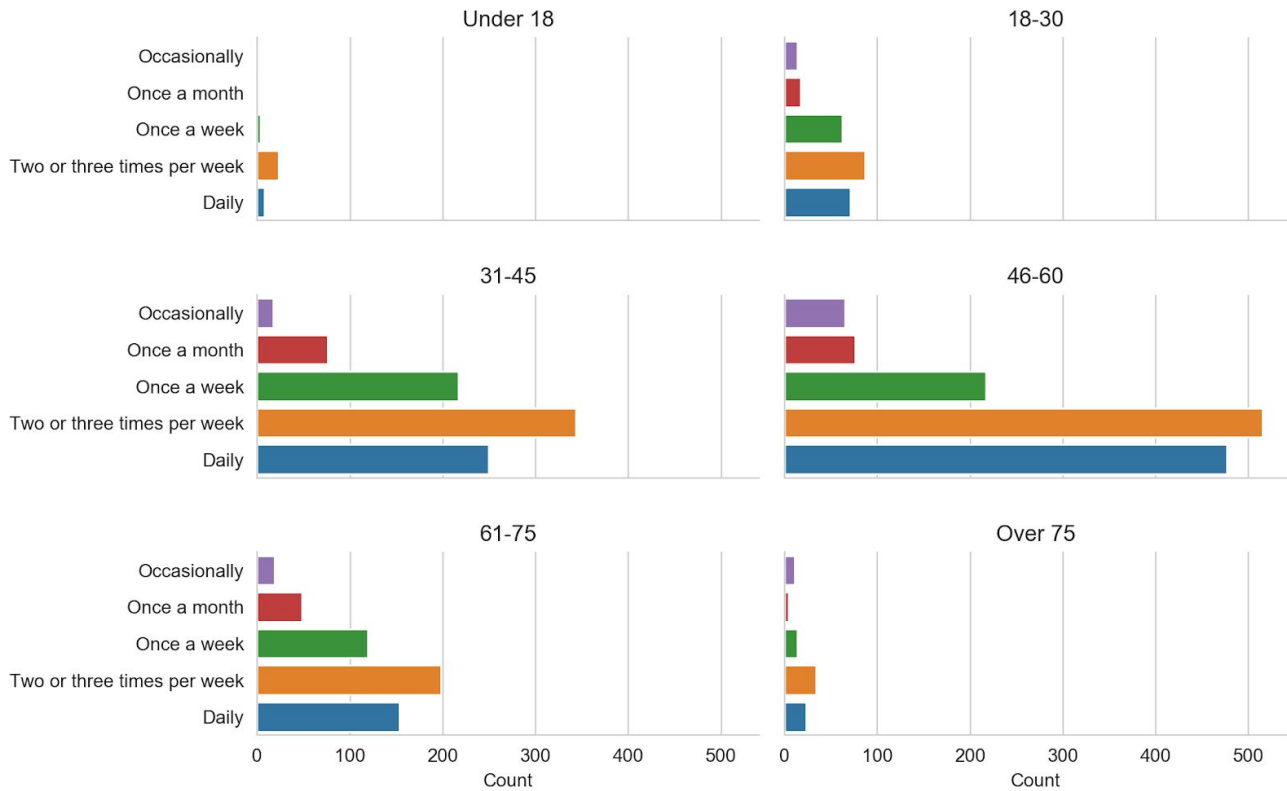


The graphs below demonstrate that the breakdown of use duration pattern is common across all age groups, although the relative proportions within an age group do differ from the overall view in some cases (e.g. in

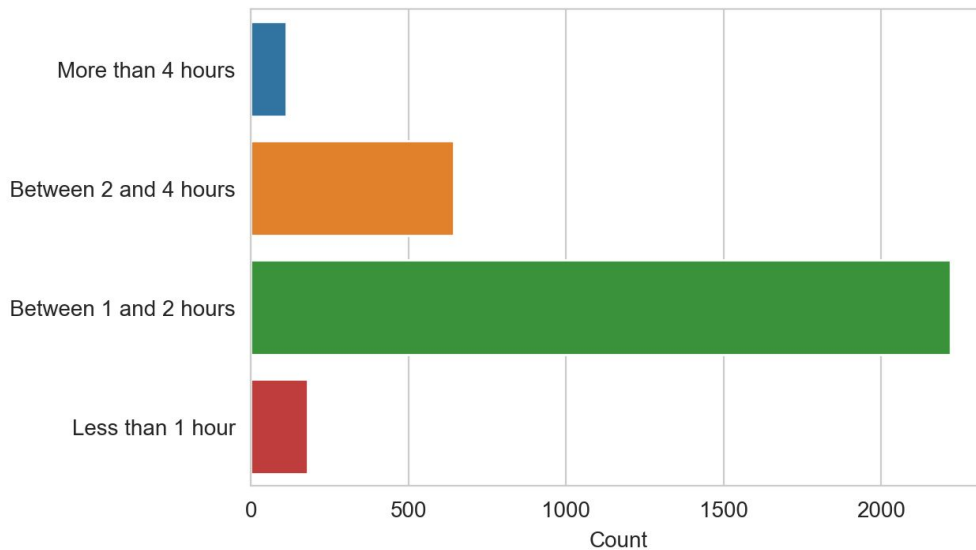


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the 46-60 age group almost as many people use the land on a daily basis as use them two to three times per week).



The graph below shows the duration that Surrey Heath residents use the land for – as can be seen, between one and two hours is overwhelmingly the most popular.



This pattern is repeated across all age groups almost identically, without exception.

Across the Surrey Heath community, it is possible to calculate the average number of hours each respondent spends using the lands to be 6.2 hours per week. The total time spent by Surrey Heath residents using the lands each week is found to be 19,600 hours.

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**Summary: Residents of Surrey Heath constituency make a great deal of use of the military lands – the average respondent to the survey spent 6.2 hours per week on the lands. Across the Surrey Heath respondents as a whole the total number of hours spent on the land was 19,600 hours per week.**

**The overwhelming majority of respondents are using the land at least once a week (89%), with 38% of respondents using the lands two or three times a week, and 31% of respondents using the lands daily. When they visited the lands 94% of residents would stay for at least one hour, with the most common duration being one to two hours.**

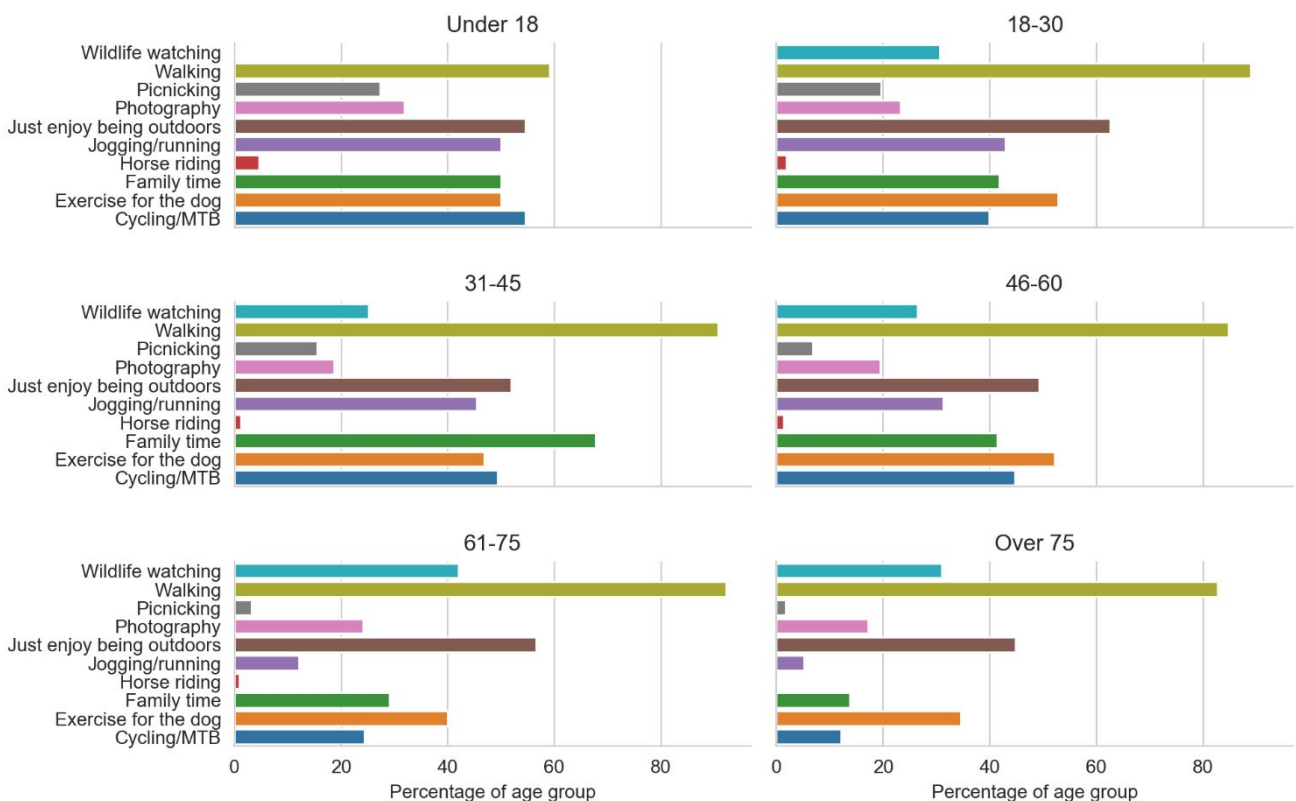
## What do people use the lands for?

*Do most people use the land for a single activity? What sorts of activities take place on the lands?*

Almost all Surrey Heath respondents said they used the lands for multiple purposes. There was an extremely wide variety of activities reported as taking place on the lands with some 200 activities counted in the 'Other' category. Some activities were expected (walking, cycling) and others perhaps less so (astronomy, butterfly surveying, and litter picking).

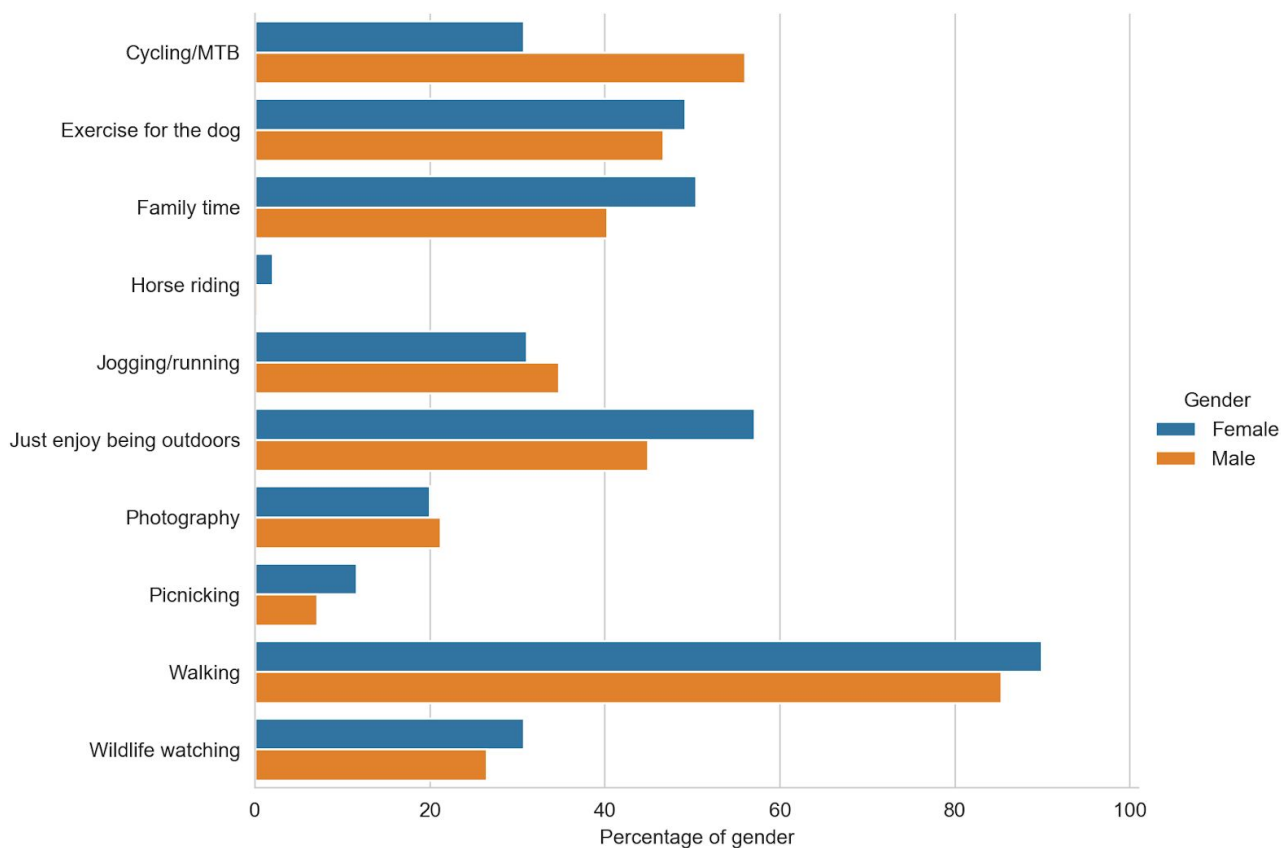
The most popular activities for Surrey Heath residents were: walking (88% of respondents), enjoying the outdoors (52%), dog walking (48%), family time (46%), cycling (42%), running (33%), and wildlife watching (29%).

The graphs below show that the mix of activity varies by age group; for example cycling is enjoyed by between 40% and 60% of people below the age of 60, but then drops to 10% in the over 75s. Family time as an activity peaks in the 31-45 age group, aligning with the age when most families are fairly young. Walking is the most popular activity in all age groups. Note that the percentages within each age group adds up to more than 100% as respondents were able to select multiple activities.



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The graph below shows the gender split across different activities in Surrey Heath. As can be seen some activities demonstrate a moderate gender imbalance – for example cycling (56% of male respondents vs 31% female), family time (40% male vs 50% female), and picnicking (7% male vs 11% female). Other activities such as walking, exercising the dog, and running are more equally split.



**Summary:** Almost all residents of Surrey Heath use the military lands for more than one purpose. The most popular activities are: walking (88% of respondents), enjoying the outdoors (52%), dog walking (48%), family time (46%), cycling (42%), running (33%), and wildlife watching (29%). The activities that residents enjoy varies by age, with lower impact activities increasing in popularity with the over 60s. There are also moderate gender imbalances in certain activities with a higher percentage of females participating in Family Time than males, and a higher percentage of males participating in cycling than females.

### Do land users know there is a byelaws review coming up?

*The delayed byelaws review will change the way that people use the lands – are residents aware? What proportion of them are likely to submit a consultation response?*

The data from the survey shows well over half (68%) of the respondents from Surrey Heath are aware of the byelaws review - slightly higher than the overall average across the entire survey and likely to be driven from the publicity around the closure of the Ash Ranges firing area. The number of residents who are aware is expected to increase once the date of the byelaws review is announced and campaigning begins in earnest in both the physical and online domains.

Additionally the number of respondents who wrote detailed comments was high in the Surrey Heath constituency at 83% / 2,650 comments. Given the average length and passionate statements contained

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within many of the comments (see examples in the appendix) it is likely that the residents of Surrey Heath will collectively make thousands of submissions to the forthcoming byelaws review.

For comparison byelaws reviews that have been conducted to date by the MoD have received at most 94 comments<sup>2</sup>. It is likely that the Surrey Heath constituency comments alone will overwhelm the MoD byelaws review team.

**Summary: Even with relatively light touch online campaigning to date, the residents of Surrey Heath have shown that well over half are aware that the byelaws review is due. The 2,650 detailed comments submitted by constituents shows the interest and likely consultation response rate is likely to be unprecedented.**

### 4. Summary results across all constituencies

#### Who uses the land?

In total 10,899 responses were received to the survey between the 11th July and mid-August - with the vast majority being received in the first two weeks. These broke down into a total of 18 Parliamentary constituencies, with the top four by number respondents being: Surrey Heath (3,171), North East Hampshire (2,736), Aldershot (2,472), and South West Surrey (1,093). Land users are more likely to be female (55% to 43%) and the average user is likely to be 46 years or older (61% of respondents).

#### Which areas of lands are used by which groups of residents?

The survey found that overwhelmingly residents use multiple areas of land with most use of the lands closest to their homes. The most popular areas of military land varied extensively by constituency and postcode - however overall the most popular areas were Beacon Hill & Caesars Camp (59% of respondents), the Fleet Pond area (59%), Minley Woods (47%), Ash Ranges (32%), Velmead Woods (32%), Long Valley (28%), and Tunnel Hill (21%).

#### How often do people use the lands?

Across the 18 constituencies the average land user used the land for 5.8 hours per week - although this varied by postcode with those areas without obvious alternatives to military land for greenspace using the land the most. The total amount of time that residents used the land for was 59,150 hours / 6.8 man years per week. The overwhelming majority of respondents (79%) are using the lands at least once a week - 36% use the lands two or three times a week, 24% daily, 19% once a week, and 10% use it monthly. When they visited the lands 95% of residents would stay for more than one hour with the most common duration being one to two hours (65%), a significant minority used the lands for two to four hours (23%).

#### What do people use the lands for?

Almost all respondents said they used the lands for multiple purposes. There was a wide variety of activities (200 activities were counted in the 'Other' category) that took place on the lands – some expected (walking, cycling) and others less so (astronomy, butterfly surveying, and litter picking).

There was little variance in land use between constituencies - the most popular uses are: walking (86% of respondents), enjoying the outdoors (50%), dog walking (44%), family time (45%), cycling (42%), running

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/ministry-of-defence-byelaws-responses>

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(34%), and wildlife watching (30%). The survey found that there were some gender imbalances in activities - for example family time and dog walking were more likely to be reported by female respondents, whereas photography and cycling were more likely to be reported by male respondents. As respondents increased in age lower impact activities became more popular, especially in the over 75s.

### Are land users engaged in the byelaws review process?

The majority of respondents were aware of the forthcoming byelaws review (64%). Over 8,800 (87%) residents took the time to write detailed comments in the survey with many citing the expectation that military lands can be shared, whilst acknowledging military primacy. Other key themes that emerged from the comments were that many residents had used the lands for decades, they were vital to residents mental health, and that residents were ready to campaign for continued public access.

## 5. Survey Conclusions

In undertaking this survey the [Byelawsreview.com/#Saveyourwoods](https://www.bylawsreview.com/#Saveyourwoods) team set out to provide detailed quantitative and qualitative data on the public use of the Aldershot Military Lands – something that until this survey was undertaken was sorely lacking from the public discourse.

The volume of responses provided by local residents to the survey, and the passionate comments that they included, demonstrate the importance that the lands have to the local community and the strength of feeling regarding access.

The survey was structured to answer a number of key questions – summarised answers to these are provided below.

- **Who uses the land?**

Residents of all ages and genders make use of the land. In all constituencies there was a gender bias towards land users being female of 11% overall, and 16% in the Surrey Heath constituency. The largest age group of land users was consistently the 46-60 year old group across all constituencies. The greatest numbers of land users came from postcodes, such as GU12, which are constrained by urban areas meaning their nearest green spaces are the Military Lands. For many postcodes there are no other green spaces that could realistically provide an alternative.

- **Which areas of land are used by which groups of residents?**

There was a large variance between constituencies as to which was the most popular area. Across all constituencies Beacon Hill & Caesars Camp and the Fleet Pond area were the most popular areas with 59% of all respondents saying they used these two areas. The variance across constituencies and postcodes particularly, show that people use the areas of military lands closest to where they live. For example, within GU12 84% of people said they used the recently fenced Ash Ranges area, whereas across the Surrey Heath constituency it was 53%, and across all respondents it was only 32%.

- **How often do people use the lands?**

Local communities make a great deal of use of the land – across all constituencies the average land user used the land for 5.8 hours per week. The total time that residents used the land for was an enormous 59,150 hours / 6.8 man years per week. The vast majority of respondents (79%) are using the lands at least once a week - 36% use the lands two or three times a week, 24% use the lands daily, and 19% use it once a week. When they visited the lands 95% of residents would stay for more than one hour with the most common duration being one to two hours. There was moderate variation within these figures, for example daily use was almost as popular as two or three times a week in Surrey Heath.

- **What do people use the lands for?**

Local residents undertake a huge variety of activities on the land – from astronomy to butterfly surveying. Almost all residents use the land for more than one purpose, with very little variation between constituencies - the most popular uses are: walking (86% of respondents), enjoying the outdoors (50%), dog walking (44%), family time (45%), cycling (42%), running (34%), and wildlife watching (30%). The activities that residents enjoy varies by age, with lower impact activities increasing in popularity with the over 60s. There are also moderate gender imbalances in certain activities with a higher percentage of females participating in Family Time than males, and a higher

percentage of males participating in cycling than females.

- **Do land users know there is a byelaws review coming up?**

Even with very light touch online awareness campaigning to date a significant majority (64%) of residents are aware of the forthcoming byelaws review. A total of 8,845 residents wrote, frequently impassioned, comments explaining what the use of Military Lands means to them and given the extensive online and physical campaigning planned by local community groups the response to the forthcoming public consultation will be very high. The previous highest number of public consultation responses for a byelaws review (The British Underwater Test and Evaluation Centre) was 94 comments in total<sup>3</sup> – it is likely that the MoD will be overwhelmed especially if the new byelaws seek to further reduce access.

It is also possible to draw further, more general, conclusions. When reducing public access to the lands (removal of access to Deepcut, fencing of Long Valley, removal of access to the Range Complex, closure of almost all car parks (e.g. Bourley Road car park), etc) the MoD has frequently referred to the costs they incur due to vandalism.

Specifically the MoD provided a statement to the press that since 2015 they had incurred costs of £170,000 due to vandalism – our survey shows that well over 15 million hours of recreational use of the land has occurred since this time, which means that each hour of public use has cost well under £0.01. Furthermore the government has published many studies on the cost of physical inactivity to the NHS – a Public Health England Study in 2016<sup>4</sup> estimated that the Surrey and Hampshire Primary Care Trusts spent £30.7m on the five health conditions most associated with inactivity. Any further reduction in access to the Military Lands will likely have a substantial negative impact on these numbers.

Finally it is clear that access to the Aldershot Military Lands is now a major local political issue – this has been driven by the continual actions of the MoD unilaterally reducing public access to lands without any public consultation or impact assessment.

This survey shows that a significant majority of land users are already aware of the forthcoming byelaws review and are motivated to participate in the consultation. The comments make it very clear that whilst residents are supportive of the need for military primacy in the use of the lands for military training, they are not prepared to accept unjustified curtailments to access.

Movements such as the SaveAshRanges campaign (related to the removal of all public access to the Ash Ranges Complex) show that residents are motivated, organised, and prepared to campaign on the issue. Irrespective of party allegiance, politicians should support their constituents in ensuring that the forthcoming byelaws are fit for purpose and guarantee ongoing public access into the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/ministry-of-defence-byelaws-responses>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/physical-inactivity-economic-costs-to-nhs-clinical-commissioning-groups>

## 6. Methodology

### The questionnaire

The questionnaire had ten questions and was designed to provide general information on how local residents used the areas of MilitaryLand covered by the Aldershot Military Lands Byelaws 1976 for the three months prior to July 2020. The questions were organised into six sections as follows:

- Areas that the respondent uses
  - Do you use the military lands for recreation?
  - Which areas do you visit? (multiple responses permitted with a map provided for clarity)
- Frequency and duration of use
  - How often do you visit the lands?
  - How long do you typically spend visiting the lands?
- Activities undertaken on the military lands
  - What do you do while visiting? (multiple responses permitted together with a free text option)
- Awareness of the forthcoming byelaws review
  - Are you aware the Byelaws that govern the land are being reviewed and a public consultation will be conducted, giving an opportunity to ensure they are fit for purpose?
- Why the respondent values their use of the lands
  - Please tell us in your own words why you value the lands (free text response)
- Demographic information (Optional)
  - What is the first half of your postcode?
  - With which gender do you most identify?
  - How old are you?

### Survey distribution

The questionnaire was primarily distributed on the Facebook social network. The initial post with a link to the survey Google Form was posted onto the Byelaws Review Facebook page<sup>5</sup> at 5pm on the 11<sup>th</sup> July 2020.

The post was then shared by the Byelaws Review team onto a number of other local interest Facebook groups, thereafter the post went viral and was shared organically without input from the Byelaws Review team. Whilst Facebook does not provide tools to see the total number of shares (private shares are hidden), it does allow us to see that the initial post received 770 public shares and 1,995 public likes. Facebook estimates that the post reached 9,172 people with 3,431 engagements (comments, likes, & shares) with the post. In addition to the original post, a large number of people shared the direct link to the survey – this number is not possible to quantify.

### Survey sample

The questionnaire received 10,899 responses from the 11<sup>th</sup> July and when the survey was closed (mid-August) – the vast majority (94%) of these responses were received in the first week after the initial sharing of the survey on Facebook.

Of these responses 8,841 people left a detailed comment as to why they valued the land showing how engaged local residents were with the survey – many of the comments would have taken the respondent several minutes to write.

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<sup>5</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/byelawsreview>



## Survey processing

The survey results were downloaded in CSV format and underwent data cleanse using Python and Pandas. Analysis and visuals were subsequently undertaken using Python, Seaborn, Pandas, Plotly, and Inkscape.

## 7. Who are the Byelaws Review Campaign Team?

The Byelaws Review campaign was set up in 2019 by a number of local residents and existing local access groups including the Trail Action Group (TAG). The group were brought together by our love of the lands and the knowledge that the long delayed review of the 1976 byelaws was finally upon us.

Since formation the team has undertaken online awareness campaigning and put together a comprehensive website<sup>6</sup>. The stories and posts made by the campaign have had high organic penetration on social media, with Facebook analytics for March/April 2020 showing our posts reached some 95,000 individuals from the local area, and were actively engaged with (commented upon, liked, clicked through etc.) by over 20,000 individuals.

It is important to note that the Byelaws Review Campaign team is not affiliated with any political party in any way whatsoever.

If you would like to get involved in our campaign please reach out to us directly via our email address - [info@byelawsreview.co.uk](mailto:info@byelawsreview.co.uk).

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<sup>6</sup> [www.byelawsreview.com](http://www.byelawsreview.com)

## 8. Appendix – Why Surrey Heath residents value the land in their own words

The below comments are a very small selection of the thousands of comments provided by the residents of Surrey Heath. The word cloud that titles this report was also generated using these comments - the size of the word is proportionate to the frequency that the word appeared in the comments.

*"As an ex- military family we love the woods especially in Deepcut where we have spent a lot of time as a family"*

**GU15 Resident**

*"It feels like this land is my lungs, my friend, my meditation, my happiness."*

**GU15 Resident**

*"I am 73 years old I have played, rode, walked and ran on ash ranges most of these years. I now walk the same areas with my grandson as I did with my sons. I hope my grandson kids can do the same in the future."*

**GU12 Resident**

*"As a serving Army officer I am aware of these lands for both my work but as importantly for the recreation activities they provide. The importance that the military place on the mental wellbeing of their people should be reflected in providing access to not only the military but the local community who access this vital resource to enjoy this unique environment to maintain their mental health by enhancing their leisure activities. I use these lands to get away from it all on my mountain bike and cannot over emphasise how access to these areas has allowed me to 'recharge my batteries' and maintain my physical and mental wellbeing which in turn allows me to be more productive at work but more importantly, to be a better Father and husband at home. Access to these lands by the public must be preserved for the good of both the community and the military."*

**GU24 Resident**

*"Because there is a duty and covenant by the military who took these lands from the people. I have had a 70 year use of them and immeasurable pleasure. Any other recreational area is already under pressure."*

**GU12 Resident**

*"Beautiful open countryside. Paid and maintained by my tax contribution, used to train future soldiers and allow me as a veteran a place of quiet and calm"*

**GU15 Resident**

*"The lands are an outstanding source of natural beauty for everyone to enjoy. I understand that the military needs training lands I really do but to take the whole lot away from the British public and then, let's be honest hardly actually use the lands for training is a little unfair. From what I see there are very few people who disrespect the land, and it should be welcomed that we use the land alongside the military. We are after all one nation. The land allows me time to pursue outdoor activities with my kids in a peaceful environment and if the areas are closed off most people will be forced to one location which will then result in overcrowding."*

**GU16 Resident**

*"With the increase in house building locally any open space which is home to wildlife and can be used for outdoor activities is becoming more and more valuable."*

**GU12 Resident**

*"I have used the land for cycling and walking for over 30 years, it's part of my life. Access to large areas of unspoilt and natural environments are absolutely essential for my mental health and wellbeing, I believe the*

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*lack of local and easily accessible areas of true wild forests and woods are responsible for the mental health crisis which is especially prevalent in the south of England. The military lands are a local lifeline for me."*

**GU16 Resident**

*"Used to be able to take my Mother but unable to as she is in a wheelchair so unable to push on the uneven services over the controlled flagged area now.....so have to drive further away to parks where as I live just across the road from the entrance to the closed off part that's why we moved here because of the ranges."*

**GU12 Resident**

*"This is the reason we moved here and use these lands 3 times a day, we respect the military when present, but would be lost without access to these lands"*

**GU16 Resident**

*"I have been using the area for the last 55 years, for children, grandchildren and dogs and at the age of 90. Still go every day for a walk."*

**GU12 Resident**

*"The Nature is outstanding & being a military family, I have always enjoyed the open, rugged beauty of MoD land and ranges; they are simply unique & stunning places."*

**GU12 Resident**

*"I have used these areas since I was a child 50 years, I would like them to remain open to the public as they are important to the local community. Do not forget that it is our TAXES that pay for these area so we should have some rights over them when the military are not using them."*

**GU12 Resident**

*"Local places to walk which do not require the use of a car to get to. The MOD is paid for by the nation so where it is safe to do so the nation should be able to use the land. The land is valuable to the local community for health benefits not just for exercise but also in maintaining green spaces around villages."*

**GU18 Resident**

*"The range has been my favourite recreation space for 60years and to lose this fabulous palace would be heartbreaking."*

**GU12 Resident**

*"In such a highly populated area, and ever more so with the allowed large scale local developments, the open spaces are critical for physical and mental well being. Losing these areas would confine local people to their tiny gardens, footpaths and small SANGS. We completely understand the need for the army to train, but there must be a balance between this and local tax payers needs. In an age where the aim is for peace and to reduce the military forces, it seems astonishing that now they decide to remove the areas from public access."*

**GU12 Resident**

*"When they are closed, it's unbelievable the amount of people trying to walk exercise and cycle on the small amount of land that's left!"*

**GU12 Resident**

*"It is much valued recreational space and used by all ages for so many purposes. We also help to look after it as we can report any misuse and problems before the military may be aware."*

**GU12 Resident**

## COMMUNITY USE OF THE ALDERSHOT MILITARY LANDS

*"I used to play in the woods when i was 5 , I'm now 55. There hasn't been a problem for 50 years, why change."*

**GU15 Resident**

*"If these lands were removed from public access the opportunity to cycle (mtb) would be reduced to almost nothing in the area. No access = no exercise, no enjoyment of the outdoors, detriment to health and well being, more reliance on NHS etc, etc"*

**GU15 Resident**

*"I moved house to be near these woods. They are my favourite place in the world - which sounds like hyperbole but I say with real sincerity. They helped me during lockdown and to run the routes was a daily source of joy and inspiration.*

*My youngest son also has complex SEN and the woods have been a source of joy for our family.*

*Now, I set off to run and they are fenced off and behind locked gates. It makes me feel sad and exhausted that the reason for living here is just taken away like that and I don't understand why."*

**GU16 Resident**