



PROJECT UBIQUE

CLOSURE OF THE LARKHILL TAILS—SUMMARY DOCUMENT

Defence
Infrastructure
Organisation

MINISTRY OF DEFENCE

Project Ubiique aims to provide managed public access across Salisbury Plain in accordance with the Ministry of Defence's (MOD) declared presumption in favour of access. Ubiique is being delivered through a series of sub-projects focusing on specific areas of Salisbury Plain, with each project adhering to the following three principles:

Certainty Clarity Consistency

These principles aim to guarantee a consistent approach to the provision of public access, ensuring both civilians and MOD personnel are clear as to where safe public access lies to reduce the potential for conflict between recreation and military training.

The aim of this document, with the aid of four accompanying maps, is to explain the requirement to close the “tails”, situated on Larkhill Artillery Range, and the changes that will follow to optimise the surrounding public rights of way network. The closures will be carried out using the Land Powers (Defence) Act 1958, thus enabling the site to be used “*efficiently without danger to the public*” for “*the purposes of an installation provided ... for defence purposes*”, as stipulated by the Act.

History

Larkhill Artillery Range (LAR) has been used by the MOD as a specialist heavy weapons range since the late 1800s. Throughout this time the general public have been denied access into the Range Danger Area (RDA) when the range is active.

In 1984 the “flag free” Ridgeway route was opened along the northern boundary of the impact area (IA). At the same time approximately 30 miles of public rights of way (PROW) were closed by order because of the risk to the public from unexploded ordnance (UXO). It is currently estimated that there remain in excess of 250,000 pieces of UXO and other explosive military debris across the Range.

The closure of the PROW left a series of “tails” or severed ends sitting outside the 1984 Artillery IA, but within the current All Arms IA (see Map 1—Public Access in 2008).

The Royal Artillery is no longer the main user of LAR. To support the new training requirement, the area described above is used for a variety of different infantry firing. This allows projectile ricochet to be contained in what is already a UXO contaminated danger area, making more efficient use of the site.

Due to the concerns for public safety and to facilitate safer and better management of the site as a military range, the Defence Training Estate (DTE) is now seeking to stop up the tails left by the 1984 Order, before taking further steps to create a better and more functional recreational network.

Range Dangers

After a century of military use parts of LAR are heavily contaminated by UXO. In addition, prior to 1984, whilst the boundary of the RDA remained fixed, the artillery IA changed to reflect the type of weapons being used. This ambiguity of use means that UXO can be found throughout the Range, particularly in areas used for infantry field firing. The presence of UXO presents a series of dangers that require consideration:

Infantry use – The outer perimeter of the IA incorporates a selection of infantry firing ranges. Light weapons have smaller safety distances than artillery and are fired closer to the public. Dropped ammunition, pyrotechnics or UXO can be difficult to find and leaves a residual hazard on the tails that cannot be effectively controlled.



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Artillery UXO – In 1984 it was accepted that UXO lies outside the 1984 IA. As stated, in excess of 250,000 pieces of UXO are present throughout the Range, thus presenting an exceptionally high hidden risk to those who may legitimately try to follow the tails that lie within the current all arms IA.



Range fires – On completion of live firing, there can often be Range fires. Due to the presence of PROW, as an added precaution, range flags are left flying to enable ammunition to “cook off” (burn out). On average this adds 48 additional days per year that the Range flags are left flying.

Since 1984 the public have become increasingly mobile in their search for outdoor recreation. Due to the site’s history and diverse range of public access, Salisbury Plain attracts visitors from far and wide. The Central Range Road and Route 29 provide two manageable means of crossing the IA. These byways are wide, metalled features that can be easily checked for civilian presence and field firing debris; therefore easy to manage for safety purposes.

However, the existence of the tails, within this vast PROW network, continues to give the public a legal right of access into an area that is heavily used for live firing. This access potentially individuals, unaware of the full extent of the hazards and who may tamper with field firing debris or UXO, in danger. In contrast to the main access roads across the Range, most tails are not well defined on the ground. This makes them difficult to follow, increasing the likelihood of an individual straying from the line of the path. Similarly, in contrast to the main Range roads, the wild and undulating landscape precludes accurate checking for civilians before firing and field firing debris after firing.

Alternatives

It could be argued that there are other alternatives to closing the tails.

Ensure the tails are clear of public before firing commences – Due to factors such as poor route definition and undulating landscape, it is difficult and time consuming to accurately check all of the broken PROW within the IA prior to firing. This potentially reduces firing times, impairing training as a consequence of rarely used PROW. Additionally this approach does not mitigate the potential presence of UXO or field firing debris. Keeping the public on well defined routes, outside the IA, makes this duty more achievable, maximises public safety and, by removing the risk from “cook off”, more flag free time can be achieved on the rest of LAR.

Ensure there is nothing hazardous on site (field firing debris) at the end of every practice – it is extremely difficult to ensure that undefined PROW are free of visible field firing debris before the public are permitted access after each firing period. In addition to the vast expense, to routinely carry this out would result in a significant increase to closure periods on the Range, preventing access to safe PROW and delaying training. This approach does not mitigate the potential presence of UXO.

Conduct UXO clearance – To completely clear the tails of UXO would be extremely challenging to achieve at a vast resource and financial cost. The outcome would not warrant such an investment. Were a tail to be certified as clear of UXO, once live firing recommences anywhere within the LAR the cleared status is lost. Thus it is MOD policy to not conduct UXO clearance in an area that may still be fired into.

All forms of clearance would have to cover a wider area than the registered PROW tails, to allow for inadvertent straying by the public.



Closed Vs Controlled Impact Areas – Closed Impact Areas are fenced off to ensure security. The size of the LAR prevents this from being a feasible management approach. Consequently it has been appropriate to maintain LAR as Controlled Impact Areas, i.e. employing methods such as red flags and accessible public information to limit and control public access when necessary. However, the resource implications associated with managing PROW within the IA are prohibitive, preventing efficient use of the Range for military training purposes.

Given the vast number of people who visit LAR, the nature of military use of LAR and the resource implications that prohibit the effective management of the tails within the RDA, MOD risk assessments clearly identify the need to prevent the use of these paths.

The Land Powers (Defence) Act 1958

In order to stop up the tails within the IA the Land Powers (Defence) Act 1958 will be used, thus enabling the Range to be operated “*efficiently without danger to the public*” for “*the purposes of an installation provided ... for defence purposes*”, as stipulated by the Act. Once the process is formally begun a legal order will be created by the Department for Transport (DfT). This Order will describe the routes that are to be stopped up for the duration of the military’s use of LAR.

In processing the Order the DfT will carry out consultation with all the relevant stakeholders, informing them of the MOD’s intention to stop up the PROW. A notice of the making of the Order will be published in the Wiltshire Times and the London Gazette. The same notice will be erected on each path and will be placed in suitable local public offices, such as a library or post office. These offices will also make a copy of the Order available for viewing. The detail of where copies of the Order will be located will be stated within the notice.

A period of 28 days is made available from the date the notice is published for representations to the Order to be made to the DfT. Once the legal process has begun all questions and comments should be directed to the DfT.

Creating a better PROW network

It is the ambition of Project Ubique to make a better PROW network. Successful steps have already made improvements that adhere to the three principles of Certainty, Clarity and Consistency (see Map 2 - Existing Public Access)

- The dedication of a Byway Open to All Traffic (BOAT), subject to flag, from Larkhill to Ridgeway, providing approximately 11 km of well maintained, well defined, high quality stone track, ensuring a long lasting route that can be used all year round.
- Dedication of Horse Down Bridleway, incorporating approximately 4 km of upgraded footpaths and new dedications to provide a flag free bridleway link from Ridgeway to Tilshead. This forms part of the proposed National Long Distance Bridleway and also the Larkhill Flag Free Perimeter Route.
- Flag locations and flagging regimes have been changed in several locations to improve connectivity and increase the number of flag free days. Locations include Larkhill Camp, the Larkhill to Ridgeway BOAT on the east of the IA and to the north of the Packway.
- Through a partnership between the MOD, Tread Lightly and Wiltshire County Council a significant number of new signs have been installed to clearly denote PROW throughout the Plain, particularly in the region of LAR.
- The dedication of three BOATs at West Lavington (West Lavington 42), Martin’s Bushes Road (Durrington 6) and Bath Drove (Shrewton CRB 9).
- The completion of three BOAT diversions in the Race Course and Demonstration areas, each providing clearly defined, good quality tracks for public use.
- Support to a Definitive Map Modification Order upgrading Bridleway Orcheston 14 to Restricted Byway.



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Following the deletion of the tails the project will return to making improvements to the public access network on the borders of the IA. Further improvements to the PROW network will include (see Map 3 -The Future of Public Access and Map 4 - Resulting Access Network):

- Provision of a Larkhill Perimeter route, enabling safe, enjoyable, off-road access for walkers, horse riders and cyclists along more than 40 km of PROW. The route will incorporate high quality, well defined tracks, providing long lasting routes usable all year round.
- Widening of the Ridgeway Corridor for approximately 15.1 km to ensure both the public and the military can enjoy ease of use without conflict.
- Dedication of the OP Ridgeway to create a BOAT of approximately 20 km, subject to flag, running along the southern edge of the IA, with additional spurs connecting adjacent PROW. As with the Larkhill Perimeter bridleway, the route will incorporate well defined, high quality stone tracks. The creation of this route will also introduce a figure of eight looping the IA, totalling approximately 53 km.
- Upgrade of a footpath to bridleway at Tilshead to contribute to the proposed National Long Distance Bridleway.
- Dedication of seven additional routes, increasing and improving access for a wide range of users:



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Location	Remarks
Shrewton (Yarnbury Castle to Shrewton 8)	Restricted Byway upgraded to BOAT.
OP Ridge Byway	Upgrades footpath West Lavington 38A to BOAT.
Orcheston	Approximate 2200m of new Bridleway dedication linking BOAT Shrewton 13 and BOAT Tilshead 12. Part of the Flag Free Larkhill Perimeter Route
Ridgeway	Approximately 2.8 km of stone track and adjoining tank track as a BOAT.
Lavington Folly to Netheravon 5 Bridleway	Dedication of a new Bridleway, using an existing, high quality track along the boundary of the IA.
Lavington Folly to Enford Farm BOAT	Dedication of a new BOAT using an existing tarmac road and track.
Casterley Vedette to Casterley Demolition Range BOAT	Footpath to be extended by 200m and upgraded to a BOAT. The stone track will finish in a turning circle, incorporating display boards at the Demolition Bunker, creating an information point.

- Continuing partnership working will enable the further installation of signs and improvements to existing permissive and registered PROW, improving public access in line with the principals of certainty, clarity and consistency.

It is anticipated that the resulting network will provide the optimum level of enjoyable public access to LAR, styled to ensure that the site can still be used to its fullest capacity as a military training area. Map 4 describes the proposed network of routes navigating around the LAR perimeter.

This document summarises one part of a complex and extensive project. Should you have any questions or require any further information regarding specific matters contained within this document please contact:

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Copies of this document, along with the four accompanying maps, can be found under the [Current Issues](#) page of the MODs website, accessed via www.access.mod.uk