

Walking on MoD land in the North and east of Hampshire

As most of you will be aware much (but not all!) of the Military Training land in the north and east of the county is designated as 'Managed Access Land' and is shown as such on OS maps. This is a variation on the Access Land regime that we are used to under the CRoW Act, with the difference being that the military can close that land to public access whenever military training is taking place (This scope to close does NOT extend to rights of way, which cannot be closed without formal permission from HCC). Over the past year or so there have been reports of groups of walkers being stopped on these areas to be told they need a permit. This is NOT the case and the military have tried to address the issue. If you continue to have problems please let me know.

Many of you who use the area will also be aware that there are a number of military car parks (which they call 'harbouring areas') which are very attractive when organising a group walk. Some of these are wrongly shown on OS maps as public car parks, this error is being corrected on the latest editions.

In recent times use of these areas as car parks by the public has caused difficulties to training operations when the military have arrived with a convoy of large vehicles, only to find that the harbouring area is full of cars left by the public (not just Ramblers, local users as well).

The MoD is taking steps to secure some of these areas by placing barriers across them. However, in general the MoD is not against use by the public, as long as military use is not impeded.

Military training activity is set to increase in the near future as troops return to the UK from Germany so clashes may be more likely to occur. In response to all this we have agreed a VOLUNTARY scheme whereby group walks organisers can obtain information in advance from the MoD about whether training is due to take place on any specific date, and whether a particular harbouring area could be available for use by the group on a given date.

In order to obtain information about planned military use of harbour areas and/or military training areas in use on a particular date the walk leader should contact Mark Ludlow, email – DIOSDTrg-SEHQTSOSA@mod.uk or telephone 01420 483409 or 07825 280224, providing the following information –

1. IF planning to use a military harbouring area then the grid reference of the proposed car park to be used and an estimate of numbers cars to be parked (this step is not needed if you are walking from outside the military area)
2. In all cases an indication of the likely route to be walked

Contact should ideally be made at least two weeks in advance where at all possible.

Mark is a member of the Hampshire Countryside Access Forum and is very supportive of trying to make this voluntary scheme work well; we have spent some time working with him to put the procedure in place, hopefully with positive results.

If you have any questions or problems with the procedure, or problems on the ground please contact me in the first instance and I will involve Mark as necessary.

Alan Marlow