

## **Regarding recent noise disturbances at Dalton Barracks, August 2023**

A number of residents in and around Dalton Barracks have contacted me about noise at the site from non-military activities, and the impact on their physical and mental wellbeing and I wanted to outline what I've done over the last few years to tackle this issue, and my thoughts on next steps.

Following concerns about excessively noisy firework displays a few years ago, with the related problems of traffic and road safety, I wrote to the Station Staff Officer to raise the issue directly with the barracks. As a result of this I facilitated a round table discussion between the station commander, local councillors and parish and town councils.

During this meeting we were given assurances that the barracks wanted to be a good neighbour and would ensure that all activities would be compliant with all guidance and regulation. They also committed to communicating events more clearly with the local community.

I was told at that time that the Ministry of Defence (MoD) has exemptions from elements of the [Environmental Protection Act 1990](#), including noise pollution. While this appears to be true for military operations of 'national security' I remain to be convinced that this exemption covers non-military activities.

There seems to be some inconsistency between this statement and the document that provides the MoD guidance on this matter. This document is the [Joint Service Publication \(JSP\) 418](#), and [Leaflet 04](#) of that guidance pack states (at section 8):

*"The MOD considers itself to be bound by the noise provision of the EPA 1990 regarding its application to everyday domestic activities. MOD offices, barracks and establishments will not create excessive noise liable to cause a nuisance as part of activities not directly connected with the; operation of equipment, training of personnel or other military operations."*

I therefore wrote to the Defence Minister several times to seek an intervention on non-military noisy events. I received two responses, dated [January 2021](#) and [January 2022](#) which I include for your information.

It now appears that position on events being held at Dalton Barracks is not that the site is exempt from noise pollution controls, but we are being told that the events are compliant with these controls. That is a small, but positive step forward.

As noise pollution and nuisance is an issue controlled, monitored and managed by the Vale of White Horse District Council, I am continuing my work with Cllr Val Shaw to understand what steps officers from the Vale have taken and could take.

I am also aware that the current program of events is far beyond anything that has previously been agreed, sometimes breaching the 'one-on, one-off' pattern promised, and is possibly beyond what seems permissible through Planning legislation. To my mind these are not the actions of a 'good neighbour'.

I understand St Helen Without Parish Council has an informal agreement with the Barracks to only hold 11 days of events. It's also my understanding that the [Town and Country Planning \(General Permitted Development\) \(England\) Order 2015](#) allows for:

*“The use of any land for any purpose for not more than 28 days in total in any calendar year, of which not more than 14 days in total may be for the purposes of—*

*(a) the holding of a market;*

*(b) motor car and motorcycle racing including trials of speed, and practising for these activities,*

*and the provision on the land of any moveable structure for the purposes of the permitted use.”*

This again is an area of law handled by the Vale of White Horse District Council, and I am working with Val to understand what can be done on this front.

Once we fully understand a) whether noise levels are breaching guidance, and b) whether the activities fall outside Permitted Development, I can then directly take this matter up with the Minister potentially through a written or oral question in the House. However, the first step is to confirm the basis of the challenge to these activities.

I know that the frequency and length of these events is causing a huge amount of distress for many residents, please be assured that I will try to support in any way I can.

Best wishes,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Layla Moran". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a long, sweeping underline.

Layla Moran