

NORTH SOMERCOTES PARISH COUNCIL

Assets of Community Value (ACV) – Community Right to bid DONNA NOOK AIR WEAPONS RANGE LAND AND BUILDINGS

Background

Back in 2018 the Parish Council submitted a successful case for the land and buildings comprising the Donna Nook Air weapons range to be listed as an ACV for five years when the Localism Act made this possible, because back in the late 1970s/early 80s it had received letters (from the MOD as it was then, Defence Infrastructure Organisation (DIO) as it is now) suggesting that they were considering the possibility of selling Donna Nook. Although it has not been suggested recently that the DIO are looking to sell the land/buildings in the future, the Parish Council are still very keen to try and protect the possibility of the asset no longer being available in the same way it is now – apart from the Public Rights of Way of the old section of Footpath 18, Footpath 28 through the base, or the new English coastal path. For example, the current free access to the rest of the dunes, beach and foreshore currently enjoyed could potentially be stopped or altered if the land was sold in the future.

To be considered as an ACV the land/buildings need to show evidence that its main use has recently been or is presently used to further the social wellbeing or social interests of the local community and could do so in the future. Once listed as an ACV with the local authority, the local community will be informed if it is listed for sale within the five-year listing period. The community can then enact the Community Right to Bid, which gives them a moratorium period of six months to determine if they can raise the finance to purchase the asset (which would also depend on any rights or covenants in the original land sale).

The Community Right to Bid does not give the right of first refusal to community organisations to buy an asset that they successfully nominate for inclusion on the local authority's list. What it does do is give time for them to put together the funding necessary to bid to buy the asset on the open market. Community ownership ensures that local people have control over the buildings and spaces that have significance to them and that these spaces are used in ways that meet the priorities and needs of the local community.

The Parish Council has already submitted a substantial amount of evidence detailing the history of the site and how it has been used and continues to be used by the community, which enabled the site to be listed in 2018, but ELDC have now asked for specific evidence of current uses of the site in the form of statements from groups and individuals of how they use the area, and the frequency and length of time it is used, with a deadline of the end of October 2023.

If you value the access to this land and whole area, please take a few minutes to detail this ASAP, either by completing and returning the form available from the Clerk or on the parish council website or email the Clerk at nspcpearce@btinternet.com. We particularly need information on your recreational use of the area that doesn't include just use of the Public Rights of Way either the old section of Footpath 18 or the new diversion route around the Realignment site (different landowners and which would remain). The use made by members of the community of the asset must not be an ancillary one – this means that aircraft spotting for example isn't included, as that happens because of its current use as an air weapons range and this would therefore cease if the Range was no longer in active use.

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Action Required:

If you value the access you currently enjoy to this land and area please take a few minutes to detail your use and the benefit you think this brings you and your family and/or business as well as the impact it would have if you no longer had access to it. You can do this by completing and returning the form on the attached link, or send an email as soon as possible, and before the 27th October 2023 please, to the Clerk at nspcpearce@btinternet.com.

Please explain how often and for how long you use the area when the Range is not in use in the evening and at weekends? For example, do you go onto the beach and dunes every evening/weekend for an hour or a couple of hours, or so many times a week or year? What do you do there? Walk the dog, enjoy the fresh air? Pick samphire? Take photographs, just enjoy the peace and quiet? Paddle, walk to the sea, watch the seals or birds? Fly a kite, ride a horse/pony, collect driftwood and/or shells? Do you have a business that promotes access to the beach and dunes as one of the benefits of staying with you, do friends come to visit because of the ability to access the beach for various activities?

Do you also walk on the areas of the dunes and foreshore which are not part of the Public Rights of Way (it is very hard to follow the actual path of FP18 in any case!), but that are also not part of the active range area, for example the many paths in the dunes either side of the March Lane entrance to the beach, and along the foreshore that are on the safe area this side of the Range Danger Boards?

How many of you do this, do you go on your own or in a group?

What benefit do you think being able to access this area gives you/your family/friends/business? How would you feel if you couldn't access this area in the way that you do now? What difference would it make to you and your family/friends/business? What impact would it have on social well being for you and the community? How strongly do you feel about this?

The Parish Council believes that if the land was sold and no longer available for the public to use for social wellbeing, or its use was changed, ie no dogs allowed, or a charge for entry was made – that this would be a very serious loss to the local community as well as those from further afield.

Thank you in advance for your help in trying to keep this asset listed. If you have any questions, please contact the Clerk on 07840 856098 in the first instance. Please note that your details will need to be passed to East Lindsey District Council as part of the evidence of use by members of the community/visitors.

Yours sincerely

Cllr Stephen Brooks
Chairman

