



Bassingbourn Ski Slope in danger of closure after DIO u-turn

In September this year, all clubs based at the barracks were given six months' notice to quit the site as a decision had been made to close the barracks after the Army Training Regiment transferred out. At that time we were led to believe that the Snowsports Club might continue to operate if we could source alternative utility supplies and arrange independent access.

The management committee (volunteers) rallied round and submitted a proposal to the Defence Infrastructure Organisation (DIO) in early October. Whilst waiting patiently for the DIO's formal response, we continued to work for the next two months, creating a proposal for a planning application and investigating availability of mains water and power, all services which will be withdrawn when the Barracks close.

In a disappointing U-turn, the DIO, which manages military estates for the Ministry of Defence, confirmed that we would have to vacate the ski slope on March 28th 2013, and denied giving any indication of future use via alternative access. They also added that any equipment or buildings remaining on site may be disposed of at their discretion.

In early November, the DIO wrote to say that permission to stay had been refused. We immediately replied, asking for some explanation. The DIO's unwelcome response came last week and merely confirmed their previously stated position.

The letter from Mark Freer DIO Senior Estates Surveyor Land Management Service stated on the 3rd December

- 'the buildings or any other equipment brought on to the premises should be removed by the 28th,
- it is not possible to use the premises for any purpose after the 28th,
- access to the premises will not be permitted after the 28th,
- I cannot provide you with the assurances you require (about returning to the site at some future time) however if the premises do become available to lease in the future we will inform you.'

David Allanson Club Chairman thought it is such a shame as we offer unique facilities and cover a very wide catchment area – attracting around 10,400 visitors per year. Nothing can be done with this facility, it will just be left to deteriorate and become derelict unless the DIO change their mind. It is especially sad after such a fantastic year of sporting events, quite a slap in the face.

In the light of the DIO's inexplicable change of position, we are continuing to fight the closure by moving our fight into the political arena. Please show your support via our Facebook page, SaveBassingbournSnowsportsCentre and signing the ePetition <http://epetitions.direct.gov.uk/petitions/43103>

Notes to Editor

Bassingbourn Snowsports Centre started over 40 years ago to support grassroots skiing and boarding. The club is situated on Bassingbourn Barracks, and has a 100m long dry ski slope, with a button lift, a training slope with a rope tow, and a club house for the members and equipment.



Bassingbourn Snowsports Centre is a non-profit making club with its surpluses used to maintain and improve its facilities and promote affordable snow sports activities. It is owned by its members and operated by a management committee elected by its members. Bassingbourn's operations are undertaken by volunteers.

The Club has continued to thrive in recent years, despite the opening of indoor skiing locations within commuting distance. Over 10,400 people participated in activities at the club during 2011. It is not unknown for clients to travel past other ski slopes to use the club's facilities, with instructors regularly travelling over 40 miles from home to teach.

The Centre has been promoting affordable skiing and boarding since it opened, including thriving junior ski clubs, instructor qualifications, slalom racing, and tobogganing sessions. Disabled participants are able to take part in snowsports activities, and are supported by an appropriately equipped wet room and changing facilities. Most of the surrounding schools and youth groups have made visits to the centre and it has also been used by organisations for young offenders.

David Allanson
Chairman

13th December 2013