

Viewpoints wonders if the MoD and Baroness Taylor, Minister for defence procurement, have their priorities right in planning to meet with People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) to discuss 'alternatives' to the hats worn by guards at Buckingham Palace.

Err....yes, you read that right. The hats of Buck House's famous guardsmen have been causing quite uproar amongst animal lovers it seems.

Previously, the animal rights group has suggested that fake fur to be used rather than the traditional bearskin but these proposals were dismissed by the MoD as unworkable. The material used for fake fur has been deemed to be neither durable nor weatherproof enough for practical wear.

PETA have also approached Vivienne Westwood, Stella McCartney and Marc Bouwer with a view to designing a new hat. Robbie LeBlanc, Peta's director for Europe, stated that although the group was proposing a new shape it did not mean that this could not become 'iconic.'

'Iconic' in what way we ask? Just because they're good enough for the catwalks of Milan doesn't mean they're good enough for British troops. From looking at the offerings of Vivienne Westwood we'll stick to our bearskins. Iconic yes; suitable for Palace guards no!

Peta's campaign against the hats had included a naked protest outside Buckingham Palace continuing its reputation for over the top protests and claims.

"Most people think its fake fur and when they find out its real and it takes one bear to make a hat, they are appalled," he said. He also added that the MoD have spent over £320,000 on the hats in the past five years.

A spokeswoman for the MoD said: "The MoD is not opposed to the use of synthetic materials as an alternative to bearskins, provided such materials meet the requirement for a high quality product that performs adequately in all weather conditions. Regrettably, a suitable alternative continues to prove elusive."

Oh what a shame(!) Well, until then we'll let Peta and Stella McCartney et al get on with coming up with such an alternative. It's their time. We hope the meeting tomorrow is short as possible (about 2 minutes should do it) and Baroness Taylor can get on with more sobering, pressing concerns such as the equipment troops are supplied with on the front line.