

REDHILL AERODROME CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE

Draft minutes of the virtual meeting of the Redhill Aerodrome Consultative Committee held on the 23rd February 2022 at 10.00am via Zoom. (*Version 3 – 23.03.22*)

PRESENT:

Terry Pollard (Chairman)
Michael Blacker (Reigate & Banstead Borough Council)
Jim Blackmore (Salfords & Sidlow Parish Council)
Richard Blaine (Aerospace Resources Ltd)
David Burke (Chief Executive, Redhill Aerodrome)
Paul Cole (National Police Air Service)
Jonathon Essex (Reigate & Banstead Borough Council)
Pat Glenn (Bletchingley Parish Council)
Liam Hammond (Tandridge District Council)
Chris Hoskins (Nutfield Conservation Society)
Zahurul Islam (Redhill Aviation)
Rigel Mowatt (Nutfield Parish Council)
Vince Sharp (Secretary)
Nick Stagg (Chairman, Redhill Aerodrome Ventures Limited)
James Tester (Redhill Aviation)
Philip Wright (Aerodrome Manager)

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE:

Catherine Baart (Surrey County Council)
Nikki Taplin (Cubair)

1. CHAIRMAN'S WELCOME

The Chairman welcomed all attendees, especially Zahurul Islam and James Tester who were attending their first RACC meeting on behalf of Redhill Aviation.

2. IAN FROW

The Committee observed a two-minute silence in memory of Ian Frow who had passed away in December 2021. Ian had represented Outwood Parish Council on the Consultative Committee for many years and was a highly respected figure in the civil aviation industry, having served as a training captain with British Airways; a Flight Technical & Development manager with Virgin; and chief editor of the British Airline Pilots' Association (BALPA) magazine, "The Log".

3. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON THE 29TH SEPTEMBER 2021

The minutes were approved as a correct record.

4. UPDATE ON BUSINESS ACTIVITIES AT THE AERODROME

Nick Stagg explained that the aerodrome had been busy accommodating the needs of the flying schools. However, the wet weather had made it necessary to use the taxiway for take offs and landings, flights from which had been rationed to prevent breaches of the movement cap* as imposed by the relevant 'Section 106' agreement between the aerodrome and Reigate & Banstead Borough Council.

He also confirmed that Arena Aviation, previously the aerodrome's largest tenant, had ceased trading in November 2021. This had left a significant shortfall in the aerodrome's rental income.

5. FLIGHT MONITORING

The aerodrome manager's flight monitoring report for September to December 2021 had been circulated prior to the meeting. This comprised movement statistics; complaints by residents about aircraft movements; and references to incidents / accidents.

Philip Wright highlighted the increase in fixed wing activity since the previous meeting, coupled with an anticipated rise in the number of noise complaints. He explained that the taxiway (Runway 25) had been used since the beginning of November 2021 because the grass runways had been unavailable due to bad weather and, more recently, because it had been too wet to cut the grass and that two cuts were needed before it could be used. Consequently, rationing flights to adhere to the above-mentioned movement cap had been challenging. The demand for flights from flying clubs had been unexpectedly greater than in previous years when the cap would not have been so problematic. Instead, the aerodrome had, occasionally, been forced to cease flights during the course of a day to avoid exceeding the cap. In this respect, he stated that unnecessary circuits flown by some instructors had been frustrating.

Jim Blackmore commented that the works were **said to be undertaken for safety reasons and they would not lead to intensification of use** which had an adverse impact upon Salfords residents in particular. In response, Philip Wright asserted that the increased use of the taxiway was due to more prolonged spells of bad weather which had made the grass runways unusable. James Tester supported this view and added that the evolving business needs of the flying schools (post Covid restrictions) had also been a contributory factor and that the improvement works, while making the taxiway much safer, had not been the cause of the additional aircraft movements. Philip Wright also stated that the flight path from the taxiway follows the Salfords Gap which should have resulted in less overflying of residential properties.

Jonathan Essex suggested that a statistically sound metric should be identified to monitor and evaluate any changes to the intensification of use of the taxiway, relative to a baseline position. He suggested that this should be an action to take away from the meeting. Phillip Wright agreed that such an indicator would be helpful.

Commented [VS1]: This comment will now stay but can be discussed as a 'matter arising' or under a separate agenda item at the next meeting if other members wish.

In response to a question from Jim Blackmore regarding complaints, Phillip Wright confirmed that there was an ongoing issue with the southern edge of the air traffic zone in that aircraft frequently turned above one particular property. Phillip had established a constructive dialogue with the residents and was working with the flying clubs to address the issue and educate pilots. However, it wasn't possible to prohibit overflying, especially in this case when avoiding the property relied upon pilots' skill in flying an accurate path and making correct adjustments for wind drift. He surmised that instances of overflying residences had increased in recent years because more properties had been built in open spaces located beneath existing flight paths.

Following a further question from Jim Blackmore, Phillip Wright confirmed that the third paragraph of his (Phillip's) reply to a complainant (on page 5 of the flight monitoring report) contained a typographical error:

"The circuit patterns are designed to ~~maximise~~ minimise the overflying of built areas, however the demand for housing is slowly eroding these spaces. Developments with the ATZ should be aware of the published circuit patterns."

Phillip Wright also confirmed that the above-mentioned circuit patterns hadn't changed.

6. PROPOSED HELICOPTER (H18 / H36) FLIGHT PATH MARKERS

Phillip Wright had asked for this item to be included on the agenda. A paper had been circulated prior to the meeting which explained that, when the Bristow Flying Training School had been in operation, there were two dayglo markerboards in the '75 Acre Field' to assist helicopter pilots to maintain the correct flight path and avoiding Robins Cook and Staplehurst Farms. Over time, those boards had been destroyed by the weather. The paper included a photograph of replacement boards, with hi-vis reflective tape, which would be erected later in the year. If these proved successful, a similar arrangement, involving larger boards, would be considered for marking the climb-out from Runway 26L to assist fixed wing pilots.

James Tester confirmed that Redhill Aviation would be pleased to help by flying, and filming, the helicopter flight paths for testing and training purposes with reference to the new flight markers for H18 / H36.

7. IMPACT OF MOVEMENT CAP RESTRICTIONS* ON RUNWAY 25

**no more than an average total of 85 daily fixed wing aircraft movements will be permitted to occur from Runway 07/25 assessed on a rolling seven-day average basis, and where each take-off and landing is considered to be a single movement (so touch and go's are counted as two movements). The methodology for calculating the seven-day average for any day will be the aggregate of that day's total movements together with the total movements occurring on the preceding six calendar days, divided by seven.*

Richard Blain had asked for this matter to be included on the agenda. He referred to the discussions under items 4 and 5 above and described that, from the perspective of aerodrome users (including Nikki Taplin who had asked him to make representations) the restrictions had caused unintended, adverse impacts. He stated that the S106 restrictions had led to private flyers being allocated very few of the movements, sometimes only three sorties a day. As opposed to smoothing out peaks and troughs of aircraft movements, he explained how the aerodrome had been forced to cease functioning on certain days to prevent the cap from being breached and that the situation had become untenable for private operators. He stated that the situation needed to be addressed as a matter of urgency and argued that the problem could be

solved by changing the statistical basis of the cap to a rolling average over a longer period.

Richard Blain also stated that many local residents visited the Pilots' Hub and believed there was strong support for flying. In response, Jim Blackmore argued that Salfords & Sidlow Parish Council had the greatest engagement with affected residents and it was they who bore the greatest impact of the Aerodrome's activities, but were put off complaining because they were told they were under established flight circuits, so would be overflown. While Runway 25 took planes over the 'Salfords Gap' (as referred to by Phillip Wright under Item 5 above) Jim Blackmore stated that these were different people who had not been overflown before.

Phillip Wright confirmed that all fixed wing movements from the taxiway were entered into a spreadsheet to calculate the seven-day rolling average. He could model the impact of, say, 14 and 21 day averages but cautioned that it would be difficult to change the S106 agreement.

Jim Blackmore stated that Salfords & Sidlow Parish Council would be pleased to see the daily movement figures if the aerodrome was willing to release them. He stressed that he was trying to be fair to all, but that restrictions were needed to protect the interests of residents. He also explained that, at Reigate & Banstead's Planning Committee meeting (when permission for alterations to the runway was granted) the Parish Council had suggested a cap of a simple average of 45 movements per day (which was more than the average for the years before the runway was modified) but this had been dismissed. He argued that the number of movements had increased since the taxiway was modified from an average of about 34 a day for the years 2005/6 to 2014/15 (about 16 in 2012/3 to 46 in 2011/12) to about 51 day for 2016/16 to 2019/20 - an increase of about 50%. He reiterated that the stated sole objective of the aerodrome's planning application was to improve safety and there would be no intensification.

Michael Blacker expressed concern that a relaxation of the present cap would lead to an unacceptable intensification of aircraft movements. Richard Blain denied this and argued that a common sense amendment to the cap would still achieve a smoothing out peaks and troughs but would not result in greater intensification over time. This was supported by James Tester who described the negative impact of a week of bad weather which could not be compensated for during the following seven days because of the movement cap. He stated that aerodrome users were not seeking to ramp up levels of aviation activity and referred to recent occurrences when Redhill Aviation had been forced to stop flying and let customers down. Redhill Aviation had, therefore, been moving its operation to Shoreham due to movement cap.

Nick Stagg asserted that the total annual movements over the last few years was approximately 50% of what they used to be and that there were well over 100,000 movements per year in the past, including helicopters, i.e. when Bristow helicopters had been based at the aerodrome. (Jim Blackmore stated that, while Runway 25 was for fixed wing, helicopter movements could come back without any restrictions). Nick Stagg supported the view that the problem lay with having to apply the rolling average cap to a seven day period. This had created significant constraints in view of the increased frequency of prolonged, unstable weather which made flying impossible. He described how a week of heavy rain and gales was often followed by consecutive days of ideal flying conditions, but that pilots couldn't make up for the lost time due to the short-term constraints of the movement cap. He also referred to the pent-up demand for flying that had been released since the lifting of Covid restrictions and the fact that the aerodrome had been unable to accommodate this.

Jonathan Essex considered that the daily limit could be reduced to an appropriate lower number if the rolling average was over more days. Richard Blain acknowledged this but argued that the intention of the present cap could never have been to cause the aerodrome to grind to a halt. He stressed that a broader, analytical study was required to devise a more rational movement cap.

Phillip Wright concluded the discussion by reflecting that this first winter's implementation of the movement cap had been challenging for all concerned and that work needed to be done to ensure that the management of the situation was as fair as possible.

8. PUBLIC MEETING 2022

Vince Sharp sought the Committee's views about whether an annual public meeting should be reinstated for 2022. This was in the context of paragraph 9 of the Committee's constitution which stated that:

"The Committee shall hold a public meeting in June/July each year for the purpose of presenting the Committee's annual report covering the period 1st April to 31st March and discussing any other issue deemed relevant by the Chairman".

Due to the pandemic, these arrangements had not been implemented since the public meeting on 27th July 2019.

The Chairman considered that a public meeting should be held later in the year. Other members agreed, and comments included:

- this would provide a valuable opportunity for the public to express views
- key aerodrome user organisations should be represented
- there was little value in continuing with the production of the annual reports as per previous practice and that more concise documentation should be provided for the meeting, including electronic links to any detailed background information such as flight monitoring reports and RACC minutes (which would already be published on the aerodrome's website)
- the meeting should be 'in person'.

Vince Sharp was therefore asked to begin planning for a 2022 public meeting as above. It was agreed that a further ordinary committee meeting be held in the meantime (see Item 9 below) the agenda for which would include arrangements for the public meeting.

9. NEXT ORDINARY COMMITTEE MEETING

This was scheduled for **Wednesday, 11th May 2022 at 10.00am** with the venue / Zoom option to be advised.